



An Inquiry Report of the:  
**Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee**

# **COMMUNITY SPORT IN CARDIFF: REGIONAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS**

January 2022



**Cardiff Council**

## CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	2
FOREWORD.....	3
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> .....	4
KEY FINDINGS .....	5
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	15
CURRENT PROVISION OF COMMUNITY SPORT .....	16
ROLE OF SPORT WALES RE COMMUNITY SPORT.....	17
LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN WALES .....	18
REGIONAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS.....	19
CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED .....	24
SWOT ANALYSIS.....	34
REORGANISATION – OTHER POSSIBILITIES .....	35
REORGANISATION – HOW TO PREPARE .....	35
SPORT NORTH WALES .....	36
APPROACH TAKEN.....	40
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b> .....	41
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b> .....	41
<b>COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE</b> .....	42

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## FOREWORD

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*I am grateful to all Members for their contributions to this scrutiny and to scrutiny officers for their support.*



**Chair, Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee**

**January 2022**

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To explore Sport Wales’s proposed Central South Community Sport and Activity programme to understand:
  - Progress to date re development of regional model
  - Proposed structure, governance, funding, and operation of regional model
  - Interface between community sports and the regional model
  - What success will look like.
- To consider the pilot Community Sport and Activity programme in North Wales:
  - Understand lessons learnt during the pilot
  - Identify lessons relevant to Central South
- To use the information gathered during the inquiry to:
  - undertake a SWOT analysis of the proposed Central South Community Sport and Activity programme
  - identify what Cardiff Council needs to do to prepare.
- To gather stakeholders’ views regarding the above, including partners, other local authorities included in Central South and relevant Cabinet Members and Cardiff Council officers.
- To make evidence-based recommendations to Cabinet regarding the Sport Wales Community Sport and Activity programme.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Reasons for Regional Sport Partnerships

KF1. The Welsh Government requires Sport Wales to maximise its contribution to achieving the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, with specified outcomes to boost activity for all and increase participation by those most in need or disadvantaged. Evidence indicates that women and girls, those with a disability, who live in poverty or who are from a BAME background are much less likely to be active or participate in sport more than 3 times a week.

KF2. In response to this, Sport Wales undertook comprehensive engagement to inform its new Vision for Sport. To deliver this vision, Sport Wales looked at regional sport partnership models used in England, Scotland, and New Zealand and developed a modified model they believe to be best suited for Wales. Following a business case analysis, Sport Wales proposed to split Wales into five regions, with Cardiff included in the Central South Regional Sport Partnership along with Bridgend, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Vale of Glamorgan.

KF3. Regional Sport Partnerships are the mechanism through which Sport Wales will direct its funding of community sport in a long-term approach. Sport Wales estimate that resource per Regional Sport Partnership will be circa £12million over 5 years.

### Rationale for Regional Sport Partnerships

KF4. Sport Wales stated the current ways of working are not sufficient to deliver the change required by Welsh Government and that Regional Sport Partnerships can deliver the scale of change required. A fresh approach, building on the success of current approaches, they promote a collaborative, insight-led, asset-based approach and enable collective learning. In addition, they can be used to boost the profile of sport, showing its added value in tackling not only physical and mental health and wellbeing, but community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, crime, skills development, and lifelong learning.

KF5. In addition, Sport Wales believe Regional Sport Partnerships enable the development of one plan for a region, which will assist partnership working and the ability to lever in additional funds, as well as the ability to remain focused on the local level, in terms of

engaging local communities and people and targeting investment creatively to provide the right delivery of services. In addition, they provide the opportunity to align resources and thus enhance funding, as well as the opportunity to take greater ownership of National Lottery funding.

KF6. Ultimately, Sport Wales stated Regional Sport Partnerships bring the opportunity to boost activity and increase participation. Members heard the need for this has been compounded by the impact of the covid pandemic.

KF7. The process of establishing Regional Sport Partnerships has commenced. Sport North Wales is live, with work advanced in Dyfed, Powys, and Gwent. In the Central South area, an Expression of Interest has been submitted by a loose consortium of all five local authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the two local health boards and Cardiff Metropolitan University, with the latter as the lead organisation. The Expression of Interest is non-binding.

KF8. Other witnesses to the Inquiry did not articulate many of the benefits detailed above but agreed, when prompted by Members, that the partnerships would enable partners to share and learn from one another, albeit that some witnesses questioned whether a whole new entity is required to achieve this.

### **Concerns about Regional Sport Partnerships**

KF9. The Inquiry found that there was recognition amongst witnesses of the need for change, with sport in Wales facing decreased resources due to reductions in overall government funding. However, the Inquiry also found several concerns about the proposed Regional Sport Partnerships. These concerns centred on the overall model, implementation process and the potential impact of regional sport partnerships.

### **Overall Model – governance and footprint**

KF10. Regarding the overall model, the Inquiry found concerns about governance and the proposed regional footprint. Sport Wales has deliberately not provided a governance framework to enable partnerships to self-determine the best structure for their area. However, the Inquiry found that the lack of a governance framework is anxiety-inducing for participants. Members are not convinced this is a workable approach for every area in

Wales, particularly an area such as Central South that has numerous contributors to the Regional Sport Partnership. Therefore, **this Inquiry concludes more guidance from Sport Wales is required to assist partners determine the best governance arrangements.**

KF11. The Inquiry also heard concerns regarding decision-making in Regional Sports Partnerships being based on one equal vote, which could result in funding moving from some of the most deprived communities in Cardiff if other members of the partnership prioritised other needs. **To avoid this, this Inquiry concludes it makes sense for decision making to recognise the populations of the areas involved and to ratio votes accordingly.**

KF12. Regarding the regional footprint, concerns expressed included that the area covered is too large and too diverse to work cohesively in one partnership. Central South covers an area where circa 1 million people live, which witnesses are concerned makes it too large to deliver appropriately targeted local programmes of community sport, needed to boost engagement and participation. In addition, the five local authority areas are diverse, with differing challenges and barriers facing their populations in becoming active and engaged in community sport. Concerns were expressed to the Inquiry that the Regional Sports Partnership may find it difficult to allocate reducing resources to equally valid but different priorities. **This could result in communities in Cardiff receiving a reduced service compared to current provision, with reduced engagement and participation, the direct opposite of the cited aims of regional sport partnerships.**

KF13. Sport Wales clarified that they would hold regional partners to account to ensure citizens needs are fairly met, using a range of data to ensure this. Sport Wales added that they see Regional Sport Partnerships as an opportunity for Cardiff to lead on BAME work and bring their insight, knowledge, and local intelligence to bear. They also highlighted that work in the early adopter, Sport North Wales, showed the need to have evidence-based discussions regarding specific needs and to work across the partnership to build commitment to meeting these needs.

KF14. The Inquiry also heard concerns that the partnership would prove unworkable as it covers two local health board areas and cuts across the existing sports landscape. The local health boards have different priorities and approaches, based on meeting the diverse

needs of their populations, meaning Central South would need to develop two, separate plans, which would create a divide. Sport Wales confirmed that Central South has raised the issue of how to coordinate across the two Health Board areas and that they are aware of views that it would be better to adapt the regional model, perhaps splitting it into two based on the Health Board areas. They highlighted there is also the option of creating sub-partnerships within the overall partnership.

KF15. Regarding the existing sporting landscape, the Inquiry heard that community sports provision benefits from relationships formed with elite sporting clubs in a local area. The proposed Central South Regional Sport Partnership cuts across some of the areas covered by elite sporting clubs, which may make it more complex to manage the interface between elite and community sport, to the detriment of provision.

