

Welsh Local Leadership Academy



WLGA • CLILC

Making Sustainable Decisions

Councillor Workbook



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Acknowledgements

The WLGA is grateful for the help of PriceWaterhouseCoopers in the production of this workbook



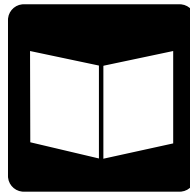
Foreword

Introduction

"Extreme need and hardship is often the mother of innovation and opportunity". This quote is particularly true of the circumstances that face Local Government in Wales today. With diminishing resources, increasing demand, greater expectation on services and intergenerational challenges such as climate change and an ageing population, the need to rethink our approach to how we meet the needs of our citizens has never been greater. As councillors we are in a privileged position, elected to represent our constituents both now and for future generations. Unlike many of those we represent, we are uniquely placed to help influence and shape their future by the decisions we take today. Making these decisions through a sustainable development lens will help ensure that our decisions are "fit for the future" whilst still addressing the needs of citizens now. This members' handbook will provide some context to sustainable development principles and practical case studies and questions that will support you as you consider future decisions. I would encourage you to take time to read the handbook, but more importantly look for opportunities to put its suggestions into practice.

Cllr Neil Rogers
WLGA Spokesperson,
Environment, Sustainable
Development and Waste

In working through the material contained in this handbook, you will encounter a number of features designed to help you think about your role in making sustainable decisions. These features are represented by the symbols shown below.



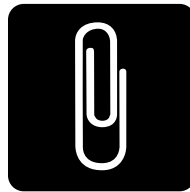
Guidance

this is used to indicate guidance, research, quotations, explanations and definitions that you may find helpful.



Challenges

these are questions or queries raised in the text which ask you to reflect on your role or approach - in essence, they are designed to be thought-provokers.



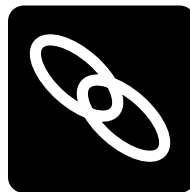
Case studies

these are 'pen pictures' of approaches used by councils elsewhere.



Hints and tips

these represent a selection of good practices which you may find useful.



Useful links

these are signposts to sources of further information, outside of the workbook, which may help with principles, processes, methods and approaches. A full list of useful additional information is also set out in Appendix B of the workbook.

Sustainable development, it's not rocket science!

What is sustainable development?

There are many definitions of sustainable development from across the globe, but the most well recognised is that used by Bruntland: *"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*. It is about ensuring well-being and a better quality of life for future generations, thinking about the impacts of today's actions on the future, and protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment by learning to live within environmental limits.

To the Welsh Government, sustainable development is about achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations in ways which:

- promote social justice and equality of opportunity; and
- enhance the natural and cultural environment and respect its limits – using only our **fair share** of the earth's resources and sustaining our cultural legacy in areas such as language and community cohesion.

Whilst sustainable development is not a new concept, it is one that is continuing to evolve and gain momentum both in understanding and how it can positively support longer term decision making. You are not alone if you feel slightly overwhelmed by the concept of SD and exactly what it means. That said, the following statement *"that's what Sustainable Development is, we are already doing much of that but haven't called it SD!"* is common after a little consideration and discussion around this subject. As members, representing your constituents longer term needs, advocating for the most vulnerable, and making choices to ensure that resources go as far as possible and deliver the best possible services, are all principles that you will feel strongly connected with. These are also at the heart of good sustainable decision making. Perhaps SD is not such an overwhelming concept after all!

Traditional associations with sustainable development include carbon emissions, climate change, biodiversity, resource management, social responsibility, and community engagement. These are all correct, but an approach built on sustainable development will consider **all** of these aspects, how they relate to **all** services and how they will inter-relate in the long term. The key objective is that applying sustainable development is a route to better decision making and delivering services in local authorities.

A sustainable approach to development is one that considers and enhances the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities.

Sustainable development, it's not rocket science!

What is sustainable development?

The World Bank Group have a simple exercise to bring the concept of SD to life:



Take a minute and jot down five to ten needs that you have in your own life.

Results - Have you listed any needs that conflict with one another? For example, if you listed clean air to breathe, but also listed a car for transportation, your needs might conflict. Which would you choose, and how would you make your decision? If within ourselves, we have conflicting needs, how much is that multiplied when we look at a whole community, city, country, and world? For example, what happens when a company's need for cheap labour conflicts with workers' needs for liveable wages? Or when individual families' needs for firewood conflict with the need to prevent erosion and conserve topsoil? Or when one country's need for electricity results in acid rain that damages another country's lakes and rivers?

