



Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

PSB OPTIONS PAPER

15TH SEPTEMBER 2025

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Context

Public Services Boards (PSBs) were established by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (The Act) to strengthen collaboration between public bodies and improve the long-term well-being of communities across Wales. Each local authority is required to maintain a PSB that brings together key partners to assess local needs, set shared objectives and priorities and deliver co-ordinated plans.

In Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, the PSBs have been operating independently of one another since their inception in 2015 and have been tackling local priorities and challenges. Although the working arrangement thus far between the PSBs hasn't been formally recognised as a merge or collaboration, there have been significant collaborative efforts undertaken by the PSB co-ordinators over the past 10 years. However, as public services face growing pressure from demographic change, budget constraints and climate risks, there is an increasing interest in whether closer regional working could enhance the effectiveness of PSBs by increasing collective working and reducing the duplication of efforts. In addition, ensuring appropriate representation at PSB meetings can be challenging and the requirement to attend numerous boards could be exacerbating this for some partner organisations. It is due to these factors that the Ceredigion PSB has requested support officers to work with regional colleagues to research and consider the potential options in moving forward.

Although the three counties share common challenges which might be better tackled by working together at the same time, there are local challenges which require tailored solutions. Around Wales there are existing models and structures of PSBs which can be looked at and analysed to determine the strengths and weaknesses they present. The structure of West Wales's PSBs need to balance the benefits of regional working whilst maintaining a clear focus on local needs and choosing an option which suits their needs best.

Introduction

This paper has been prepared to support consideration of future relationship arrangements for the three PSBs in West Wales. The research has revealed a mixture of structures across Wales in areas that have previously combined. This has led to the identification of varying structures, and the paper explores the main benefits, risks and drawbacks associated with those structures based on experiences in other areas of Wales;

Option One – No Change to Occur

Option Two – All Three PSBs Merge

Option Three – All Three PSBs Collaborate

Option Four – Only Two PSBs Come Together and One PSB Decides Not to Join

The paper also explores the administrative implications with each approach. It is intended to help inform discussion amongst PSB members in the West Wales region and support decision making on the most effective and sustainable model when moving forward and to ensure that the PSBs are able to meet shared challenges, continue to deliver on their duties and ultimately improve the well-being of the communities across the three counties. A table can be found within Appendix 1 which summarises the contents of this paper into a single visual

Option One – No Change to Current PSB Structure

This option would see no change to current ways of working and would mean each PSB would operate within its' own county. Their identity within Wales would remain as it is currently and be recognised as such by statutory members, the government and the public.

Decision making would remain within each county and plans to deliver on the well-being objectives would remain at the discretion of the members within the local PSB. Regional meetings would still take place between PSB officers to capture updates and progress on projects or plans and a general agreement to help each other where possible continues, but no formal policy is in place regarding informal collaboration. The Support for Public Services Boards Regional Grant from Welsh Government would continue to be administered by Ceredigion County Council on behalf of the three PSBs.

Pros

When it comes to changes in policy or plans, each PSB can handle this on their own terms and would only need unanimous agreement on a county basis.

Localised focus can remain in place to target areas in need of attention.

Administrative duties and resource allocation remain unaltered, and each respective way of working can be developed as each locality sees fit

- Timings and deadlines of the Assessment of Local Well-being can be handled by each board based on their current workload and how they wish to approach it
- The level of detail can be determined and agreed upon individually
- Existing projects avoid disruption

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Accountability remains within each individual PSB

Cons

The responsibility to produce an Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plan and subsequent Annual Reports tends to fall to the Local Authority within the PSB and the resources to produce these documents are being put under pressure.

Each county will need to produce and deliver upon their own Well-being Plan objectives which could lead to duplicated efforts in PSB's across the region.

Weaker strategic alignment across West Wales.

Participation and appropriate representation are currently an issue for some PSB's due to the volume of meetings national and regional organisations need to attend.

- Due to the frequency of meetings and availability of appropriate representatives from the statutory bodies, this can see an inconsistency in the members who are able to attend the meetings across the PSBs

Reduced regional influence and recognition due to having separate PSBs across the West Wales footprint.

Option Two - All Three PSBs Merge

A merge occurs when two or more public services boards agree to merge if they consider it would assist them in contributing to the achievement of delivering against the Well-being goals under the Act. The Act covers the obligations of a merge, and these can be found within Appendix 2.