KF16. Having considered the above concerns and Sport Wales's response, **the Inquiry concludes that, in an environment of reducing resources, it will be difficult to balance priorities across such a diverse region, as all are valid priorities with strong evidence bases.** This view is borne out by the differing agendas adopted by the two health boards that aim to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their populations. **Members therefore have a real concern that there will be a dilution of what we currently do in Cardiff, which cannot be allowed to happen, for the individuals this will affect, their communities, the overall wellbeing of Cardiff and the knock-on costs to public services, such as health, if preventative measures such as community sports are reduced.**

KF17. The Inquiry finds that the concerns about the proposed model and footprint are a real block in moving forward with the Central South Regional Sport Partnership. It is clear that there is an unwillingness to commit to a Partnership with the current regional footprint. These points, plus the fact that community sport provision will be further impacted by the fact the footprint stretches across existing networks between elite and community sport provision, means that **this Inquiry concludes it would be best to not adopt the regional model but, if we must, then it is advisable to adapt the regional model.**

KF18. The Inquiry heard evidence that Sport Wales recognises there is ongoing debate regarding regional footprints, and that the original Dyfed Powys area has been split following concerns expressed by participants. The Inquiry believes it should be possible

for Sport Wales to do the same for Central South area as they have for Dyfed Powys, which would result in seven Regional Sport Partnerships across Wales, still enabling economies of scale to be realised.

### Implementation Process

KF19. The Inquiry heard concerns from witnesses about the lack of political oversight and input into the implementation of the Central South Regional Sport Partnership as well as concerns about the lack of a clear timeline for implementation.

KF20. The Inquiry finds there has been a lack of engagement with Cardiff Council's Cabinet Members to discuss the proposed approach and the specifics about the Central South Regional Sports Partnership. Sport Wales set out that their role is to discuss and explore constructive ways forward and clarified that they are happy to talk to Cabinet Members and local members, in a collaborative manner, alongside officers. They stated they have met with Cabinet Members in other parts of Wales, where regional sport partnerships have not been an issue politically.

KF21. The Inquiry found that there was a feeling that Sport Wales did not understand the local authority landscape in the Central South area, which is more elected member-led than other local authority areas.

KF22. Sport Wales highlighted that, in their view, the lack of political mandate is the key stumbling block, and that they are keen to work with partners to address this. **Members agree that political input is key and are pleased to hear Sport Wales's openness to meeting with Cabinet Members in a constructive manner;** it can only be to everyone's benefit to build positive relationships.

KF23. Regarding the timeline for the introduction of Regional Sport Partnerships, the Inquiry heard that the original timeline for establishing a regional partnership has slipped, due to the covid pandemic. Some witnesses were now not clear on the timeline. Sport Wales clarified that they do not want to force a timeline. However, those not in a regional sport partnership will fall behind in terms of delivering against the Well Being of Future Generations Act agenda. Therefore, whilst there is not a fixed timeline, there is an end of the road.

KF24. Members asked what would happen if we reached the end of the road but there is no agreement. Sport Wales explained it is not looking to divert Central South funding elsewhere as the funding is for the citizens living in the region. Sport Wales would make sure a structure is in place to deliver for those citizens. This Inquiry **concludes it would be helpful to have an agreed timeline, to provide impetus for solution-finding.**

#### **Potential Impact**

KF25. This Inquiry heard concerns regarding the potential impact of a regional sport partnership, in terms of reduction in resources and a reduction in local partnership working and community intelligence.

KF26. The Inquiry heard the introduction of regional sport partnerships could result in national, regional, and local authority bodies reducing resources in sport, by cutting officer posts and reducing in-kind contributions. In addition, concerns were expressed that a regional sport partnership may not get the same value for money invested regionally as is currently achieved, due to lower levels of local partnership working and community intelligence. Finally, concerns were expressed that monies may be diverted from Cardiff, despite high levels of need.

KF27. The Inquiry explored these concerns with Sport Wales, which was clear that they are seeking to protect frontline budgets in partner organisations, including local authorities, and protect the delivery of community sport provision in a time of reducing resources, by better coordinating existing resources. They stated that they had made the difficult choice to reduce their own staffing base to reduce their take of the overall resource level, to protect resource for use elsewhere. Sport Wales were explicit that regional sport partnerships are not about threatening sports development teams in local authorities; they see these as key in providing the insight and intelligence that the regional sport partnership will need to properly direct resource. In addition, Sport Wales confirmed that local authorities and partners in Sport North Wales are making in-kind contributions.

KF28. Regarding local partnership working and community intelligence, the Inquiry heard how important it is to have local knowledge about what will work in different communities. Concerns were expressed that if the regional sports partnership model led to a reduction in sports officer posts, this would result in a loss of community intelligence and partnership knowledge. In addition, staff changes, and a regional way of working, would negatively

impact local partnership working. Finally, a regional sports partnership would not be involved in Major Events in the same way local authorities are and therefore would struggle to lever in the additional community sport outreach that the local authority is able to as part of the process of planning the hosting of Major Events.

### **Where Cardiff is now**

KF29. In 2014, Cardiff Council and Cardiff Metropolitan University established a Joint Venture, Sport Cardiff, to deliver community sport services in the city. Cardiff Council staff were transferred into the Sport Cardiff team. The existing approach to community sport in Cardiff works well, with targeted work to boost participation rates for key sectors of the population, cross boundary working, partnership working with sports clubs and governing bodies and the development of a pool of over 400 volunteers to assist at major sporting events.

KF30. Sport Cardiff work with Cardiff Council and a range of partners to develop an annual Local Sports Plan, which delivers the priorities and key considerations above and is agreed annually with Sport Wales and links to their core National Programmes. Sport Wales part-fund Sport Cardiff, based on delivery of the outcomes set out in the Local Sport Plan, and have been complimentary about the work happening in Cardiff, as documented in annual reports.

KF31. The local authority role in Community Sport is important, with successive administrations having worked to build relationships with sport communities in Cardiff. This allows Cardiff Council to maximise the benefits of these relationships, for example by increasing the delivery of community sport linked to Major Events, such as providing rugby outreach in Llanrumney, Adamsdown, Riverside and Ely as part of the Urdd Rugby 7's.

### **Where Next?**

KF32. Concerns were expressed that the combination of all the issues highlighted above would result in Cardiff being especially affected, with a decline in community sports overall and for the most deprived communities in particular. Some witnesses felt this to be particularly unfair given that the current Joint Venture partnership is working well in addressing participation and activity rates. There was a feeling amongst several witnesses that Cardiff would be disadvantaged because of issues elsewhere in Wales.

KF33. From the perspective of Cardiff, there is particular concern that the proposed footprint will do harm to Cardiff. However, Members also heard that, from the perspective of other areas, they are concerned that Cardiff will ‘take-over’ and that the needs of their areas will be overshadowed by the levels of need in Cardiff. The Inquiry was struck by the fact that, whilst the current incumbents at Sport Wales are clear they would not let this happen, there could be staff changes at Sport Wales and therefore this position could alter. Uncertainty around the governance framework and decision-making compound these concerns.

KF34. The Inquiry asked witnesses for any alternative ideas for the reorganisation of community sport provision, given the landscape of reducing resources and the need to boost engagement and participation rates. The following suggestions were received:

- a. Cardiff-only footprint
- b. Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan footprint
- c. Joint Venture model
- d. ‘As-Is’ Plus.

KF35. The Inquiry notes these responses would lead to many of the benefits of the proposed Central South regional sports partnership without as many disadvantages.

### **How to prepare**

KF36. The Inquiry identified the following key steps in preparing for Regional Sport Partnership:

- a. Record accurate data re participation rates
- b. Adopt ‘Whole Community’ System Thinking
- c. Join up conversations across the sector
- d. Avoid parochialism
- e. Build trust and commitment.

KF37. Sport Wales stated that partners need to own and develop the partnership, to help shape, grow and nurture the partnership. They believe there is a clear role for local authorities in this process; it is not Sport Wales’s role to lead the partnership. The Inquiry understand the need for partnerships to find their own momentum. However, **Members believe there is a role for Sport Wales to assist in the establishment of a partnership, particularly when it is clear there are issues with this.**

## Lessons from Sport North Wales

KF38. Sport North Wales includes six local authorities, Public Health Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Glyndwr University, Bangor University, North Wales Housing Associating (including six local housing associations), North Wales Education Consortia, and Disability Sport Wales. It is connecting with organisations such as the North Wales Regional Equality Network. It is likely the Sports Partnership will connect with other regional bodies such as, for example, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the office of North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

KF39. The local authorities played an active role in its formation, with one of the Chief Executives leading the project. A Collaboration Board met monthly to build trust and commitment, and a Regional Planning Group developed the strategic plan and is now working on implementation of the regional delivery plan as well as having the ability to horizon-scan for future risks, opportunities, and regional need.

