

WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL POWER OF WELL-BEING – ASSESSMENT

Heading	County Council Assessment	Welshpool Town Council –What is Welshpool Town Council doing
Travelling around Powys	<p>Powys has one of the worst, poorly maintained road networks in Wales, with 5,500km of roads, 1.49 billion kilometres of road traffic (2015), and relatively low traffic congestion. As the elderly population increases, this may have a potential impact on healthcare and statutory services. Most people use their own vehicles for regular travel, only 1% of the population use public buses and people are dissatisfied with the bus service .Powys has 2 railway lines (The Cambrian Powys Well-being Assessment 2016 - Framework 15 Line running through Welshpool and Newtown towards Aberystwyth, and The Heart of Wales lines running from Craven Arms to Llanelli) carrying 110,000 passengers a year. Transport services across Powys are not integrated with other county providers and therefore not making best use of our resources.</p>	<p>There have been improvements to the transport in Welshpool in the last 2 years. There are five particular points to make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The rail service is now much improved and discussions are taking place to gain a full hourly service. b) The Town Bus now integrates with the trains. c) There is now a preferred location for a central bus station. d) The National Express Bus now stops at the Tourist Information Office giving support to passengers. e) The Tourist Information Office has information (open 7 days a week) and sells National Express Bus and main line railway tickets.

<p>Poverty and Deprivation</p>	<p>Some areas of Powys are very deprived, due to many people in part time employment (46% of women work part-time) or on very low pay. In 2016, average weekly pay in Powys was £366 (Wales: £407, UK: £439). This was a fall of £15 per week in Powys since 2015, whilst Wales rose by £19 and UK by £14. The unemployment rate is 1% (1.3% male, 0.8% female) and Powys has a low number of workless households (15.3%, Wales: 19.4%) Fuel poverty is high due to lack of access to cheaper fuels such as gas. Home ownership rates are in decline among the younger generation and people are remaining in the rental sector. Travel times to GP surgeries and other public services are extremely poor, Ystradgynlais, in particular is in the worst 10% of areas in Wales.</p>	<p>The Town Council is very aware of the issues and have been working with local people to help. The points of note are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A booklet setting out how to get help (in plain language) is being prepared. b) The Easter Egg Hunt, Dragon Hunt around Town together with the Annual Fireworks Display and the Carnival are free. c) We give time to give advice to those locally who need it.
<p>Suitable accommodation for older people</p>	<p>As our elderly population increases, there will be more demand for suitable accommodation options. By 2035, more people are expected to be living alone and the number of people with dementia is also expected to increase. We will need to accommodate citizens within their local communities, whether that is in their own home, in sheltered or extra care accommodation, or a nursing home.</p>	<p>The Town Council has a substantial land holding. The first phase of development at Red Bank has just been completed providing 23 affordable homes with Mid Wales Housing. The Town Council will support initiatives that produce a result giving provision of sheltered housing. The provision of 30% plus affordable housing sounds good on paper but not deliverable in practice. A lesser percentage and actually getting the units is a much more sustainable approach.</p>

<p>Employment and Skills</p>	<p>Economic activity rates are high in Powys, and we have a very low rate of people claiming unemployment benefits. There are low numbers of people seeking work and productivity in Powys is low compared with the UK, possibly as a result of the large number of people working in part time jobs. Regeneration currently signposts businesses to potential sources of information, advice and funding and plays active role to locate premises. We also help to provide business support to individuals and start-up companies.</p>	<p>The Town Council supports business and in turn the employment growth as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Working with business through the business forum. b) Working with Tourist Attractions through the Tourism Meetings held. c) Publications to support Tourism. d) The Council has an equality policy which has been implemented – we have 24 staff – 3 under 25 – 2 over 65 – 3 disabled.
<p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Although superfast broadband has been enabled in many areas of Powys, mobile coverage and internet speeds remain poor in many rural areas of Powys. By June 2017, 96% of Powys should have access to superfast broadband due to the Superfast Cymru project. Housing affordability (average house price vs average salary) is preventing people from remaining in Powys and poor road and rail links are also reducing access to employment in terms of convenient travel times and suitable connections.</p>	<p>The poor signal on phones in Welshpool will be improved soon with a new aerial being erected on the Town Hall.</p> <p>The reason many developers do not build in Powys is the Planning Culture which is not conducive to be over helpful.</p> <p>The road links to Welshpool are OK, we accept most other areas do not have a good road network.</p> <p>The rail service is much improved and the Town Council has been very much involved in that.</p> <p>The Town Council will continue to work with operators and Welsh Government to improve our rail services.</p>