Challenge - How do we decide whose needs are met? Poor or rich people? Citizens or immigrants? People living in cities or in the countryside? People in one country or another? You or your neighbour? The environment or the corporation? This generation or the next generation? When there has to be a trade-off, whose needs should go first? How do you manage the dilemma of conflicting needs?

A sustainable development approach is the way in which we consider these impacts and challenges, conflicts and dilemmas with a view to future generations. As a Councillor you will have a very specific role in trying to address many of these conflicts and issues.

Is the concept of sustainable development now easier to understand?

Sustainable development, it's not rocket science!

Sustainable development is relevant to the communities and citizens you serve.

Below are two examples of typical but very different families that you might find within your wards. Each of these families will be impacted by the inter-generational challenges facing us all such as, health inequality, climate change, demographic change, welfare reform, and pressure on services due to reduced council resources. Whilst some of these issues might feel remote they will have different direct and indirect impacts on each family. See below some examples of what these impacts



Family 1 – Mr & Mrs Jones

Mr and Mrs Jones are aged 73 and 68 respectively and are retired. They both receive state pensions. They have lived in a local authority owned 3 bedroom house in a very deprived local authority housing estate. Mr Jones has recently had a heart attack which has left him with permanent health and mobility problems. They are waiting to be assessed for a housing adaptation grant and neither Mr nor Mrs Jones drive. Mrs Jones enjoys going to Bingo in the evenings and Mr Jones used to enjoy working on his allotment but now finds his health problems limit these opportunities.

They provide care and support to their 3 grandchildren, who live in a neighbouring street and attend the local school. They regularly pick up their grandchildren from school whilst their daughter is at work and look after them during the school holidays. All their grandchildren regularly stay over with them whilst their parents work.



Family 2 - Gemma and Dave Jones

Gemma and Dave, both aged 22, have two girls aged 5 and 3, and live in a three bedroom, privately rented pre-1910 house. Gemma works 20 hours a week and brings home £140 per week. They also receive working tax credit of £26.81 and child tax credit of £113.99 – which is paid 4 weekly. To be able to go to work she relies on her mother for help with the school run and during the school holidays.

Dave had a road traffic accident 11 months ago and whilst he is on the mend, he still has restricted and painful movements. He was awarded higher rate mobility and the lower rate care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). They have a Motability car. This award is due to expire at the end of the year. He was found 'fit for work' after a medical last week. His employers have kept his job open for him to return to work but at the moment their occupational health are stating that he isn't fit to return.

The house they rent has recently been assessed as failing the Decent Home Standard due to poor thermal comfort.

Sustainable development, it's not rocket science!

Sustainable development is relevant to the communities and citizens you serve.

Examples of how intergenerational challenges might impact these two families

Intergenerational Issues	Local Impacts on Young Family	Local Impacts on Elderly Couple
Global Financial Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of short term/pay day borrowing escalating • Reduced number of company start-ups = no local employment • Company reorganisation due to cheaper labour markets = local unemployment • Cost of child care escalating resulting in cost trap meaning young mothers and fathers are unable to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pension funds diluted, greater dependency on LA care services and costs. • Low interest rates resulting in less income from savings = greater dependency on LA • Government austerity measures - Welfare Reform resulting in less income due to "Bedroom Tax".
Extreme Weather Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased flooding impacts children going to school, impacting ability of parents to find work • Council is unable to respond quickly to help vulnerable groups (Heavy snow or flooding) • Higher repair bills on houses, or increasing insurance costs (Tendency to not repair due to costs, therefore degrading housing stock) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More health problems in the summer due to hot weather - hospitalisation • Cold weather linked to high energy costs linked to inability to warm the home linked to increased health issues • Higher repair bills on houses, or increasing insurance costs. (Tendency to not repair due to costs therefore degrading housing stock)
Migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family networks eroded impacting stability of family unit. • Less young people impacts local skill base and therefore negative impact on companies locating in the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger families leaving the area to find work = less family support therefore greater dependency on LA
Health Inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income families making poor or constrained choices around diet = lower life expectancy and poorer health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to local services, delays in care could result in compounding health issues.
Reduction and costs around finite resources (Water, Energy, Fuel, Food)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local food staples increasing in cost - limited choice impacting long term health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing costs for renewables, Energy = colder homes = increasing health issues.