KF40. The Sport North Wales governance model has been developed to meet the requirements of the Governance and Leadership Framework and Sport Wales Capability Framework and was self-determined by the partnership members following a detailed review and options appraisal.

KF41. The Sport North Wales Partnership Board is skills based, led by a Chair who was externally recruited. They have appointed a Regional Director and other paid officers.

KF42. The amount of Sport Wales funding for Sport North Wales has not changed from the amount that used to go to the local authorities. However, the partnership identified additional resource to move forward proactively in addition to their individual commitments and leadership roles and are making in-kind contributions where needed. In addition, the partnership has already attracted additional funding through its partnership with Public Health Wales and are actively connecting with 'Get North Wales Moving'. Sport North Wales also plan to explore commercial and other revenue stream partnerships moving forward.

KF43. Sport North Wales has begun conversations about how to re-allocate funding based on need, with future programming to be evidence led, supported by regional insight.

KF44. Sport Wales clarified that a learning log approach has been taken throughout the early adopter phase. Key lessons to date include:

- a. Early identification of purpose and role is very important – this is up to the partnership to determine, not Sport Wales – need to enable partners to come together and establish this
- b. People and partnerships - need to recognise these are already busy and committed and give them time and space to operate and be comfortable with what they are doing – Sport Wales can offer some small resource to help this process
- c. Partnership leads, Sport Wales offer support
- d. Up to regional partnership to identify best way to corral partners to meet needs of region – does mean there will be some difficult conversations, but Sport North Wales has managed to do this
- e. Building trust and commitment is key
- f. Funding – has been able to draw in funding that might not otherwise have done.

KF45. The work to develop Sport North Wales commenced 5-6 years ago, with Sport North Wales becoming operational 6-8 months ago and so it is too early to know its impact. However, the Inquiry was surprised to find that no reports have been produced on the process of establishing the partnership and emerging lessons that could be useful for other partnerships. Members feel it would be useful to understand and share the lessons from Sport North Wales, notwithstanding that there will be differences between the areas in terms of demographics, need, and engagement and participation rates, as it is more the lessons on building a successful partnership and implementing the new approach that will of value.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered the evidence to this Inquiry, as well as our knowledge of community sport services in Cardiff via our other scrutinies and our ward work, Members are not convinced the current proposals from Sport Wales are in the best interests of Cardiff and our deprived communities. Therefore, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee makes the following recommendation.

*R1. Cabinet urgently pursues with Sport Wales the feasibility of maintaining our current existing Joint Venture partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University rather than entering a Regional Sport Partnership.*

In the event discussions with Sport Wales on the above recommendation prove fruitless, the Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee makes the following recommendations:

*R2. Cabinet takes up Sport Wales's offer to engage to:*

- a. enable political input and to build political mandate*
- b. Lobby for a reduced footprint, either Cardiff-only or one based on the Cardiff & Vale University Health Board footprint*
- c. Work collaboratively to achieve agreement on reduced footprint as set out above.*

*R3. Cabinet actively engages with the Regional Sport Partnership development process to build trust and commitment.*

*R4. Cabinet works collaboratively with Regional Sport Partnership partners to agree governance arrangements that ensure Cardiff's voice is heard in proportion to population size.*

*R5. Cabinet seeks assurance from Sport Wales that priorities identified for Cardiff will not be diluted in any regional partnership and funding will not be diluted.*

*R6. Cabinet seeks clarification from Sport Wales on their basic expectations regarding governance models.*

## CURRENT PROVISION OF COMMUNITY SPORT

1. In 2014, Cardiff Council and Cardiff Metropolitan University established a Joint Venture, Sport Cardiff, to deliver sport services in the city. Cardiff Council staff were transferred into the Sport Cardiff team.
2. The Joint Venture set out the following priority objectives:
  - **Regional Sports Boards**<sup>1</sup>: “Provide a regional delivery mechanism for the Local Sports Plan”
  - **Sport for Children**: “Provide every young person in Cardiff access to quality sporting opportunities” “Every Child a Swimmer”
  - **Strong and Vibrant Clubs**: “Cardiff will provide the opportunity for a variety of community-based sports clubs to become visible and viable in order to thrive through the cities excellent infrastructure”
  - **Coaching, Volunteering and Workforce**: “Create a highly skilled workforce to service the needs of Cardiff’s sporting community”
  - **Competitions/Cardiff Games**: “To provide the opportunity for every young person in Cardiff to experience high quality appropriate competition”
3. Underpinning each priority objective are the following key considerations:
  - BME
  - Women & Girls
  - Disability Sport and Inclusive Opportunities
  - Disadvantaged areas.
4. Sport Cardiff work with Cardiff Council and a range of partners to develop an annual Local Sports Plan, which delivers the priorities and key considerations above and is agreed annually with Sport Wales and links to their core National Programmes.
5. Sport Wales part- fund Sport Cardiff<sup>2</sup> by way of an annual grant circa £600,000, to deliver outcomes based on the annually agreed ‘Local Sport Plan’. Sport Wales is complimentary about the work happening in Cardiff, as documented in annual reports.

<sup>1</sup> Established for each Neighbourhood Partnership area

<sup>2</sup> The other main funder of Sport Cardiff is the Football Association Wales (FAW)

6. This Inquiry heard that the existing approach to community sport in Cardiff works well, with:
- targeted work to boost participation rates for key sectors of the population
  - cross-boundary working to create critical mass needed to deliver key projects to smaller population groups
  - partnership working with sports clubs and governing bodies to boost outreach work
  - 400+ volunteers available to assist at major sporting events.
7. This Inquiry heard that the local authority role in Community Sport is important, with successive administrations having worked to build relationships with sport communities in Cardiff. This allows Cardiff Council to maximise the benefits of these relationships, for example by increasing the delivery of community sport linked to Major Events, such as providing rugby outreach in Llanrumney, Adamsdown, Riverside and Ely as part of the Urdd Rugby 7's.

## ROLE OF SPORT WALES RE COMMUNITY SPORT

8. Sport Wales is the national organisation that works on behalf of Welsh Government to develop and promote sports and physical activity programmes in Wales. It uses Welsh Government funding and National Lottery funding to support community sports.
9. Funding is available to individuals and clubs, for equipment, coaching, costs associated with establishing a new club and volunteer schemes. There are various grant schemes, including in the past, Community Chest grants, Development Grants and A Place for Sport grants. Current community level grant schemes include:
- a. **CrowdFunder – A Place for Sport** – up to £15,000 to improve 'off-field' community sport facilities, such as changing rooms, storage, ramps etc.
  - b. **Be Active Wales Fund** – £4million fund to increase participation on-field, aiming to '*protect and progress community sport clubs and organisations in Wales through the Covid-19 pandemic and into the future.*'
10. The Welsh Government sends Sport Wales an annual remit letter that confirms the amount of funding being provided and sets out the priorities and targets that Sport Wales

should focus on that year. In 2018-19, the annual remit letter from the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Dafydd Elis-Thomas AC/AM, stressed the need for Sport Wales to maximise its contribution to achieving the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and to develop a Corporate Plan for 2018-2021 that led to the following outcomes:

#### Outcomes

- More people meeting the Chief Medical Officers physical activity guidelines
- More people undertake sport and physical recreation on 3 or more occasions per week.
- An increase in sport and physical recreation participation by those most in need or disadvantaged.
- A system that delivers continuous elite sport success while ensuring the safety, well-being and welfare of all sportsmen and sportswomen.