A merge of the three PSB's would see the most fundamental change. A new entity would be formed as a result of all three PSBs coming together to form a single board, referred to as "the Board". This would see the introduction of a new Chair and Vice Chair, a new scrutiny committee with their respective Chair and Vice Chair and a new Terms of Reference for each.

Timing plays an important role in the decision to merge as a PSB would need to review their current Well-being deliverables and determine how these continue forward if a merge takes place during the current five-year period i.e. 2023 – 2028.

The administrative structure of the PSB would be determined by the three Local Authorities and this takes various forms across current merged PSBs within Wales. For example, Gwent PSB rotate the administrative functions every two years in line with their Chair and Vice Chair rotation. Anglesey and Gwynedd PSB have appointed a PSB support team to work across the two PSBs and act as a central point of contact who are employed by Gwynedd (with proportional funding provided by Anglesey). Further to this, the scrutiny structures would require a review as a new single committee would be formed as part of a merge. The Support for Public Services Boards Regional Grant from Welsh Government would be utilised by the merged PSB.

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Pros:

Economies of scale play a large role within a merged PSB. Members would be aware of each other's efforts and delivery groups, whether regional or local.

The resources required to produce the Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plan and Annual Progress Report can be shared throughout the merged PSB network. This could be done using existing resources or through a shared funding arrangement.

National and regional bodies would need to only attend a single PSB meeting as opposed to three. This would see a reduction in the number of meetings as the Board would come together as one and would tackle the issue of appropriate representation in meetings.

Resources would be pooled together which includes administrative functions, expertise, skills and knowledge which could benefit the speed and effectiveness of decision making and delivery.

A merge can build upon current working relationships with the involved members and strengthen these relations moving forward.

- Gwent PSB noted that the decision to merge the five PSBs in their locality was made to ***“simplify and strengthen the existing partnerships arrangements... The move to a regional PSB... makes it easier for partners to get actively involved”*** (“Well-being Plan for Gwent 16/02/2023”, pg. 3, para 3, 2023)
<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/documents/s35225/Gwent%20PSB%20Well-being%20Plan.pdf>

It could provide a single identity for the public to recognise with the possibility to enhance public engagement as a result.

Expertise and knowledge can be shared between PSB's, and this has the potential to increase collaboration between partner organisations resulting in more efficient working relationships.

There is a possibility that by involving the members in a single board, it could allow for a more dynamic delivery structure, for example;

- Gwent introduced task and finish groups for each local authority area within the PSB to utilise local services to carry out the work identified by national and regional members during meetings

Cons:

Delivery of plans could suffer if there aren't strong working relations between all PSBs.

There is a real threat of losing a sense of localised focus. This could be either in the form of recognition by larger organisations and/or in the delivery of plans carried out by the Board.

Accountability could be diluted within the PSB due to the volume of members unless matched with strong governance and scrutiny frameworks

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- Members would need to have a clear understanding of what is expected of them when the PSB is established and what their roles and responsibilities are
- New Terms of reference would need to be established to ensure members have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, whether they are a part of the PSB or the scrutiny committee

Political sensitivity surrounding the merge of three Local Authorities

- Newport raised concerns in discussions leading up to the merge of the now Gwent PSB surrounding the needs of Newport and that they would naturally be different to the other counties in the PSB. The benefits of working together weren't dismissed by the Councillor but he felt hesitant to support an agreement that could see Newport on the back foot (Newport City Council Meeting Minutes, 20th June 2021, p.4)
(<https://democracy.newport.gov.uk/documents/s20142/Minutes%2020072021%20Council.pdf?LLL=0>)

Could see slower, less agile delivery.

Priorities could differ across each area of West Wales which could see challenges in deciding which area to tackle.

There would need to be a fair exchange of resources amongst the PSB with each member contributing where feasible i.e. staff, skills, services, knowledge etc.

Option Three A) – All Three PSBs Collaborate

This option would see all three PSBs within West Wales formally collaborating with one another. This is an extension of current working relationships towards a more formal agreement of roles and responsibilities between the PSBs. This option would see a move to more co-ordinated efforts in resource sharing and allocation. By identifying and agreeing which areas in planning and delivery could make use of shared resources and experience, this can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the PSBs. The Support for Public Services Boards Regional Grant from Welsh Government would continue to be administered by Ceredigion County Council on behalf of the three PSBs.

