4th March 2013

Dear Colleague,

**Cardiff Partnership Response: - Sustainable Development Bill: Helping Shape a Better Future for Wales**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the Sustainable Development Bill. The Bill was included as an agenda item at the December meetings of the Cardiff Partnership and there was a clear consensus amongst group members that sustainable development should be a central organising principle of the Welsh Government and Welsh public service organisations.

The new duty requires sustainable development to be embedded within strategic decision making processes to clearly identify the outcomes that organisations are working towards. We will reflect on the most appropriate mechanism for demonstrating this in due course, however Cardiff has already taken the progressive step of integrating four previously separate statutory strategies under seven shared outcomes in its Single Integrated Plan, “What Matters”.

The seven outcomes clearly represent long term aspirations relating to economic, social and environmental well-being. The new approach to collaboration in Cardiff also provides clear governance arrangements for partnership working. It allows for a consistent approach to performance management designed to demonstrate how individual projects and interventions impact the broader outcomes.

In this way, the Cardiff Partnership has pre-empted many of the requirements of the Bill. We have strengthened our partnership governance framework in relation to sustainable development and secured better decision making to improve the wellbeing of the city.

The Partnership therefore welcomes the recognition within the Bill that public service providers are required to work together at both local and regional levels in order to achieve shared outcomes. This level of collaboration is essential to achieving the outcomes that matter most to citizens.

It is therefore important that local collaboration is enshrined in statute. This is particularly relevant as there is a real concern that, given budgetary pressures,
individual organisations may retrench from the level of collaboration needed to achieve meaningful change in priority areas.

The Cardiff Partnership would therefore encourage the Welsh Government to legislate, through the Sustainable Development Bill, and put the Local Service Board on a statutory footing.

This is also important as there is a clear need to establish an appropriate mechanism for coordinating a number of funding streams previously administered by the separate statutory partnerships.

The Local Service Boards across Wales could ensure that, as partnerships are integrated, different funding streams are coordinated effectively to achieve shared outcomes. This would also ensure that all key local service providers have the opportunity to influence how spending is allocated with due regard given to sustainable development.

There is also a role for the Sustainable Development Bill in fostering further collaboration between local authorities. As it stands there is no real framework which allows sustainable development to become embedded in organisations and this needs to be strengthened if this is to become a reality. The best example of this is the Local Development Plan process which will have a huge impact on sustainable development yet there seems to be little in the legislation that compels local authorities to work together. This Bill could go someway to achieving this aspiration; however Welsh legislation does not compel local authorities, or other public sector organisations, to work together, which will lead to a less sustainable outcome for Wales. For instance, Sustainable Development is heavily embedded within our LDP process in Cardiff, but the framework is not currently in place to facilitate collaborative approaches between local authorities on housing allocations and transport solutions on a regional level. This is important to maximise well being across Wales.

In addition, whilst recognising that the SD Bill must focus on processes that can be applied across all areas of decision-making, it would be helpful if the Welsh Government use the Bill to highlight cross-cutting issues that foster practical collaboration to delivers real and measurable change on the ground.

A recent example of this in Cardiff has been the development of a city-wide Food Charter and sustainable food programme, under the auspices of the Cardiff Food Council. The aim of the programme is to use food as a common vehicle for engaging a number of stakeholders with health and sustainability issues. By bringing seemingly disparate areas of work together organisations can maximise social, economic and environmental outcomes.
Looking forward, the challenge for all partners invested in achieving a genuinely sustainable future is about more than simply demonstrating sustainable development as a guiding principle. It is about collaborating effectively at all levels of government – including working nationally, regionally, at a local authority level and directly with both Community Councils and communities themselves to exploit opportunities that promote the well-being of our areas.

We trust you will find this response useful and we look forward to taking this important agenda forward, together.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Heather Joyce
Leader of Cardiff Council and
Chair of the Cardiff Partnership Leadership Group