## LEVELS OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN WALES

11. Sport Wales clearly articulated to the Inquiry the need for improved participation rates pan-Wales. Their evidence included the following:

- *There are 1.4 million people who are regularly active, but we also know that if you have a disability, live in poverty or are from a BME background you are less likely to be active or enjoy sport – longstanding challenges that we have to address if we are to get everyone active through sport*
- *We need to consider the needs and motivations of individuals and be responsive to their changing needs; we need to be able to engage with all young people and give them a positive start, developing habits for a lifetime of activity. Ultimately, we need to showcase the benefits of sport to wider audiences, bringing new partners and investment to the start line.<sup>3</sup>*
- *Those participating less frequently than 3x per week*
  - *Around half of young people from an ethnically diverse group*
  - *More than half of all young people with a disability*
  - *Almost 6 in 10 young people from the most deprived communities*
  - *Over half of all girls.*

<sup>3</sup> Information Memorandum (2019)

12. Sport Wales made the point that the covid pandemic will have compounded these issues. Their evidence found 96% of children and young people said they would like to do more sport, highlighting the latent demand for certain activities. Therefore, there is a need to ensure the right support and opportunities are available and that barriers are removed.
13. Sport Wales explained why it is important to boost levels of physical activity and sport in Wales, not only to promote physical and mental health and wellbeing but to promote community cohesion, skills development, and lifelong learning. They also explained how community sport can help tackle anti-social behaviour and crime. Members of the Inquiry concur with these points, noting that Cardiff Council has long held these views and acted to boost community sport accordingly.

## REGIONAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS

14. In response to the direction of Welsh Government to refocus efforts to maximise its contribution to the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, Sport Wales undertook comprehensive engagement to inform its new Vision for Sport, culminating in a vision of creating *'An Active Nation Where Everyone Can Have a Lifelong Enjoyment of Sport'*.
15. To deliver this vision, Sport Wales looked at regional sports partnership models used in England, Scotland, and New Zealand. Rather than adopt these wholesale, Sport Wales has modified the approach to one they believe is best suited for Wales, for example having a less prescriptive approach and a wider scope than the model followed in Scotland.
16. Sport Wales developed a new approach called *'Community Sport and Activity Programme'*, based on Regional Sport Partnerships. Regional Sport Partnerships are the mechanism through which Sport Wales will direct its funding of community sport in a long-term approach (most likely through a 5–10-year partnership). Sport Wales estimated that resource per Sport Partnership will be circa £12million over 5 years. Funding will be made up of:

- Funding focussing on extra-curricular school sport and the development of physically literate young people
  - Funding for the Free-Swimming Initiative
  - Lottery Grant schemes
    - Plus
  - Funding to support leadership, strategy development, insight & operational running of the partnership
  - a commissioning budget to incentivise match funding and develop new and innovative opportunities to be physically active through sport.
17. In 2019, Sport Wales shared an Information Memorandum, with partners, which set out:
- a. Rationale for new approach
  - b. Information on proposed approach
  - c. Detail on Regional Sport Partnership areas and outcomes to be achieved
  - d. Commissioning process
    - How to be involved
    - How to submit an Expression of Interest
    - Outline details of next stages.

### **Rationale for Regional Sports Partnerships**

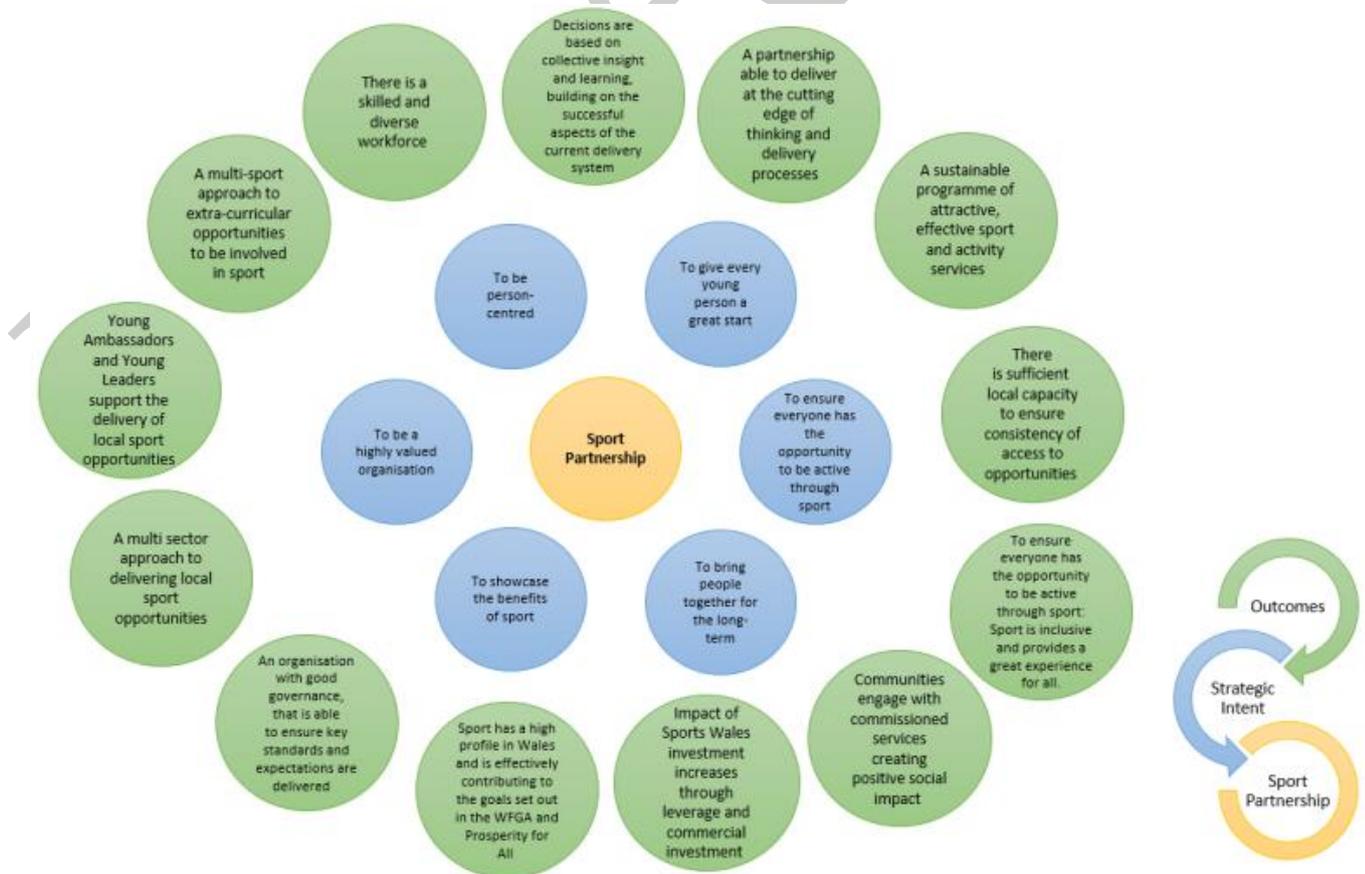
18. Sport Wales stated that the current ways of working, pan-Wales, are not sufficient to deliver the change required by Welsh Government, in terms of boosting participation rates in physical activity and sport. In their evidence to this Inquiry, they cited the World Health Organisation's recent statement that organisations need to come together in strong partnerships to affect change. Sport Wales stated that Regional Sport Partnerships can deliver the scale of change required in Wales.
19. The Inquiry were interested to understand why Sport Wales believed Regional Sports Partnerships were necessary to deliver increased participation rates in physical activity and sport, as opposed to other possible approaches. Sport Wales stated that their view is that a fresh, collective approach is needed to achieve the vision, to build on the successful aspects of current approaches to community sport and activity to ensure

everyone can participate and benefit from a lifelong enjoyment of sport. Sport Wales gave the following specific benefits for having regional sports partnerships:

- Collaborative approach – involve partners and sectors and be able to speak with one voice to other organisations, for example Education Consortia
- Insight-led approach – clear evidence that will meet local needs
- Collective learning – help boost profile of successful projects and sport overall
- Asset based approach – current approaches mean great work not always joined up or shared. Sport Wales clear that do not want to deconstruct good work but build on it.
- Boost profile and show added value of sport – ensure sport has a place in local decision making and local partnerships.