One of the key features of good sustainable decision making is to fully understand the respective impacts on various stakeholder groups

The importance of sustainable development

Why is sustainable development important for your council?

Wales, having quickly acknowledged the need for change and with a duty to pursue SD has the opportunity to forge and market a distinct, innovative, economically advantageous approach to development. Local Government lies at the heart of such a shift in mind-set. Our challenge is to demonstrate strong, creative leadership, to deliver policies and services so as to foster and promote sustainable ways of living and working in the wider community and through the markets in which we operate.



Under the Local Government Act 2000, Councils have been charged with “promoting the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area and producing Single Integrated Plans or Well Being Strategies which contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK”. As we have seen, social, economic and environmental well-being is a core component of sustainable development. In essence, everything a Council does should assist in the continuing sustainability of their local area and the delivery of a more sustainable Wales.

Sustainable local policy should ensure that:

- a holistic view of planning and service delivery takes into account the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability;
- future trends, for example climate change impacts, are taken into account and that planning is for the long-term;
- impacts beyond the local area are considered;
- local people and communities are engaged in the process of decision-making through participative systems of governance.

Sustainable development has already been adopted as the central organising principle by the Welsh Government. This should also be the central principle for local government and all public sector activity.

The importance of sustainable development

Turning challenges into opportunities

The case for placing sustainable development at the centre of decision making is made even more compelling by considering some of the challenges that local government is currently facing and those issues that will materialise over the coming decades. It is clear that sustainable development presents opportunities to deal with these challenges more effectively.

Challenges	Opportunities
Pressure on resources and service delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of the decade the Welsh Government's Budget will be 20% lower than it was at the beginning. In a typical council we can expect¹ - up to 4% cuts per annum up to 2017-18 then 'cash flat' thereafter. This equates to required savings of up to £12m in 2015/16 and up to £28m in 2017/18. Previous analysis shows cuts of 25% in planning, 25% in highways and transport (from 2015/16) and 50% in economic development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using longer term financial evidence to make longer term financial decisions. Using a broader range of investment criteria (including social value) rather than the traditional Return on Investment (RoI) measure. An opportunity to embed efficiency measures.
Poverty and welfare reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent of the on 8th March 2012. The consequences of this legislation on councils will be wide ranging and present a unique set of challenges. Welsh Government are looking to LAs to meet half the cost of the £30m Council Tax Reduction Scheme next year. In a typical council this could mean c£600K. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased flooding impacts children going to school, impacting ability of parents to find work. Council is unable to respond quickly to help vulnerable groups (Heavy snow or flooding). Higher repair bills on houses, or increasing insurance costs (Tendency to not repair due to costs, therefore degrading housing stock).
Job creation and unemployment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wales has nearly 11% of its population employed directly within the public sector, compared to nearly 8% for the UK as a whole.² In March 2014³ the employment rate for those aged 16-64 in Wales was 70.0%, The UK average was 72.7%. However in parts of Wales these figures are significantly worse than the Wales average. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting social, environmental and economic issues to find unexpected solutions to problems. Unemployment can be tackled in a variety of ways including using community organisations to address the skill shortages in the population. Investing in the local green economy, such as renewable energy to bring sustainable private sector jobs to your council region.

1 These figures have been provided by the WLGA as part of their analysis of how a typical council "Council Cymru" might be effected by the austerity measure over the next few years based on worst case analysis by the Institute of Fiscal Studies