Extracted below is the guidance set out by The Act regarding the collaboration of PSBs;

“48 Collaboration between public services boards

(1) Two or more public services boards may agree to collaborate if they consider it would assist them in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

(2) The Welsh Ministers may direct two or more public services boards to collaborate in whatever way the Welsh Ministers consider would assist the boards in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

(3) For the purposes of this section, a board collaborates if it—

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- (a) co-operates with another board,*
- (b) facilitates the activities of another board,*
- (c) co-ordinates its activities with another board,*
- (d) exercises another board's functions on its behalf, or*
- (e) provides staff, goods, services or accommodation to another board.”*

Pros

Existing working relationships would be formalised and contributions from each PSB would be identified.

There would be the formal agreement to share resources across the PSBs i.e. staff, skills, knowledge etc.

Increased collaboration and information sharing which would save efforts as opposed to working separately

- Pooled resources could see improved service delivery and knowledge transfer whilst avoiding duplication of efforts

Supports issues across borders, i.e. public transport.

The PSB would have a collective voice which can lead to having a larger footprint within Wales.

A similar framework for the Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Reports could be followed by the PSBs

- Anglesey and Gwynedd adopt similar templates when producing their literature to ensure consistent methodology, avoid duplication of efforts and facilitate the development of strategies towards common goals

Cons

The exchange of resources would need to be fair with each PSB contributing as much as feasibly possible.

There is the potential for lack of accountability within the PSBs

- Roles would need to be clearly understood and agreed upon to avoid misinterpretation of duties and responsibilities

Option Three B) Possible Collaborative Structure – Strategic Co-Ordinating Group

With the guidance from the Act allowing flexibility in the structure of a collaboration, this could see dynamic ways of working as long as each individual PSB are committed to producing an Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plan and Annual Progress Reports on an

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individual basis. Further to the points in **Option Three A**), in order to facilitate closer collaboration amongst members, a strategic co-ordinating group could be established comprised of representatives of the statutory partners. This could provide direction to local PSBs and identify the opportunities where it makes sense to work on a regional, rather than local footprint. This could allow for the 3 PSBs to receive direction around joint regional working but still allow for the flexibility to work on local priorities as they see fit

Pros

The issue of appropriate representation within meetings can be addressed by having a meeting for senior level members of statutory organisations coming together at the same time.

Flexibility and a sense of localised focus can be maintained within local authority areas.

Cons

Invited members within the PSB may be reluctant to act upon or involve themselves with the activities decided upon by the statutory members if the vote doesn't go in their favour

- They are under no obligation to join the PSB and this could see a reduction and loss in participants if they are being excluded from meetings

Option Four – Only Two PSBs Come Together

This section aims to explore the pros and cons of two PSBs coming together either via a merge or collaboration without the third PSB. The considerations and stipulations surrounding a merge or collaboration are noted in the previous sections, so this section assumes one of those options has been taken by two PSBs in order to bring two together and leave a sole PSB alongside. This section focuses on the joint PSB and the advantageous and disadvantages they face. The sole PSB will face the pros and cons found in “Option One” as there will be no change to their structure. The Support for Public Services Boards Regional Grant from Welsh Government would continue to be administered by Ceredigion County Council on behalf of the two PSBs.

Pros

If successful it could encourage the third PSB to join at a later date

Resources can be pooled together

Meetings are attended by members at the same time

Less meetings for National and Regional bodies to attend

The joint PSB will have a larger footprint within Wales

Economies of scale

A single identity to be recognised by the Welsh Government and public

Potential for better public engagement

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Cons

Fragmented service delivery across West Wales which may impact on regional partners

National and regional organisations would need still need to attend two separate PSB meetings (the joint PSB and sole PSB) which could cause delays in delivery and information sharing