20. The Inquiry notes that many of these ways of working are already in place in Cardiff, via Sport Cardiff and the collaborative, partnership, evidence-based ways in which it works.

21. The aimed for outcomes for Regional Sports Partnerships are set out in the graphic below, taken from Sport Wales Information Memorandum document:



22. The Information Memorandum set out a proposed two-fold role for Regional Sport Partnerships, which also details benefits:
- a. The power of the collective to strategically plan and lead this work, developing one vision, one plan which is developed and owned by all.
    - o Use of insight – a strong evidenced based plan that meets the needs of participants and stakeholders.
    - o Targeted Investment - creating the conditions for innovation in service delivery and being able to evidence the impact being made
    - o Leveraging in additional resources (whether funding, people, value in kind) to support the delivery of the outcomes
  - b. Provision of high-quality local opportunities to be active through sport – more opportunities, delivered locally. At a local level it means:
    - o Listening to local communities and local people
    - o Putting their needs first and delivering high quality opportunities to be active at the right time, right place and in the right environment
    - o ENJOYMENT is central to people getting involved
    - o Providing the right delivery for those tens of thousands of people who want to do more.
23. Other witnesses to the Inquiry did not articulate many of the benefits detailed in points 19-22 but agreed, when prompted by Members, that the partnerships would enable partners to share and learn from one another, albeit that some witnesses questioned whether a whole new entity is required to achieve this.
24. Members note this lack of iteration of strengths of regional sports partnerships by other witnesses. Members' view is that Cardiff already benefits from many of the strengths detailed above, due to its Joint Venture with Cardiff Metropolitan University and the resultant strengthened partnership working and improved participation rates. Members recognise that, theoretically, there could be benefits to other areas in Wales and potentially in the Central South area but do not have the information to comment fully on this.

25. This Inquiry also sought to understand the opportunities arising from Regional Sports Partnerships. Sport Wales identified the following:
- a. Opportunity to boost activity and increase participation
  - b. Opportunity to take greater ownership of National Lottery funding element
  - c. Opportunity to align resources and enhance funding received by joining up planning and coordination.
26. The Inquiry heard that Sport Wales undertook business case analyses that resulted in proposals to split Wales into five regions. Sport Wales propose Cardiff is part of a Central South Regional Sport Partnership consisting also of the following local authorities: Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Bridgend.
27. The commissioning process for Regional Sports Partnerships consists of 3 stages:
- a. Expressions of Interest – to be a lead organisation or delivery partner
  - b. Outline Solutions Stage
  - c. Full Business Case
28. The process of establishing Regional Sports Partnerships has commenced, with Expressions of Interest sought. An Expression of Interest has been submitted for the Central South area, by a loose consortium of all five local authorities, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the two local health boards and Cardiff Metropolitan University, with the latter as the lead organisation. The Expression of Interest is non-binding.
29. This Inquiry heard that Cardiff Metropolitan University put itself forward as the Lead Organisation for the following reasons:
- Pragmatism – Regional Sports Partnerships are going to happen; therefore, they would prefer to play a proactive role to shape and steer this
  - No vested role – and so able to bring partners together across the region
  - Need to shape future and be seen as trusted partner
  - Can help to ensure Cardiff gets best out of opportunity.

## CONCERNS HIGHLIGHTED

30. The Inquiry found that there was recognition amongst witnesses of the need for change, with sport in Wales facing decreased resources, due to reductions in overall government funding. However, the Inquiry also found several concerns about the proposed Regional Sports Partnership approach and possible impact. These concerns centred on:

- a. Overall Model
  - Governance
  - Regional Footprint
- b. Implementation
  - Political input
  - Timeline
- c. Potential Impact
  - Reduction in resources
  - Reduction in local partnership working and community intelligence

31. Some of the witnesses concluded that the combination of the above would cause an inequitable impact on Cardiff and its communities. These concerns are detailed below.

### Concerns expressed re overall model

32. The Inquiry heard evidence that the Regional Sports Partnership approaches in England and Scotland had not worked as expected, with Scotland ceasing to operate a regional model and some areas of England moving away from this approach, for example Manchester now has a stand-alone sports partnership, rather than being part of the Greater Manchester partnership. Concerns were expressed that Wales was therefore following a model that had proved to be ineffective elsewhere.

33. Members put these points to Sport Wales, which clarified that they had deliberately learnt lessons from the approaches taken elsewhere and modified the model for Wales accordingly. For example, the approach taken in Scotland differed significantly to the approach proposed in Wales, in that it was more prescriptive regarding governance and staffing arrangements, with a narrower scope. Sport Wales offered to speak with sportscotland to ascertain their views on regional sports partnerships; they informed the

Inquiry sportscotland remained supportive of the principles behind more effective collaboration at a regional level.

## **Governance**

34. The Inquiry heard concerns expressed that there was a lack of clarity from Sport Wales regarding governance arrangements. Some witnesses stated Sport Wales informed them it was up to the partnership to determine governance arrangements, and they did not feel this was helpful.
35. Sport Wales informed the Inquiry that they do not think it best to prescribe a specific approach, other than to comply with good governance<sup>4</sup>, and that it is better for partnerships to develop a governance approach that meets the needs of their areas. Sport Wales want to encourage self-determination of governance and are content if regional partnerships look different to one another – it is up to the regional partnership to determine what works best for them.
36. Whilst Members think Sport Wales's aims are laudable, Members understand why a lack of governance framework is anxiety-inducing and are not convinced this is a workable approach for every area in Wales, particularly an area such as Central South that has numerous contributors to the regional sports partnership.
37. The Inquiry also heard concerns specifically regarding decision-making in Regional Sports Partnerships. Concerns were expressed that, if each member of the partnership had one equal vote, communities in Cardiff would be negatively affected as other areas of the partnership may not have the same needs as communities in Cardiff and therefore may not vote to approve release of funding to meet these needs, as they may wish the funding to be used for priority needs in their areas. This concern is explored in more detail later in this report, at points 43-44.
38. To avoid this, Members believe it makes sense for decision making to recognise the populations of the areas involved and to ratio votes accordingly.

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<sup>4</sup> Governance and Leadership Framework and Sport Wales Capability Framework.

## Regional Footprint

39. The proposed Central South Regional Sport Partnership covers five local authority areas – Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Vale of Glamorgan – and two local health boards – Cardiff & Vale UHB and Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board.
40. Concerns were expressed to the Inquiry that the area covered is too large and too diverse to work cohesively in one partnership. Members also heard concerns that the partnership would prove unworkable as it covers two local health board areas and cuts across the existing sports landscape. More details on these are set out below.

## Size of Footprint

41. The proposed Central South Regional Partnership covers an area where circa 1 million people live. Witnesses were concerned that the scale of this makes it too large to deliver appropriately targeted local programmes of community sport, which are needed to boost engagement and participation.

## Diversity of areas

42. In addition, Members heard that the five local authority areas are diverse, with differing challenges and barriers facing their populations in becoming active and engaged in community sport. For example, the valley communities have high rates of long-term limiting health conditions and underlying health conditions that affect mobility, coupled with an older population structure, and high levels of poverty and deprivation. These also exist in Cardiff, which in addition has a higher level, compared to the valleys, of BAME communities living in deprived areas.
43. Concerns were expressed to the Inquiry that the Regional Sports Partnership may find it difficult to allocate reducing resources to equally valid but different priorities. One example given to the Inquiry was that currently there are specific projects in Cardiff to improve engagement and participation amongst BAME communities in community sport. However, witnesses are not convinced the Regional Sports Partnership will prioritise these given the other priority needs within its area. Witnesses are therefore concerned that communities in Cardiff will receive a worse offer because of the introduction of a Regional Sport Partnership and that the aims of Welsh Government, in terms of

improving engagement and participation amongst deprived communities, will not take place in some of the most deprived communities in Cardiff.