2 Welsh Government - Key economic statistics – May 2014

3 Welsh Government - The Labour Force Survey estimates for the 3 months to March 2014

The importance of sustainable development

Turning challenges into opportunities

<p>Demographic change and health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ageing population is a challenge that is affecting the whole of the UK and many other developed countries, not just Wales. • Between 2008 and 2023, the population in Wales is projected to increase by 5.1%, but the population aged 65 or over is projected to increase by 25.1%. • The working population is growing much slower than the elderly population they will be required to support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking preventative steps to address this challenge now and acting upon them to alleviate financial and healthcare crises in communities in the future. • Working across the public sector to come up with a truly collaborative response. • Being clear about what these trends are in your communities – and using this long term evidence to inform decision making.
<p>Climate change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of global weather related disasters has quadrupled between 1980 and 2006, from 60 to 240. • Climate Change is having a very direct impact on our communities resulting in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more flooding; • new pests and diseases affecting agriculture, forestry and wildlife; • more disruption to our energy, transport and ICT infrastructure; • greater pressure on water resources; and • more health problems in the summer. • It is also indirectly impacting citizens and communities through, increases in food and energy prices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how future climate impacts might specifically affect your ward – these impacts may well be very different across a council region. • Understand and plan to reduce the future impacts of climate change by ensuring these are built into corporate risk assessments and budget decisions. • Ensure that the Council's future investments in its buildings take account of future demand and how climate change might impact them in the next 50 years. • Look for the opportunities to take advantage of climate change – such as the positive impacts on tourism due to a warmer climate and longer seasons.
<p>Regional collaboration and public sector reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principle of collaboration to deliver efficiencies and improve service quality is not a new one. However despite some good isolated examples where this has been effective it is likely that the requirement to undertake more strategic and whole scale collaboration is going to become unavoidable. • In particular for Wales the recent findings of the Williams Commission (Jan 2014) has suggested some very significant changes to the structure of local authorities to provide a more efficient framework for such collaboration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To embrace and deliver benefit from collaboration, rather than resisting and seeing it as a challenge. • Using Sustainable Development criteria in prioritising how best to collaborate and with which services and partners. • Putting citizens and communities at the centre of collaboration choices and priorities. • Using a long term lens and longer term evidence to shape future collaboration choices and activity.



Do you recognise these challenges within your council and are you already starting to address them?

The importance of sustainable development

A new sustainable development duty on your council



"Sustainability lies at the heart of the Welsh Government's agenda for Wales; it also lies at the heart of this legislative programme. Taken as a whole, it will promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing and enhance people's quality of life in Wales. It is about defining the long term development path for our nation. It means healthy, productive people; vibrant, inclusive communities; a diverse and resilient environment and an advanced and innovative economy. This legislative programme provides new powers, duties and institutional capacity to advance our goals of building a sustainable Wales." - *First Minister, 12 July 2011, The Welsh Government's Legislative Programme 2011-16.*

Over the last year the language of sustainable development has been more specifically modified to focus on expectations and impacts for future generations. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill (previously the Sustainable Development Bill) has been drafted to help tackle the generational challenges Wales faces in a more joined up and integrated way - ensuring Welsh public services make key decisions with the long term well-being of Wales in mind.

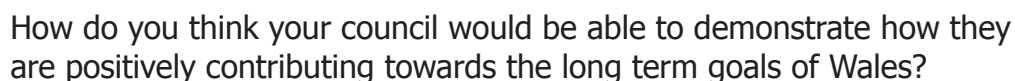
The Bill will require specified public authorities (including local authorities) to set objectives that contribute to the achievement of a number of well-being goals. When setting and subsequently working towards meeting those objectives, they will be required to do so in a manner consistent with 'the sustainable development principle' (i.e. seeking to ensure the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs). It is intended that this will help embed effective sustainable development behaviours into strategic decision making. The Bill sets out the well-being goals as follows (see below):

Goal	Description of the goal
A prosperous Wales	An innovative and productive, low carbon emission, economy that makes more efficient and proportionate use of resources; and which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities for a skilled and well-educated population.
A resilient Wales	A biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.
A healthier Wales	A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
A more equal Wales	A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.
A Wales of cohesive communities	Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.	A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

A new sustainable development duty on your council

For the purposes of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, it is proposed that the goals will be achieved by **placing a duty on named public service organisations in Wales to maximise the contribution they make to these goals**. The Welsh Government also intends to use other mechanisms such as the Sustainable Development Charter and their approach to sustainable procurement to also engage businesses, the third sector and other organisations to help achieve these goals and also propose to measure the progress organisations are collectively making to achieve these goals.

This is a radical agenda which will demand significant change in the way we manage the environment and act as a society if we are truly to focus on long-term wellbeing. As a key stakeholder, local government will have a pivotal role to play in delivering against these goals.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

What does sustainable development look like in a council?

Longer-term and strategic planning and decision making

Sustainable development has at its centre a number of key principles. These principles provide the fundamental building blocks to sustainable development decision making. We will explore these in more detail and provide examples/case studies of what this principle might look like in a local government context. These principles being:



A key component of sustainable development is the consideration of the needs of future generations. This can only be achieved by considering the long-term future in current decision making, budgeting and risk management.

