

## Partnership Council for Wales – 2 March 2023

### **Programme for Government Commitment: ‘Keep regional partnership working under review with local partners’**

#### **Purpose**

1. To update Partnership Council for Wales on work underway to fulfil the Programme for Government / Co-operation Agreement commitment to ‘Keep regional partnership working under review with local partners’.
2. Members of Partnership Council will be asked for their views in relation to the questions for consideration at paragraph 17 as part of the discussion.

#### **Background and context**

##### *Review of Strategic Partnerships 2019-20*

3. A Review of Strategic Partnerships was undertaken jointly by the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh NHS Confederation in 2019-20, following a [recommendation by the Working Group on Local Government](#). The review team considered the broad partnership landscape to identify the key areas where it was felt there was unnecessary complexity or duplication, and opportunities for simplification and rationalisation in a focused and pragmatic way.
4. The [Review of Strategic Partnerships final report](#) made eleven recommendations reflecting practical actions to simplify the partnership landscape, but concluded there was no support for standing down any specific partnerships and the focus should be on partnerships being supported to simplify their own arrangements locally. It noted that in some parts of Wales, this had already happened. The report also recommended that Partnership Council for Wales should periodically review the partnership landscape to consider whether, when and where Welsh Government policy or legislative change may be required. The recommendations were [accepted by the Partnership Council for Wales](#) in June 2020.

##### *Programme for Government / Co-operation Agreement commitment*

5. The Welsh Government’s [Programme for Government](#) includes a commitment to ‘Keep regional partnership working under review with local partners’. This commitment also forms part of the [Co-operation Agreement](#) between Welsh Government and Plaid Cymru. The commitment aligns with, and can build on, the work and recommendations of the Review of Strategic Partnerships.
6. The key principle remains that any changes to partnership arrangements should be led locally, driven by what works best based on local priorities and existing relationships.

## **Engagement exercise to keep regional partnership working under review**

7. The Minister for Finance and Local Government and the Plaid Cymru Designated Member, Cefin Campbell MS, are conducting an engagement exercise with the chairs of a range of strategic partnerships to gather their reflections on progress to align partnership activity since the Review of Strategic Partnerships report in June 2020, and opportunities and barriers to accelerate that progress.
8. The partnerships in scope for the engagement exercise are largely those identified in the original Review of Strategic Partnerships.
9. To date, the Minister for Finance and Local Government and Designated Member have met with Chairs of the following partnerships as part of the engagement exercise:-

### Strategic Partnerships (multi-purpose)

- Public Services Boards
- Regional Partnership Boards

### Strategic Policy Partnerships (single purpose)

- Area Planning Boards (substance misuse)
- Community Safety Partnerships
- Regional Safeguarding Partnerships
- VAWDASV Partnerships

10. Officials have separately met with Regional Development Co-ordinators supporting Regional Housing Support Collaborative Groups, another of the partnerships in scope of the 2019-2020 review.
11. A further meeting with Mental Health Partnerships was planned for 30 January but unfortunately was postponed and new arrangements are being made for engagement with these partnerships.
12. The aim of the engagement exercise has been to systematically gather evidence to provide a solid basis to inform future action.
13. A semi-structured approach has been taken to each of the discussions, exploring what has happened since the review of strategic partnerships, with particular focus on:-
  - Activity undertaken, or planned, to ensure the partnership is aligned with the work of other partnerships in the area;
  - Opportunities and barriers locally to better align or rationalise partnerships;
  - Options to accelerate progress.
14. During the discussions, the Minister for Finance and Local Government has reaffirmed the commitment to work with partnerships to simplify and rationalise arrangements in their area where appropriate.

## **Next steps**

15. Following the remaining planned engagement, a full analysis of the evidence arising from the exercise will be undertaken. A report setting out key findings, conclusions and recommended actions will be put before Partnership Council for Wales in the summer, for discussion and agreement on the way forward – including the approach to future reviews.

## **Questions for Partnership Council's consideration**

16. The views of Partnership Council are welcomed to inform the Minister's and Designated Member's consideration, alongside the evidence gathered through the engagement exercise with chairs of strategic partnerships. It is recognised that some Members of Partnership Council may already have been part of discussions in their role as chairs of particular strategic partnerships. This is an opportunity for those Members to offer any further thoughts and for other Members to offer views.

17. Specifically, Members are asked for their views on:-

- Progress in rationalising or better aligning partnerships since the Review of Strategic Partnerships reported in June 2020.
- Opportunities for, and barriers to, better alignment between partnerships.
- How work to streamline and align partnerships in an area could be supported.
- Partnership Council's role in driving the recommended actions that emerge from this exercise.

**Local Government: Performance and Partnerships  
Welsh Government  
February 2023**