44. Members put these points to Sport Wales, who recognised these concerns and clarified that they will hold regional partners to account to ensure citizens needs are fairly met, using a range of data to ensure this. Sport Wales added that they see Regional Sport Partnerships as an opportunity for Cardiff to lead on BAME work and bring their insight, knowledge, and local intelligence to bear. They also highlighted that work in the early adopter, Sport North Wales, showed the need to have evidence-based discussions regarding specific needs and to work across the partnership to build commitment to meeting these needs.

#### **Two Health Boards**

45. The area covered by Central South includes two local health boards, which have different priorities and approaches, based on meeting the diverse needs of their populations. The Inquiry heard that this means the Central South Regional Sport Partnership would need to develop two, separate plans, which would create a divide.
46. Sport Wales confirmed to the Inquiry that the Central South Regional Sport Partnership has raised the issue of how to coordinate across the two Health Board areas and that they are aware of views that it would be better to adapt the regional model, perhaps splitting it into two based on the Health Board areas. They highlighted there is also the option of creating sub-partnerships within the overall partnership.

#### **Existing Sports Landscape**

47. The Inquiry heard that community sports provision benefits from relationships formed with elite sporting clubs in a local area. The proposed Central South Regional Sports Partnership cuts across some of the areas covered by elite sporting clubs, which may make it more complex to manage the interface between elite and community sport, to the detriment of provision. One example cited to the Inquiry was Rugby, with Bridgend being linked to the Ospreys and Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and the Vale of Glamorgan being linked to Cardiff Blues.

48. The Inquiry notes these concerns and Sport Wales's responses to these and concludes that, in an environment of reducing resources, it will be difficult to balance priorities across such a diverse region, as all are valid priorities with strong evidence bases. This view is borne out by the differing agendas adopted by the two health boards, that aim to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their populations.
49. Members therefore have a real concern that there will be a dilution of what we currently do in Cardiff, which cannot be allowed to happen, for the individuals this will affect, their communities, the overall wellbeing of Cardiff and the knock-on costs to public services, such as health, if preventative measures such as community sports are reduced.
50. These points, plus the fact that community sport provision will be further impacted by the fact the footprint stretches across existing networks between elite and community sport provision, means that this Inquiry concludes it would be advisable to adapt the regional model.

### **Changing the regional footprint**

51. Members note the Information Memorandum<sup>5</sup> references that there will be further discussions on the make-up of the regions, with Sport Wales committed to '*ongoing dialogue and support for all partners engaging in the process ...to support them in working through modelling that will address their concerns*'. The Information Memorandum also states it is recognised that '*there is still some debate in the sector about the best make-up of the Sport Partnership (in terms of geography)*' and that the process is designed to enable organisations to continue to discuss and agree the most appropriate approach, through the outline solution stage, with organisations able to present and discuss alternative arrangements. Members heard that Sport Wales has agreed to split the original Dyfed Powys area, following concerns expressed by participants in those areas that the footprint was too big.

### **Conclusions**

52. Members recognise that the concerns about the proposed model and footprint are a real block in moving forward with the Central South Regional Sport Partnership. It is clear to

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<sup>5</sup> Getting People in Wales Active for Life: Information Memorandum – Sport Wales 2019

Members that there is an unwillingness to commit to a Partnership with the current regional footprint. From the perspective of Cardiff, this is because the footprint is seen as doing harm to Cardiff. However, Members also heard that, from the perspective of other areas, they are concerned that Cardiff will 'take-over' and that the needs of their areas will be overshadowed by the levels of need in Cardiff. Uncertainty around the governance framework and decision-making compound these concerns.

53. Members conclude that the proposed footprint is too large. Members believe it should be possible for Sport Wales to do the same for Central South area as they have for Dyfed Powys, which would result in seven Regional Sport Partnerships across Wales, still enabling economies of scale to be realised.

### **Concerns expressed re implementation**

54. The Inquiry heard concerns from witnesses about the lack of political oversight and input into the implementation of the Central South Regional Sport Partnership as well as concerns about the lack of a clear timeline for implementation.

### **Political Oversight and Input**

55. Witnesses raised concerns about the lack of engagement by Sport Wales with local authority Cabinet Members to discuss the proposed approach and the specifics about the Central South Regional Sports Partnership. Members asked witnesses if they knew why Sport Wales was taking this approach and received various answers, including that Sport Wales did not see it as their role to persuade local Members of the case for Regional Sports Partnerships. There was a feeling that Sport Wales did not understand the local authority landscape in the Central South area, which is more elected member-led than other local authority areas.
56. The Inquiry raised these points with Sport Wales, which clarified that they are happy to talk to Cabinet Members and local members, in a collaborative manner, alongside officers. They stated that their role is to discuss and explore constructive ways forward and that it is local authority officers' role to work with members as part of the regional sport partnership development process. They concluded that it is not Sport Wales role to convince politicians but to work with them to find solutions.

57. Sport Wales also highlighted that they have met with Cabinet Members in other parts of Wales as part of discussions on Regional Sport Partnerships. They added that in North Wales, regional partnerships had not been an issue politically and that in Dyfed & Powys there had been political engagement and it had helped shape how it is now. In Gwent, there has been some political engagement. They stated this shows Sport Wales is being flexible in its approach in order to get the project delivered.
58. Sport Wales highlighted to the Inquiry that, in their view, the lack of political mandate is the key stumbling block, and that they are keen to work with partners to address this. They added that hopefully this scrutiny will illustrate the benefits of the proposed changes.
59. Members agree that political input is key and believe that all involved should have worked together from the start to obtain buy-in to enable discussions to move forward on the best approach for the region. Members agree that local authorities in the Central South area are member-led and that elected members expect to be involved in discussions shaping regional partnerships. Members were pleased to hear Sport Wales's openness to meeting with Cabinet Members in a constructive manner; it can only be to everyone's benefit to build positive relationships.

#### **Timeline**

60. The Inquiry hear that the original timeline for establishing a regional partnership has slipped, due to the covid pandemic. Some witnesses were now not clear on the timeline, whilst other witnesses believed the timeline to be March 2022 but were unsure whether this was fixed or could slip again.
61. Members sought advice from Sport Wales on the timeline. Sport Wales clarified that they do not want to force a timeline but want to get to a point where all are comfortable to move forward. However, they stated that the fact other sports partnerships are either already up and running or due to come online imminently, means those not in this position will fall behind in terms of delivering against the Well Being of Future Generations Act agenda. Therefore, whilst there is not a fixed timeline, there is an end of the road. Sport Wales funding flows from the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales)

Act 2015 and the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and Sport Wales needs to make inroads to delivering these so it cannot keep the structure as it is.

62. Members asked what would happen if we reached the end of the road but there is no agreement – would Sport Wales step in or would they divert funding support to others? Sport Wales clarified it is not looking to divert Central South funding elsewhere as the funding is for the citizens living in the region. Sport Wales would make sure a structure is in place to deliver for those citizens.
63. Members note the above and believe it would be helpful to have an agreed timeline, to provide impetus for solution-finding.

### **Concerns expressed re potential Impact**

64. This Inquiry heard concerns regarding the potential impact of a regional sport partnership, in terms of reduction in resources and a reduction in local partnership working and community intelligence. More details are provided below.

### **Reduction in Resources**

65. Witnesses to the Inquiry raised several concerns that the introduction of Regional Sport Partnerships would result in a reduction in resource levels for community sport per se as well as specifically for Cardiff.
66. An overarching concern was that the regional sport partnership model was being proposed as an efficiency-based model, a cost saving model, for Sport Wales, which has streamlined their resource base. Concerns were also expressed that local authorities may reduce their sports officer posts, as it will be harder to argue to keep posts in a climate of reducing local authority resources and high demand pressures, if there is a regional body. Some witnesses also expressed concern that, if a private sector operator was appointed as the lead organisation, this could lead to them using part of the regional sport partnership funding to meet core costs, such as HR, thus reducing the amount of funding available for community sport provision.
67. Members heard that the Central South area has already seen a reduction in resources for community sport, in that Disability Sport Wales announced changing their delivery

model to one officer in each region, rather than one officer in each local authority area. There are concerns other Wales-wide or region-wide organisations may follow suit, thus reducing the overall pool of resources for community sport.