Examples of this type of thinking include:

- Considering potential future savings when deciding to invest – “spend to save”
- Considering whole-life costs and not just initial outlay, looking beyond the “easy wins”
- Considering whether future risks can be better mitigated by acting now
- Focussing on preventions rather than cures
- Understanding the organisation’s context on both a local and global level.

How do I know if my council are taking the right steps?

- Your long term goals are based on good awareness of intergenerational trends such as climate change, changing demography and health.
- Ensuring that corporate strategies and plans are linked to all areas of sustainable development such as biodiversity and wellbeing.
- You will have a 20-30 year capital programme.
- You will have longer term revenue financial planning which is linked to longer term service demands.
- There will be a move towards favouring investments that yield higher benefits over the longer term at the expense of shorter term measures with lower long term gains.
- Proactively explaining progress towards long term objectives and being open and honest when these are not being met.



What does sustainable development look like in a council?

Effective challenge and scrutiny based on sound evidence

Relying on long-held assumptions has the potential to limit the progress that can be made in service delivery. An approach that applies the principles of sustainable development would seek to challenge assumptions using sound evidence.

The role of overview and scrutiny is perhaps one specific function within local government where these principles could be seen to be best exercised. That said, the principle of challenge based on sound evidence is one that should be exercised by all when making decisions, including all officers and members irrespective of their formal role. Recent work undertaken by the National Welsh Scrutiny Officers Network highlighted some of the key attributes of effective scrutiny, these included:

- Democratic accountability that drives improvement in public services. - "Better outcomes"
- Democratic decision making that is accountable, inclusive and robust. - "Better decisions"
- The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services. - "Better engagement"

How do I know if my council is taking the right steps?

- Your council will have a robust training programme for both members and officers which builds understanding of sustainable development principles in practice.
- You will have access to up-to-date information on the economic, environmental and social characteristics of the **area** in which your council provides services.
- Your scrutiny function will have proactively embraced the scrutiny attributes outlined above.
- Officers will be proactively providing you with longer term evidence such as trends on energy, climate, demography, water and employment which go beyond 10 years.
- Your scrutiny responsibilities will go beyond the boundary of your council into other bodies such as LSB's.
- Scrutiny, oversight and challenge will be seen by both members and officers as adding value rather than an unnecessary burden.
- Citizens will be playing an increasingly important and pivotal role within the council's decision making process.

What does sustainable development look like in a council?

Co-operation and integration

Delivery of services can become more effective through co-operation between services within a council, between separate councils, and between councils and other stakeholder organisations.

Co-operation brings opportunities by opening up more ambitious projects by pooling resources, improving the quality of work by bringing together different backgrounds and perspectives, realising efficiency gains by reducing duplication and sharing outputs, and reducing the risk of services working against one another in pursuit of different goals.

How do I know if my council are taking the right steps?

- You will have identified the relationship between your organisation and other organisations that deliver a service in the same area.
- You will have evaluated the use of existing partnership arrangements and networks to help deliver your objectives.
- You will have started to use data from different statutory / non-statutory sources to provide an integrated approach to delivering your services.
- You will have started to consider how to change how your organisation reports on its performance to simplify and integrate these arrangements with others. In particular the annual reporting and financial statement.



What does sustainable development look like in a council?

Engaging the community and citizens

Engaging the community with regards to sustainable development is about encouraging local people to become involved in the decisions and activities that affect their lives, and the lives of generations to come.

By supporting people working and learning together at a community level, we can deliver the changes that will make sustainable development happen. It is crucial to ensure that local communities are prepared to manage and instigate change effectively. Local Government engaging with communities on sustainable development is significant because:

- In order to build a sustainable future, there needs to be change implemented in the places where we work and live, how we live our individual lives, and as communities within a wider society.
- Government regulation and policy alone cannot achieve the required change.
- Local government is strongly linked and connected to the community.

How do I know if my council are taking the right steps?

- You will be engaging the community on issues that are of importance to them, to ensure that their views and priorities are best represented.
- There will be open planning and decision making processes with the community to gain new perspectives and ideas.
- Your council will have adopted the National Principles for Public Engagement⁴.
- Your strategic plans will be exclusively and demonstrably focused on the outcomes for people and communities.
- You will have a clear citizen communication strategy which will define the way in which the organisation engages with people and uses existing networks and structures for consultation to avoid duplication.
- You will have prepared, published (or updated) your 'Community Involvement Scheme' for the whole organisation (not just specific functions).
- Citizens from all sectors and age groups are involved in setting, co-creating and developing strategy and policy – not just the usual suspects.