<p>Energy in Housing</p>	<p>Many of our homes are not energy efficient and not connected to the gas network. The majority of these homes rely on other, more carbon intensive forms of heating such as oil, liquid petroleum gas, and coal, which are generally less economical to run. Electricity consumption is high compared to the rest of Wales. As energy prices increase, people are finding it increasingly difficult to heat their homes.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. Welshpool is lucky that it has gas in the Town.</p>
<p>Employment and Skills Infrastructure</p>	<p>Economic activity rates are high in Powys, and we have a very low rate of people claiming unemployment benefits. There are low numbers of people seeking work and productivity in Powys is low compared with the UK, possibly as a result of the large number of people working in part time jobs. Regeneration currently signposts businesses to potential sources of information, advice and funding and plays active role to locate premises. We also help to provide business support to individuals and start-up companies.</p>	<p>The Town Council supports this viewpoint. The Town Council is working with local business and the tourism industry to create a platform where more people are employed.</p>

<p>Health Inequalities</p>	<p>Life expectancy in Powys is above average for Wales and continues to improve. However there has been a growing inequality gap appearing between genders, with females tending to outlive males, as well as between the least and most well off (not yet to Powys Well-being Assessment 2016 –Framework 8 levels of statistical significant, Public Health Wales). This gap is expected to widen over the next 10 years. Healthy life expectancy is also unequally distributed.</p> <p>58% of adults are overweight or obese (Wales 59%), yet Powys citizens are generally healthier than the rest of Wales. 20% of adults smoke (Wales: 20%) and 24% of adults in Powys binge drink at least once a week (Wales: 24%). This will put a strain on health services in the county.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with these findings. The Town Council is not sure it has a particular role that would help here.</p>
<p>Exclusions -Free School meal attainment</p>	<p>Powys has the lowest percentage of children entitled to free school meals in Wales. Current data shows an attainment gap between students who do receive free school meals and those who don't. The number of exclusions has remained consistent, with some variation between schools.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of the situation. The Town Council is not sure it can help with a direct role.</p>

<p>Child Obesity</p>	<p>The majority of four to five year old children in Powys are of a healthy weight. However this is not evenly distributed, 28.4% of the most deprived fifth of 4-5 year old children in Powys are overweight or obese compared with 20.9% of the least deprived fifth. The overall rate of overweight or obese four to five year olds has remained at just under 25% in recent years.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of the situation. The Town Council is not sure it can help with a direct role.</p>
<p>Young mental well-being</p>	<p>People are increasingly using mental health services in Powys, particularly young people. This is placing more pressure on the service. This increase is partly attributed to improved access to information and counselling services.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of the situation. The Town Council is not sure it can help with a direct role.</p>
<p>Violence against women</p>	<p>In 2016 Powys has seen a 10% rise in the number of domestic violence incidents being reported, compared with 2015 which appears to be more prevalent in the north of Powys, where BME (Black, Minority and Ethnic) and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) groups are also more likely to be affected. Many crimes are still not reported, and the number of incidents is expected to rise over the coming years. This rise continues an existing trend with an overall increase of 75% since 2010.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of the situation. The Town Council is not sure it can help with a direct role.</p>

<p>Educational Attainment</p>	<p>Powys schools have shown an improvement in attainment in recent years, but there is some variation. There is also variation in Estyn inspection outcomes, particularly in the secondary sector. Sixth forms are also facing increased competition from other providers, with increasing numbers of students choosing to study outside the county or in England.</p>	<p>The Town Council does work closely with schools. The Town Council has a Youth Council which has met at the High School regularly since 2008.</p> <p>The Town Council also involves the schools in the Towns projects such as design of playgrounds and sculptures etc.</p>
<p>Business Growth</p>	<p>Powys has a high proportion of micro businesses, although we have seen a 3% growth in Powys, this is lower than the Welsh average (8%). Self-employment is high, and a large proportion of the population are working part-time jobs on a below average salary. There is also a high reliance on the public sector as a source of employment.</p>	<p>The Town Council has done a number of things to aid business many of which have aided the Town being as good as it is. There are no empty industrial units and only 3 empty shops out of 167 with 3 new large companies moving into town (Aldi, B&M and Pets at Home).</p> <p>The actions taken are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Working with business getting rents lowered in the 2008-2014 period. b) Working with business through the Business Forum when meets most months. c) Provision of events to bring people into the Town. d) With 45% of Welshpool visitor stopping on their way to somewhere else the taking over of the toilets and Tourist Information Centre was essential. e) The Town has a Coach Friendly Scheme in place.