Appendix 1

Option	Pros	Cons	Structure	Administrative Considerations
1. No Change To PSB Structure	<p>Decisions can be more efficient and dynamic due to less members</p> <p>Localised focus and identity can remain</p> <p>Resource allocation remains as it is</p> <p>Avoids disruption to existing projects</p> <p>Accountability remains with each individual PSB</p>	<p>Increased pressure placed on the resources to produce Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Reports</p> <p>Duplication of efforts across region</p> <p>Weaker strategic alignment across West Wales</p> <p>Appropriate representation from Statutory Members is currently an issue for some PSB's</p> <p>Multiple meetings for National and Regional Bodies to attend</p> <p>Reduced regional influence and recognition</p>	<p>Carmarthenshire PSB</p> <p>Ceredigion PSB</p> <p>Pembrokeshire PSB</p>	<p>Each PSB produces and publishes their own Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Report and Annual Progress Reports</p> <p>Three separate well-being planning and consultation cycles</p> <p>No change to individual PSB structure or Chair/Vice Chair</p> <p>No change to current scrutiny arrangements</p> <p>Individual Terms of References' will remain</p> <p>Individual administrative support will remain</p> <p>No change to arrangements grant administered by one PSB and shared equally with each PSB</p>
2. All Three PSBs Merge	<p>Economies of scale</p> <p>Resources to produce Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Reports can be combined across the PSBs to alleviate pressure on those producing the documents</p> <p>Less meetings for members to attend</p> <p>Resources can be pooled together</p> <p>Build upon current working relationships</p> <p>A single identity to be recognised by Welsh Government and public</p> <p>Potential for better public engagement</p> <p>Expertise and knowledge sharing</p> <p>Reduction in the duplication of efforts</p> <p>More dynamic delivery structure</p>	<p>Delivery of plans could suffer if there aren't strong working relations</p> <p>Potential to lose a sense of local focus</p> <p>Potential loss of accountability within the PSB</p> <p>Political sensitivities surrounding the merge of three Local Authorities</p> <p>Slower Delivery less agile</p> <p>Priorities could differ across each area</p> <p>The exchange of resources would need to be fair with each Local Authority contributing</p>	<p>A single PSB Board is established</p>	<p>A Single Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plan and Annual Progress Report would be produced</p> <p>A new Chair and Vice Chair must be appointed to the Board</p> <p>A joint Terms of Reference must be drawn up by the Board</p> <p>A review must be carried out by the Board of the local well-being plans in effect for its area immediately before it was established, and the local objectives set out in those plans</p> <p>A joint scrutiny committee would be set up to review the efforts of the merged PSB</p> <p>Considerations need to be addressed with regards to the existing local delivery groups across the PSBs and how these continue to operate post merge</p> <p>Considerations need to be given to administrative support—this could either be rotated across the Local Authority areas or be a single team</p> <p>The merged single PSB will receive funding from the Welsh Government to facilitate their activities</p>

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Option	Pros	Cons	Structure	Administrative Considerations
3a. All Three PSBs Collaborate	<p>Existing working relationships would be formalised and contributions from each PSB identified</p> <p>Experience, resources and skills can be shared and brought together</p> <p>Increased collaboration and information sharing</p> <p>Supports issues across borders i.e. public transport</p> <p>Larger footprint and voice within Wales</p> <p>A similar framework for the Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Reports could be followed by the PSBs</p>	<p>The exchange of resources would need to be fair with each PSB contributing</p> <p>Potential lack of accountability</p> <p>Roles could be misunderstood unless clearly identified and agreed</p>	<p>Retained Carmarthenshire PSB</p> <p>Retained Ceredigion PSB</p> <p>Retained Pembrokeshire PSB</p> <p>+ element of formalised collaboration between the PSBs</p>	<p>Separate Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Reports would be produced, one by each PSB</p> <p>PSBs could follow the same structure and assist one another with the production of reports, plans and assessments</p> <p>A new Terms of Reference/Partnership Agreement would need to be drawn up by the PSBs</p> <p>Considerations need to be given to administrative support—this could either be rotated across the Local Authority areas or be a single team</p> <p>There would still be a scrutiny committee for each respective PSB</p> <p>Each PSB region will receive their own funding from the Welsh Government to facilitate their activities This would normally be administered by one PSB on behalf of the group and either split equally or pooled together and allocated according to the collaboratives agreement</p>
3b. All Three PSBs collaborate and introduce a Strategic Co-ordinating Group with Senior Statutory Members	<p>Retains advantages of Option 3a and:</p> <p>Appropriate representation from statutory partners is addressed by having them all come together at the same time</p> <p>Takes steps towards regional working but allows flexibility to work on local priorities as/when fit</p>	<p>Retains disadvantages of Option 3a and:</p> <p>Invited participants may be reluctant to involve themselves</p>	<p>Retained Carmarthenshire PSB</p> <p>Retained Ceredigion PSB</p> <p>Retained Pembrokeshire PSB</p> <p>+ Strategic Co-ordinating Group</p>	<p>Retains the administrative considerations of Option 3a and:</p> <p>Would there be an additional scrutiny committee established for the strategic co-ordinating group?</p>
4. Only Two PSBs Come Together	<p>Retains advantages of Option 2 and:</p> <p>If successful, it could encourage the third PSB to join at a later date if not ready</p> <p>Resources can be pooled together</p> <p>Meetings are attended by members at the same time</p> <p>Less meetings for National and Regional bodies to attend</p> <p>The joint PSB will have a larger footprint within Wales</p> <p>Economies of scale</p> <p>A single identity to be recognised by Welsh Government and public</p> <p>Potential for better public engagement</p>	<p>Possible Fragmented service delivery across West Wales region</p> <p>There would still be separate meetings for National and Regional members to attend</p>	<p>Joint PSB—Two areas coming together</p> <p>Sole PSB</p>	<p>There would be two Assessments of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plans and Annual Progress Reports instead of three</p> <p>There would be two scrutiny committees - one for the joint PSB and one for the sole PSB</p> <p>The joint PSB would pool resources together across the PSBs to produce the Assessment of Local Well-being, Local Well-being Plan and Annual Progress Report whilst the sole PSB would only be able to use their own resources</p> <p>Considerations need to be given to administrative support—this could either be rotated across the Local Authority areas or be a single team</p> <p>Each PSB region (the joint PSB and sole PSB) will receive their own funding from the Welsh Government to facilitate their activities</p>