⁴ National Principles for public engagement from Participation
cymru <http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles>

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

Community leader

As an elected member you have many roles within the Council, each of which presents different opportunities for improvement by embracing sustainable development. This section provides you with some tips on applying sustainable development principles and key questions you may wish to use to start challenging your thinking and those of your fellow councillors and officers to help support sustainable decision making.

For the individual councillor, acting as a community leader is a vital part of promoting and supporting sustainable development throughout your ward. Ways to include sustainable development would be:

- Leading by example with sustainable development.
- Ensuring all stakeholder groups are fully engaged.
- Managing resource distribution effectively for your ward and others.
- Planning for the long-term as well as the short-term

Here are a few questions you should consider to get you thinking about the significance of sustainable development in your role as a "community leader":



- Q: How might the best interests of my ward differ between the short-term and the long-term future?
- Q: Do I have the sufficient robust evidence/information on which to base my short, medium and longer term decision making?
- Q: What are some opportunities to become more fully engaged with stakeholder groups across my ward?
- Q: What has changed as a result of my engagement with stakeholders?
- Q: Which partner organisations could be influenced on sustainable development through leading by example?
- Q: How could community organisations and local businesses be encouraged to develop sustainable solutions for themselves and in partnership with the council?
- Q: In what areas could promoting the best interests of my ward be detrimental to other wards?
- Q: Have I ever encountered any conflicts of interest with other wards arising from resource competition?

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

Overview & scrutiny

Members on overview and scrutiny committees can play a significant role in enhancing sustainable development in their local areas. You have an opportunity to review and analyse current policies to ensure that sustainable development is at the forefront of local government thinking; providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate, to help influence future strategy and drive forward improvement.

Here are a few questions you should consider to get you thinking about the significance of sustainable development in your role as a scrutiny member:



- Q: What are the economic, social and environmental impacts: of the policies/projects/ issues under review?
- Q: Does my scrutiny work programme include oversight of longer term policy decisions?
- Q: To what extent are decisions being made assessing the needs of future generations?
- Q: Have the policies and decisions under review considered both the short-term and long-term economic, social and environmental impacts?
- Q: Are these decisions based on robust long term evidence?
- Q: In what ways is performance around sustainable development identified, measured and measured in my scrutiny committee?
- Q: Does my scrutiny committee include sustainable development experts, or am I consulting with appropriate sustainable experts outside the committee when reviewing policies and decisions?

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

The Executive

Being a member of a Cabinet will mean you are in an excellent position to drive forward sustainable development when making collective strategic decisions on policy, budgets and future delivery structures.

Here are a few questions you should consider to get you thinking about the significance of sustainable development in your role as a councillor on or influencing the Executive:



- Q: When developing policies, have I fully considered sustainable development and have the short and longer term economic, social and environmental impacts been taken into account?
- Q: When reviewing capital investment proposals do I consider the “whole life” costs in reaching my decision?
- Q: When deciding on policy do I consider both the long term and short term future of my local area?
- Q: In what ways am I measuring my sustainable development performance?
- Q: Do I consult with appropriate sustainable development experts (officer or external consultants) when discussing and deciding on future policy?
- Q: When planning for my portfolio area, how do I consider the impacts on other portfolio areas?
- Q: To what extent do I genuinely consider working with other stakeholders, (other public bodies, the third sector, and private sector) to achieve the council’s strategic objectives?

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

Planning

The planning system is in many ways aimed at enabling sustainable development. Through both development plans and the development management process, planning must provide for homes, infrastructure, investment and jobs in a way which are consistent with sustainability principles. It assesses sustainability through applying a series of assessment criteria used in determining planning applications, such as:

proximity of new development to public transport	housing density	Brownfield before Greenfield	proximity to support services – shops, health, education, employment
potential for reducing car journey lengths	opportunities for walking and cycling	Green Travel Plan	detailed design and site orientation
energy efficiency in completed buildings and during construction	renewable energy generation on site	waste reduction	sustainable drainage



When considering proposals and making decisions planning members should assess sustainability by:

- being aware of the advice in Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Notes <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/policyindex/?lang=en>
- considering LDP policies;
- thinking how the development relates to other uses;
- considering if the development is accessible by different modes of transport; and
- considering whether it is an efficient use of land.