68. In addition, concerns were expressed that a regional sport partnership may not get the same value for money invested regionally as is currently achieved for funding invested in Cardiff, particularly for BAME communities. This point links to the concern that regional sports partnerships will lead to lower levels of local partnership working and community intelligence, set out in more detail below. In essence, the concern is that there will no longer be the knowledge to understand the differences between communities and that services will be commissioned on too broad a basis, with poorer results, therefore.
69. Finally, concerns were expressed that monies may be diverted from Cardiff, despite high levels of need, due to the issues highlighted in points 37 and 43, and the perception that Cardiff receives a disproportionate amount for community sport.
70. Members explored these concerns with Sport Wales, which was clear that cost savings are not a driver for the introduction of regional sport partnerships and that they are seeking to protect frontline budgets in partner organisations, including local authorities, and protect the delivery of community sport provision in a time of reducing resources, by better coordinating existing resources. They stated that they had made the difficult choice to reduce their own staffing base to reduce their take of the overall resource level, so cost savings to Sport Wales has been a consequence of the introduction of regional sport partnerships but in order to protect resource for use elsewhere.
71. Sport Wales were explicit that regional sport partnerships are not about threatening sports development teams in local authorities; they see these as key in providing the insight and intelligence that the regional sport partnership will need to properly direct resource.
72. Regarding private sector organisations becoming the lead organisation and using resources for core costs, Members heard from Sport Wales that there have been no expressions of interests from this sector. In addition, Sport Wales confirmed that local authorities and partners in Sport North Wales are making in-kind contributions.

73. Members note the responses from Sport Wales and accept these. However, Members feel that Sport Wales has not taken on board the realities facing local authorities regarding the pressures they are under coupled with reducing resources. Members understand the concerns expressed by witnesses that some local authorities may see the introduction of regional sport partnerships as an opportunity to cut staff. This would be damaging to community sport provision.

#### **Reduction in local partnership working and community intelligence**

74. The Inquiry heard that, currently, local sports officers work with local partners to build up intelligence about what works in different communities regarding community sport provision. Members heard that approaches used in Splott would not necessarily work in Ely, for example, and that approaches used must vary according to the different communities being targeted to achieve optimum results,

75. As outlined in points 66-67, concerns were expressed that the regional sports partnership model could lead to some reduction in sports officer posts. Members heard that this would have consequences short term with a loss of community intelligence and partnership knowledge, and longer term for sports management and sports development.

76. In addition, Members heard that regional sports partnerships could lead to a loss of local relationships that make things work currently, due to staff changes and a regional way of working rather than a localised way of working.

77. Finally, Members heard that, for Cardiff, there would be another loss, in that a regional sports partnership would not be involved in Major Events in the same way local authorities are and therefore would struggle to lever in the additional community sport outreach that the local authority is able to as part of the process of planning the hosting of Major Events.

#### **Inequitable impact on Cardiff and its communities**

78. Concerns were expressed that the combination of all the issues highlighted above would result in Cardiff being especially affected, with a decline in community sports overall and for the most deprived communities in particular. Some witnesses felt this to be particularly unfair given that the current Joint Venture partnership is working well in

addressing participation and activity rates. There was a feeling amongst several witnesses that Cardiff would be disadvantaged because of issues elsewhere in Wales.

79. Sport Wales recognise there are concerns about what the partnerships will focus on and how they will work. They stated that it needs partners to own and develop the partnership, to help shape, grow and nurture the partnership. They believe there is a clear role for local authorities in this process; it is not Sport Wales’s role to lead the partnership.
80. Members understand the need for partnerships to find their own momentum. However, Members believe there is a role for Sport Wales to assist in the establishment of a partnership, particularly when it is clear there are issues with this.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

81. The terms of reference for this Inquiry include undertaking a SWOT analysis of the proposed Central South regional sports partnership. Members have used the evidence gathered during the inquiry to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, which are set out below.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fresh, collective, partnership approach</li> <li>○ Evidence based approach – insight-led</li> <li>○ Builds on successful aspects of current approaches</li> <li>○ Shared learning of successful projects</li> <li>○ Asset based approach – join up great work</li> <li>○ Ensures everyone can participate and benefit from a lifelong enjoyment of physical activity</li> <li>○ One strong voice for sport – boosts profile and ensures place in local decision making</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Opportunity to boost activity and increase participation</li> <li>○ Opportunity to take greater ownership of National Lottery funding element</li> <li>○ Opportunity to align resources and enhance funding received by joining up planning and coordination.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of governance framework</li> <li>○ Proposed Central South footprint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Size</li> <li>- Diversity of areas included</li> <li>- Two health boards</li> <li>- Existing sports landscape</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Lack of political oversight</li> <li>○ Lack of political input</li> <li>○ Lack of clarity re timeline</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduction in resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sport roles cut - Local authority, Regional and National bodies</li> <li>- Specific reduction in funding received by Cardiff due to reprioritisation elsewhere</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Less value for money from regional investment, due to broader commissioning</li> <li>○ Reduction in local partnership working</li> <li>○ Reduction in community intelligence</li> <li>○ Reduction in ability to lever in additional resource from Major Events</li> <li>○ Inequitable impact on Cardiff and its communities</li> </ul>

## REORGANISATION – OTHER POSSIBILITIES

82. The Inquiry asked witnesses for any alternative ideas for the reorganisation of community sport provision, given the landscape of reducing resources and the need to boost engagement and participation rates. The following suggestions were received:
- a. Cardiff footprint – that the local authority is a regional sports partnership in its own right, given its size, complexity of population and needs, existing successful Joint Venture with Cardiff Metropolitan University, and ability to utilise local partnership working and community intelligence to boost engagement and participation rates.
  - b. Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan footprint – that the two local authorities form their own regional sports partnership, which would fit with the local health board, is a workable size and would build on already existing good partnership links and community intelligence.
  - c. Joint Venture model – that the successful, proven Joint Venture model that works well in Cardiff is continued and applied to other local authority areas.
  - d. 'As Is' Plus – community sport provision remain organised as is currently but boost cross-border working and sourcing of alternative funding. This should include closer integration with other local authorities at a Cabinet Member level, sharing expertise, and working with Health colleagues.
83. Members note these responses, which would lead to many of the benefits of the proposed Central South regional sports partnership without as many disadvantages.

## REORGANISATION – HOW TO PREPARE

84. The terms of this Inquiry included identifying what Cardiff Council needs to do to prepare for Regional Sports Partnerships. Witnesses highlighted the following key steps:
- a. Record accurate data re participation rates – this will be critical to demonstrate the needs in Cardiff. The Physical Activity and Sports Strategy, currently being drafted and due to be approved in early 2022, will be a key document to demonstrate needs, priority areas, and place-based approaches grounded in local knowledge and intelligence about what will work where.

- b. Adopt 'Whole Community' System Thinking – witnesses explained it is important to take a whole community approach to system thinking, so to plan to meet needs throughout life, via a range of provision, including non-sport provision that encourages an active life, such as active travel provision.
- c. Join up conversations across the sector – witnesses stressed it is important to join up conversations with all actors in community sport provision, including national organisations and smaller governing bodies that operate regionally. This will ensure conversations do not become disjointed and that they can help shape regional sport partnerships.
- d. Avoid parochialism – focus on the needs of citizens and the need to boost engagement and participation rates to ensure parochialism does not take hold.
- e. Build trust and commitment – Sport Wales were clear that it is essential to build trust and commitment levels of local partners by being clear on what the partnership is there to do and how it complements local delivery. They stated this is evidenced in the Sport North Wales work – trust is key to then be able to build partnership and commitment on.