<p>Reduced public funding</p>	<p>Since 2012/13, Powys has seen a £17.7 million pound reduction in funding from the Welsh Government. Combined with increased service pressures, this has resulted in a number of shortfalls across the organisation. In order to produce a balanced budget for 2016/17 and future years, savings of £29.9 million will be required. In order to meet this challenge, we have transferred some services to town and community councils and other local organisations. Services such as leisure centres, libraries and local museums, as well as the maintenance of town and village halls, recreation grounds and reduced third sector funding.</p>	<p>The funding cuts, however they have come about, have been made worse by a number of actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The retaining of the local government pension scheme for new people – such a scheme has been unaffordable for a decade or more. b) The inability to make a decision and stick by it, delaying actions means deeper and more damaging cuts later. <p>The Town Council has a policy of retaining services for its residents and has in turn tried to help the County Council by taking over services. This has been achieved with the Tourist Information Centre, Public Toilets, Day Centre, Playgrounds, Flower Beds, Open Spaces and Street Scene.</p> <p>However, when services are taken over on the premise that they were going to be withdrawn only to find they are not is double taxation and this situation needs to be addressed.</p>
<p>Young Carers</p>	<p>The number of young carers is increasing, with most providing up to 19 hours of care. Some young carers, due to their responsibilities, are missing out on school time. This can have an effect on their education and future prospects. Due to the increasing elderly population, more young people are finding themselves with caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of this situation To try and help the Town Council Day Centre takes emergency placements where needed for day care.</p>

<p>Vulnerable Children</p>	<p>The most common age group of vulnerable children is 10-15 years old, this makes it hard to find suitable foster parents as their needs are greater. More children are being placed on the child protection register, with neglect being the most common reason. The number of cases referred to the Youth Justice Service has fallen since 2010, along with the number of children in need. Adverse childhood experiences are stressful experiences during childhood. Preventing adverse childhood experiences from happening can benefit not only those children but also future generations.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p>
<p>Reduced child population</p>	<p>The number of children in Powys is expected to decrease over the next 10 years. There has been a drop in birth rates since 1991, it is estimated that by 2035 there will be 20% fewer 0-2 year olds in Powys (these figures are estimates). In addition, many young people are choosing to leave Powys to attend education or seek employment. This change in the population is expected to have a number of negative effects on services such as schools, due to projected falling pupil numbers, increasing cost of services, and weakening of our economy.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p>

<p>Carers</p>	<p>Powys has a total of 16,154 unpaid carers, 65% of these are over 50 and 39% are retired. Their health is typically below average, and some carers are now providing more than 50 hours of care each week. Unpaid carers are more prevalent in the south of Powys, particularly around Ystradgynlais. The number of unpaid carers is expected to increase over the coming years due to the increasing ageing population.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of this situation To try and help the Town Council Day Centre takes emergency placements where needed for day care.</p>
<p>Living independently</p>	<p>More people over 65 are now living on their own in Powys, there are 19,000 lone person households out of a total of 59,100 households (2015). Many people are finding it increasingly difficult to perform basic domestic tasks. A total of 859 clients are supported by domiciliary care in Powys, a lack of infrastructure and assistive technology has reduced the viability of independent living. Despite this, there has been an increase in the number of adult clients supported in the county.</p>	<p>The Town Council is aware of the aging population and that nearly 30% are over 60 and rising. This was the reason the Town Council took over the Day Centre and is willing to work with the County Council and other agencies to aid helping seniors thought this work.</p>