In doing so members will need to have regard to other considerations such as:

- employment generation;
- whether alternative locations exist for the development; and

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

Planning



For further information see the WLGA's Members' Planning handbook: <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/publications-and-consultation-responses-imp/planning-handbook-a-guide-for-local-authority-members/> Planning Handbook - A Guide for Local Authority Members: Publications and Consultation Responses: Improvement and Governance: Topics: Welsh Local Government Association (from page 66).

There will often be a considerable amount of information and detail that members need to take into account. Sometimes some of the elements may compete against each other to varying degrees and careful consideration needs to be given to the weight to be attached to the different aspects.

However, in conjunction with the detailed planning hand book here are a few questions you should consider to get you thinking about the significance of sustainable development in your role as a councillor involved in development of the LDP or development management.



- Q: When considering local planning applications am I taking into account the economic, social and environmental impacts before making a decision?
- Q: Does the proposed new development provide an opportunity for new local jobs and to what extent am I clear about managing potential conflicts such as, environment V development, in my decision making?
- Q: Where relevant, do I know the BREEAM⁵ rating of a proposed development and is there an opportunity to improve it?
- Q: Before making a decision regarding planning applications, are all of the appropriate stakeholders being properly consulted?
- Q: Has the overall planning framework/policy been challenged to ensure it looks to support the Council's long term sustainable development objectives over the next 50 years?
- Q: Am I confident that I have taken the necessary expert advice from offices and others before making my decision?



My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

Licensing

The granting and approving of licenses can have an impact on sustainable development. For example, the granting of licenses for establishments serving alcohol can impact on the health service, law enforcement and tourism. The number of taxi licenses issued will impact on carbon emissions and the local public transport strategy. However, as licensing committees are quasi-judicial, committee members need to take account of the legal constraints on what can be taken into consideration when making decisions. This means that you will need to have regard to the facts made in the application for a licence (or when varying or revoking licences on the evidence provided by for example council officers or the police) rather than issues of sustainability.

My role as a councillor - Am I asking the right questions?

The Employer

Being a member of the Council will also involve acting as an employer. Your employee base is one of your key resources and often the council is one of the largest local employers, therefore any decision you make around your employees will have an important part to play in implementing a sustainable development approach.

In 2012 the UK's first national subjective wellbeing report published by the ONS highlighted that having a job has a positive impact on people's "happiness/wellbeing". "Research shows how employee engagement in public services delivers trust and public confidence as an end result, in the same way it as it does profit in the private sector. Councils with good employee engagement have higher resident satisfaction and an IDeA study showed that engagement and leadership are stronger influences on performance than levels of pay. Research also shows that staff are more engaged when they are consulted, valued and see the value that their organisation is creating. Much of which is core to SD thinking.

Here are a few questions you should consider to get you thinking about the significance of sustainable development in your role as a councillor and as an employer of a significant number of employees:

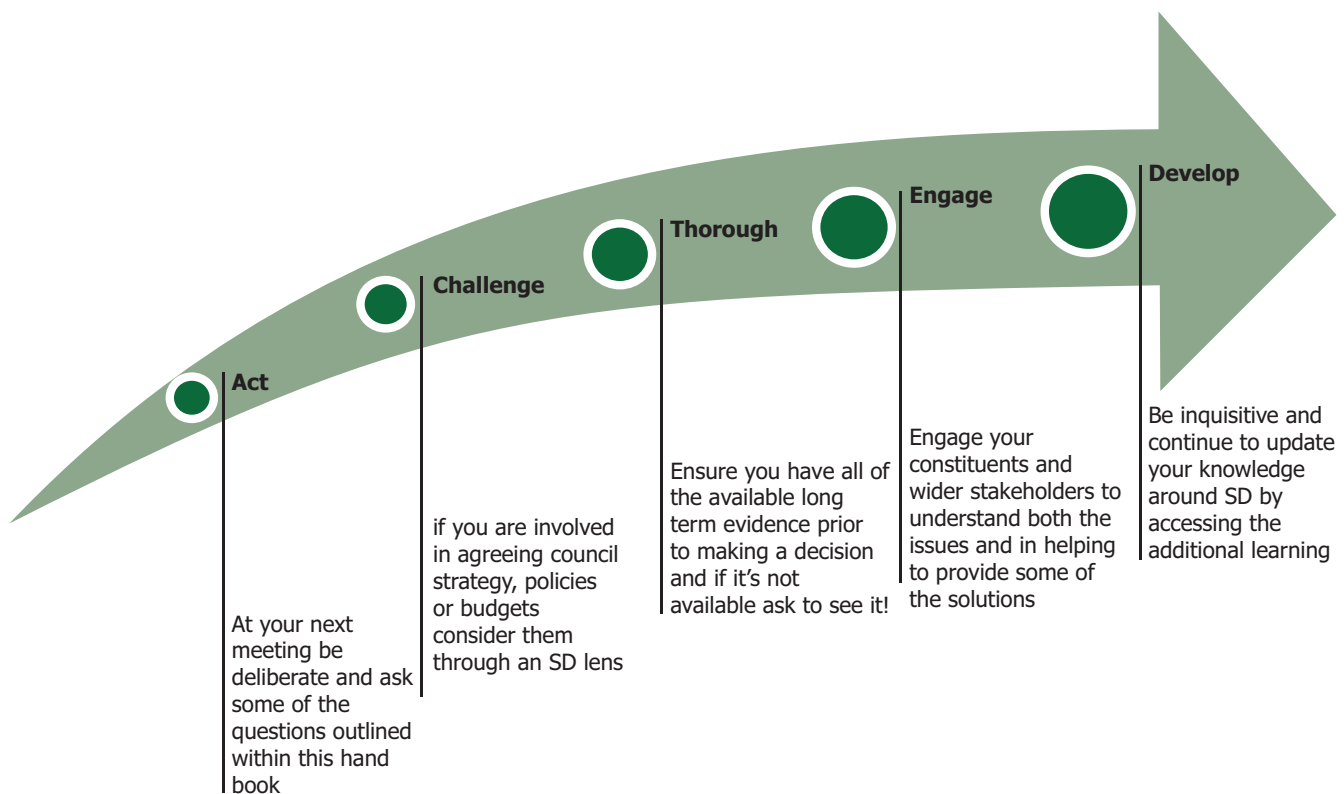


- Q: Am I clear about our current and future human capital requirements – and have these requirements been considered through a sustainable development lens?
- Q: Are the Council employees fully aware of the opportunities and risks that exist around sustainable development and how they can support members in delivering our SD objectives?
- Q: What mechanisms do we use to consult our workforce?
- Q: To what extent do I value, reward or incentivise staff to be innovative in their work?
- Q: What is our staff turnover and sickness rates, how could I support our staff to help reduce these?
- Q: How could I engage staff in shaping decisions on future strategy and what benefits would this bring?
- Q: Are there opportunities to better consult staff on issues that affect them?
- Q: How could I encourage a stronger health & safety culture in our organisation, and what impacts would this have on productivity?
- Q: How could I encourage and support employees' personal development?
- Q: Are staff encouraged to volunteer both time and their skill set to help support the local community?

What can I do next?

The role of the councillor has never been more challenging. Representing local constituents in an environment with diminishing resources and competing priorities can be complex. However there are significant benefits that the right decisions can afford to both current and future generations.

This Member hand book has sought to provide you with some of the context and tools to better equip you in discharging this responsibility effectively. However without practice, knowledge and tools become obsolete. Therefore we would encourage you to take the following steps in embedding and improving your understanding and application of sustainable decision making by following the **A.C.T.E.D** principles:



Where can I go for more information?

The first natural source for additional information will probably be your Member support officers who will be able to best connect you to the officers within the Council or within other organisation who will be able to help you with any specific questions. However, there is also plenty of other resource material available on line. Below is a list of additional material which will help you explore the issues of Sustainability further and provide examples of where others are engaged in meeting the challenges.



Ref	Name of resource	Link
1	WLGA - Sustainable Development Tools and thought leadership	http://www.wlga.gov.uk/sustainabledevelopment-framework/
2	PwC – Sustainable Development Webpages	http://www.pwc.co.uk/sustainability-climate-change/index.jhtml
3	Forum for the Future SD webpages	http://www.forumforthefuture.org/
4	LGA – Environment webpages	http://www.local.gov.uk/environmentplanning-and-housing
5	Sustainable Development Commission – Now decommissioned, however learning material is still available	http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/what-is-sustainable-development.html
6	Cynnal Cymru (Sustain Wales) – web pages	http://www.cynnalcymru.com/
7	DEFRA – Sustainable Development policy Impact test	https://www.gov.uk/sustainable-development-impact-test
8	European Commission – SD web pages	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/