85. Members note these points.

## SPORT NORTH WALES

86. The terms of reference for this Inquiry included considering the pilot regional sport partnership in North Wales, called Sport North Wales, to understand lessons learnt during its development and to identify lessons relevant to the Central South regional sport partnership. Work on Sport North Wales commenced 5-6 years ago. Sport Wales clarified that Sport North Wales is an early adopter rather than a pilot, given that regional sport partnerships can develop and evolve in a variety of ways to suit the needs of their area. Sport Wales provided the information below in points 87– 97.
87. Sport North Wales includes six local authorities, Public Health Wales, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Glyndwr University, Bangor University, North Wales Housing Associating (including six local housing associations), North Wales Education Consortia, and Disability Sport Wales. It is connecting with organisations such as the North Wales Regional Equality Network. It is likely the Sports Partnership will connect with other

regional bodies such as, for example, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the office of North Wales Police and Crime Commissioner.

88. The local authorities played an active role in its formation, with one of the Chief Executives leading the project. A Collaboration Board was established and met monthly, which was important to build working relationships and develop trust amongst the partnership. This trust supported the creation of the regional vision and strategic framework and became an important step in developing common understanding, shared purpose and ultimately trust in that everyone is committed to the partnership and believes that it can deliver positive outcomes for its citizens. Trust also helped to support the agreement of a governance framework which supported the ambition of the Sports Partnership.
89. The Sport North Wales governance model has been developed to meet the requirements of the Governance and Leadership Framework and Sport Wales Capability Framework and was self-determined by the partnership members following a detailed review and options appraisal.
90. The Sport North Wales Partnership Board is skills based. Led by a Chair who was externally recruited, it is a blend of partner representative and independent appointed experts providing a modern, agile, and diverse approach to North Wales strategy, governance, and decision-making. They have appointed a Regional Director and other paid officers.
91. The Sport North Wales partnership has developed a Strategic Plan that presents a shared Regional Vision, Purpose, and key themes: Start Active, Being Active, Staying Active & ReStart. They proactively engaged with the existing sports development workforce to develop their vision and strategic framework. The drafting of the strategic plan was devolved to the delivery teams and representatives of the partners. This took the form of 4 workshop days (engaging approx. 30 reps per session) resulting in a strategic vision and delivery framework. All 6 local authorities were heavily involved and consulted throughout this process. This process led to the creation of a regional planning group. Sport North Wales undertook an equalities impact assessment during the creation of their emerging vision and strategic framework, supported by an Equalities Statement of Intent.

92. The regional planning group has been established to support the creation of a regional delivery plan and its implementation as well as having the ability to horizon-scan for future risks, opportunities, and regional need. Each partner can deliver against the framework, identifying which of the theme/s are most important to their local area. Regional operational planning for 22/23 and in subsequent years will be aligned to the Strategy framework, given that all partners were engaged in its development.
93. The amount of Sport Wales funding for Sport North Wales has not changed from the amount that used to go to the local authorities. However, the partnership identified early what additional resource it would take to move forward proactively in addition to their individual commitments and leadership roles and are making in-kind contributions where needed. In addition, the partnership has already attracted additional funding through its partnership with Public Health Wales and are actively connecting with 'Get North Wales Moving'. Sport North Wales also plan to explore commercial and other revenue stream partnerships moving forward.
94. Sport North Wales has begun conversations about how to address some of the differences across the region and re-allocate funding based on need. Future programming will be evidence led, supported by regional insight. The development lead officers are for the first time working more collaboratively across the region, currently using the Upshot IT system on behalf of the partnership. Sport North Wales is currently refreshing a partner and systems mapping exercise to identify additional stakeholders and partners who can contribute to the delivery of their vision and purpose.
95. Overall, the Sport North Wales partners have co-created a Sports Partnership which is right for their region – they see the value of the wider partnership approach and the added value this will bring to their communities. They are also clear on how their structure and set up will compliment (not duplicate) other regional bodies and the opportunity this brings to sell the benefits of sport in wider agendas. Sport North Wales is currently developing a brand identity for the region, connecting the various stakeholders and delivery partners against a common purpose.

### **Lessons Learnt**

96. Sport Wales clarified that a learning log approach has been taken throughout the early adopter phase. Key lessons to date include:

- Early identification of purpose and role is very important – this is up to the partnership to determine, not Sport Wales – need to enable partners to come together and establish this
  - People and partnerships - need to recognise these are already busy and committed and give them time and space to operate and be comfortable with what they are doing – Sport Wales can offer some small resource to help this process
  - Partnership lead, Sport Wales offer support
  - Up to regional partnership to identify best way to corral partners to meet needs of region – does mean there will be some difficult conversations, but Sport North Wales has managed to do this.
  - Building trust and commitment is key.
  - Funding – has successfully drawn in funding that might not otherwise have happened.
97. Sport Wales emphasised that Sport North Wales became operational 6-8 months ago and so it is too early to know its impact.
98. Members were surprised to find that no reports have been produced on the process of establishing the partnership and emerging lessons that could be useful for other partnerships. Members recognise Sport Wales's point that regional partnerships can vary but feel it would be useful to understand and share the lessons from Sport North Wales to date with other areas of Wales, notwithstanding that there will be differences between the areas in terms of demographics, need, and engagement and participation rates, as it is more the lessons on building a successful partnership and implementing the new approach that will be of value.

## APPROACH TAKEN

- M1. Members undertook this Inquiry during November and December 2021.
- M2. Members received evidence from the following internal stakeholders who attended question & answer sessions and contributed to a panel discussion:
- Cllr Peter Bradbury, Cabinet Member – Culture & Leisure
  - Neil Hanratty – Director of Economic Development
  - Steve Morris – Operational Manager – Sport, Leisure and Development.
- M3. Members also received evidence from the following external stakeholders:
- Laura Williams – Assistant Director of Sport, Physical Activity & Health, Cardiff Metropolitan University
  - Ben O’Connell – Director of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University
  - Brian Davies – Acting Chief Executive, Sport Wales
  - Graham Williams – Director, Sport Intelligence and Service Development.
- M4. Scrutiny Services wrote to the other local authorities in the Central South regional sport partnership area, offering them the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry by sharing their views on the proposed partnership approach. Members were particularly keen to understand their perspectives. Initially, local authorities indicated they would like to contribute. However, following the cancellation of a meeting between them and Sport Wales in early November, the local authorities declined to contribute as they had been hoping to receive clarity from Sport Wales on the current status of the regional partnership approach before commenting and, lacking this, felt that their comments would not be meaningful or helpful.
- M5. To inform the Inquiry, Members were provided with information detailing the policy context, directions from Welsh Government, and Sport Wales publications relevant to Regional Sport Partnerships.
- M6. The evidence has been used to identify suitable findings from the Inquiry.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review, and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

## LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review, and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without modification. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet / Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal power of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- To scrutinise, measure and actively promote improvement in the Council's performance in the provision of services and compliance with Council policies, aims and objectives in the area of economic regeneration.
  - Cardiff City Region City Deal
  - Inward Investment and the marketing of Cardiff
  - South East Wales Economic Forum
  - Economic Strategy & Employment
  - European Funding & Investment
  - Small to Medium Enterprise Support
  - Cardiff Harbour Authority
  - Lifelong Learning
  - Leisure Centres
  - Sports Development
  - Parks & Green Spaces
  - Libraries, Arts & Culture
  - Civic Buildings
  - Events & Tourism
  - Strategic Projects
  - Innovation & Technology Centres
  - Local Training & Enterprise

- To assess the impact of partnerships with and resources and services provided by external organisations including the Welsh Government, joint local government services, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies, and quasi-departmental non-governmental bodies on the effectiveness of Council service delivery.
- To report to an appropriate Cabinet or Council meeting on its findings and to make recommendations on measures, which may enhance Council performance or service delivery in this area.

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## Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee Membership



Councillor Nigel Howells  
(Chairperson)



Councillor Iona Gordon



Councillor Jane Henshaw



Councillor Gavin Hill-John



Councillor Chris Lay



Councillor Thomas Parkhill



Councillor Adrian Robson



Councillor Abdul Sattar



Councillor Ed Stubbs

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