<p>Enjoying the Environment</p>	<p>The natural environment of Powys -our mountains, rivers, lakes and lowland landscapes give us a fantastic environment in which to live, work and enjoy. They provide a backdrop for the tourist industry and help us lead healthier and better lives. However, from the 9,250km of rights of way in Powys, 40% are open and easy to use, however transport links do not make it easy to enjoy the environment.</p>	<p>The Town Council promotes the area through its VISIT WELSHPOOL web site, leaflets and events.</p> <p>The Town Council is working with Welsh Government and other agencies to secure a better train service delivery (there have been more trains since 2015).</p>
<p>Public Protection</p>	<p>Powys has the lowest number of crimes Overall and the lowest crime rate per 1000 population (Dyfed Powys Police). Crime appears to have risen in Powys over the past several years, this is due to changes in the recording of crime. There has been an increase in certain crimes in Powys such as sexual offences, doorstep crime and cyber-crime. Newtown has the highest crime rate (21.5%) compared with other areas of Powys (Brecon is ranked second: 15.7% and Llanfair Caereinion is lowest with 2.19%).</p>	<p>The Town Council has a good working relationship with the Neighbourhood Policing Team and with Police at Inspector level. Currently the Council is working with the Police on the minor drinking problem in Welshpool.</p> <p>The Town Council hosts a full CCTV system which is digital and well maintained. The Police have access to this at all times.</p>

<p>Children with Disabilities</p>	<p>Autistic spectrum disorder is the most common presentation of disability within children in Powys. In 2016, 155 open cases were referred to the team (a decrease of 13% since 2012). From our caseload, 52% of children with disabilities live in north Powys.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p>
<p>Climate Change</p>	<p>The global climate is changing, including rising sea levels, increasing Carbon Dioxide emissions and higher average temperatures. This could lead to increased instances of flooding in some areas, damage to ecosystems, and increased pests and diseases.</p>	<p>A sensible approach needs to be made to this subject. Currently rules are too prescriptive which inhibits getting a good result overall.</p> <p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p>
<p>Prevention</p>	<p>More people are regularly active in Powys than in the rest of Wales, nearly 58% adults are overweight or obese and this is predicted to continue to rise. Powys adults report significantly higher levels of emotional well-being than in the rest of Wales, and the assets required for healthy communities appear to be more prevalent in Powys than elsewhere. According to Age UK, 6-13% of the elderly are often or always lonely, and social isolation is associated with an increased risk of death from any cause (Welsh Government, 2014)</p>	<p>The Town Council promotes sport and supports sports organisations through the sports fields, clubs and a Festival of Sport being started up again in 2017.</p>

<p>Community services</p>	<p>12,900 people are employed in the public sector (2016). A variety of services are provided by the public sector such as 98 schools, 17 branch libraries and 2 mobile libraries, 16 leisure centres, 10 hospitals, 18 fire stations and 14 police stations. The voluntary sector involves over 4,000 groups contributing an estimated £174 million to the economy. Powys Powys Well-being Assessment 2016 -Framework12 has lots of small communities with strong community spirit. 81% of respondents agreed that Powys is a safe place for children to play outside. Other Welsh councils with the highest rating are Anglesey and Gwynedd.</p>	<p>The Town Council promotes the Community Spirit in Welshpool in a number of ways as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Community Awards presented on Mayors Sunday each year. b) A range of events bringing volunteers together to run them. c) A Volunteers reception each year to say thank you to those who have helped with events and other Council activities during the year. d) The Council also promotes community involvement with many consultation routes. e) The Council has a newsletter which goes to every home 4 times a year. f) The Council has a full Welsh Government compliant Web Site which is kept up to date daily. g) The Council uses Social Media to communicate on a daily basis. h) The Councillors and the Town Clerk with his staff are all well known to the Community and an 'open door' policy is applied.
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<p>Resilient environment</p>	<p>A healthy, resilient environment creates the conditions for a thriving and sustainable society. We have large areas of woodland (15%), nature reserves and 80 sites of special scientific interest (SSSI). Just over 70% of the land in Powys is farmed. 85% of Powys is classed as Less Favoured Area, these are areas where agriculture activity is considered difficult. Powys has good air quality and has lower CO2 emissions than the rest of Wales (6.7 tonnes per person compared to 8.7 tonnes for Wales). Evidence shows that our natural environment continues to be put under pressure, for example, several water sources in Powys are contaminated with pollutants and 6,650 properties are at risk from flooding.</p>	<p>The Town Council does it bit to create conditions for a sustainable society such as providing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A country park with adventure playground. b) 5 other playgrounds all in good order. c) Dog walking areas at the top of Red Bank. d) Public access to Outer Park (part of Powis Estates) for public walking in including dogs. e) Provision of dog and litter bins in over 100 locations in the Town. f) The provision of the street scene to ensure the environment is tidy and safe.
<p>Renewable Energy</p>	<p>Powys saves the largest amount of Carbon Dioxide and is also the largest low carbon generator in Wales in the biomass, onshore wind, and solar thermal sectors. Photovoltaic solar cells make up a total of 60% of all renewable energy projects in Powys.</p>	<p>This is where we might be seen to divulge. The Town Council does not support large scale wind farms where they are supported by a pylon line which will in turn destroy the landscape and tourism that you purport to support.</p>