Appendix 2

47[F1 Merger and demerger of] public services boards:

(1) Two or more public services boards may agree to merge if they consider it would assist them in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

(2) The Welsh Ministers may direct two or more public services boards to merge if the Welsh Ministers consider it would assist the boards in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals.

F2(3).

(4) If two or more boards merge—

(a) references in this Part (other than in this section) to a public services board must be construed as references to the merged board, and

(b) references in this Part to a local authority area must be construed as references to the combined areas of the local authorities that are members of the merged board.

[F3(5) A merged board must, as soon as reasonably practicable after it is established, review—

(a) the local well-being plans in effect for its area immediately before it was established, and

(b) the local objectives set out in those plans.

(6) As soon as reasonably practicable after a review under subsection (5), the board must prepare and publish a local well-being plan for its area which may adopt the plans and objectives mentioned in subsection (5)(a) and (b)—

(a) to the extent the board considers appropriate, and

(b) subject to such amendments and revisions as the board considers appropriate.

(7) A merged board may, if it considers that it would assist in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals—

(a) demerge, or

(b) partially demerge (if three or more separate boards merged in the creation of the merged board).

(8) The Welsh Ministers may, if they consider that it would assist in contributing to the achievement of the well-being goals, direct a merged board to—

(a) demerge, or

(b) partially demerge (if three or more separate boards merged in the creation of the merged board).

(9) For the purposes of subsections (7) and (8), a merged board—

(a) demerges if it ceases to exist and a separate public services board is established for the area of each local authority that was a member of the merged board;

(b) partially demerges if—

(i) it continues to exist as the public services board for the areas of two or more local authorities, and

(ii) a separate public services board is established for the area of each local authority that has ceased to be a member of the merged board.

(10) A public services board established after a demerger or partial demerger must, as soon as reasonably practicable after it is established, review—

(a) the local well-being plan in effect for its area immediately before it was established, and

(b) the local objectives set out in that plan.

(11) As soon as reasonably practicable after a review under subsection (10), the board must prepare and publish a local well-being plan for its area which may adopt the plan and objectives mentioned in subsection (10)(a) and (b)—

(a) to the extent the board considers appropriate, and

(b) subject to such amendments and revisions as the board considers appropriate.

(12) Before publishing a plan under subsection (6) or (11), a board must consult—

(a) the Commissioner;

(b) the Welsh Ministers;

(c) such other persons as the board considers appropriate.

(13) A board must send a copy of a local well-being plan published under subsection (6) or (11) to the persons mentioned in section 44(6).]