<p>Your Local Environment</p>	<p>Recycling rates are increasing in Powys, from 50.9% (2012/13) to 59.1% (2015/16). Wales increased 7.9% during the same period. The number of fly tipping incidents remains below the rest of Wales. We are seeing increased incidents of dog fouling, poor high way cleanliness and graffiti. Recycling remains prominent in terms of a situation that the public feel strongly about.</p>	<p>The Town Council does recycle where ever it can. The Town also put in place the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Removal of fly tipping within a few hours. b) Removal of graffiti when it appears within a few hours. c) Dog Control Orders on all Town Council land. d) Emptying of litter bins on a more regular basis keeps litter down to a minimum.
<p>Tourism</p>	<p>Tourism has continued to grow and provide a £720 million investment to the local economy. Montgomeryshire has the most tourists staying overnight, and southern localities towards Brecon have more day visitors. Tourism is the most prominent in rural areas, with food and drink representing the largest section of the industry in terms of income. There was nearly a 6% growth in tourism during 2014-15, and this may continue in the Powys Well-being Assessment 2016 Framework 13 short term, however there is a risk of tourist numbers going into decline in the future if promotional services do not continue.</p>	<p>It is a pity that Powys says it supports Tourism yet appears to do very little. Closing of toilets, tourist information offices, poor web site and minimal printed material for visitors.</p> <p>The Town Council is doing the following for Tourism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Visit Welshpool Web Site b) Maps and local attraction information booklet including a Town Guide c) Events booklet listing all local events taking place in the Town d) Provision of a fully networked Tourist Information Centre e) Surveys and support to the Welsh Government via the Shrewsbury Aberystwyth Rail Liaison Committee

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<p>Childcare Sufficiency</p>	<p>There are enough childcare places at present to meet need. However, they are not evenly distributed around the county, leaving some areas with a surplus of places and others with a deficit. Demand for childcare places will increase from September 2017 following changes to the admission age for children to start school. Schools will now only have one intake of pupils at the start of the school year (September) following a child's fourth birthday. Welsh Government runs a three year old funded education scheme which provides 10 hours of free childcare per week in a pre-school setting.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p> <p>The Town Council is at a loss as to why with falling numbers the Welsh Medium School is not located on the same site as the Church in Wales School to be built. This is more cost effective and gives flexibility in the future with changing role numbers.</p>
<p>Mental Health</p>	<p>Improving mental health is a critical issue for people of all ages and its impact is cross cutting, affecting life chances, learning, home life, employment, safety, physical health independence and life expectancy. One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, and 25% of GP consultations are used for people with mental health problems. 11 years is the average time lost to life for males with mental health problems. Women with mental health problems on average lose six years. 8% of the Powys population report being treated for depression or anxiety and it is one of the top three leading causes of disability.</p>	<p>The Town Council agrees with this finding. The Town Council is not sure it can help directly.</p>

Dementia	Dementia prevalence increases with age, roughly doubling every five years for people aged over 65 years. Dementia affects 20% of people over 80 years of age in the UK and one in 14 people over 65. In Powys it is thought that only 39.6% of the projected number of people with dementia have a diagnosis. It is estimated there are 4,256 people in Powys aged over 65 with dementia.	<p>The Town Council supports the Dementia Group in Welshpool through funding and secretarial support. Welshpool is also a Dementia Friendly Town. All staff are all trained to be Dementia Friendly.</p> <p>The Day Centre (run by Welshpool Town Council) hosts a place for people to go with dementia in a safe environment.</p>
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NOTE:

This assessment and action plan is to be reviewed annually at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

*R A Robinson FRICS FILCM
Town Clerk
Welshpool Town Council
May 2017*