

# Carnegie UK response to the Senedd's Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee consultation on priorities for the new Senedd term

August 2026

## 1. What are the most important issues relating to public administration that the Committee should focus on during this Senedd term?

The Committee should focus on whether public administration in Wales is properly organised and resourced to deliver the long-term, preventative and collaborative approaches that its current policy ambitions require.

Wales is unique in the UK in that it already has a strong legislative foundation for achieving these aims, in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

However, as the Senedd's recent post-legislative inquiry found, progress on implementing the Act has stalled. There is an opportunity now to recapture the world-leading momentum of the Act, and for the Committee to play a constructive role in how it is taken forward.

While there is broad support for wellbeing-based and preventative approaches across public services in Wales, progress depends on strengthening the systems, culture and accountability mechanisms needed to put the Act into practice.

Effective public administration depends on three core areas:

- governance that supports institutions by actively engaging with them and holding them to account for setting and working towards wellbeing outcomes;
- tools to direct spending to what matters most for people in the present day and what they think matters for their children and grandchildren;
- ways of working that build trust and enable clear and frank communication at all levels to facilitate better collaborative processes.

These core areas can be addressed in several ways. First, consideration should be given to whether the governance bodies established to drive long-term change, such as the Wellbeing of Future Generations Commissioner's office, have the resources to fulfil their statutory functions effectively, including scrutiny, accountability, capacity-building and support for implementation.

Second, the Committee should examine how the wellbeing goals are reflected in budget-setting and spending decisions. Tools such as wellbeing cost-benefit analysis and early intervention frameworks (outlined in Carnegie UK's report on [Budgeting for Wellbeing](#), can help embed long-term outcomes into budget processes, ensure that resource allocation

aligns with policy objectives, and enable greater transparency about the impact of public spending.

Third, the Committee should explore how budgeting processes can better support long-term and preventative approaches. Multi-year funding arrangements could replace short-term and siloed processes to enable better long-term planning, innovation, and more robust evaluation, as well as greater collaboration. Alongside this, the Committee should explore how government and public bodies assess and measure preventative investment, drawing on international evidence to better understand long-term social, economic and environmental returns.

Finally, organisational capacity and culture within the public sector must not be overlooked. Transformational change is difficult to achieve when resources are stretched. Reform requires investment in leadership, ways of working, learning and development in order to give public servants, at all levels, the support needed to adopt new ways of working and to innovate.

These issues point to a key consideration for the Committee: whether the Welsh public sector has the governance arrangements, budgetary tools, and ways of working needed to deliver its long-term ambitions. Strengthening these areas would help ensure the Act is not only embedded in policy, but reflected in the decisions, relationships and accountability mechanisms that shape outcomes for current and future generations.

## **2. The Cabinet Minister for Government Effectiveness and the Constitution made a Plenary statement on his priorities on 23 June 2026. Which areas raised by the Cabinet Minister relating to public administration should the Committee consider further during this term?**

The areas raised by the Cabinet Minister that the Committee should consider further are those concerned with moving from ambition to implementation: strengthening the Well-being of Future Generations Act, improving decision-making through better evidence and data, and clarifying priorities across government.

The Minister's commitment to "strengthen how the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 applies across Government" is particularly important. Wales has been internationally recognised for putting long-term, collective wellbeing into legislation, but the impact of the Act depends on whether its ways of working are embedded consistently in the culture, systems and day-to-day practice of government and public services. Evidence from Carnegie UK's work on wellbeing frameworks suggests that progress often stalls when principles such as long-termism, prevention, collaboration, integration and involvement are treated as aspirations rather than operational expectations. For the Act to deliver "meaningful and measurable change", there must be clarity about what working in these ways means in practice, who should be doing so, and how progress will be scrutinised.

The Committee should therefore examine whether the Welsh Government and wider public sector have the leadership, skills and institutional capacity required to embed the Act effectively. This should include attention not only to political and senior leadership, but to the middle layer of public administration: the managers and officials responsible for translating national commitments into operational practice. Without investment in organisational development, learning, data capability and cross-sector working, there is a risk that the Act remains a strong legislative framework without sufficient practical effect.

The Minister's emphasis on evidence-led government is also welcome. Timely and comparable data is essential for understanding whether public administration is improving wellbeing outcomes, identifying inequalities between places and population groups, and assessing long-term preventative impact. The Committee could usefully explore whether current data systems are sufficient to support decisions beyond short-term service pressures, and whether Wales can learn from wider work on wellbeing and Beyond GDP measurement elsewhere in the UK and internationally.

Finally, the Committee should consider how the Government intends to prioritise across its public administration reform agenda. Commitments to clearer objectives and more effective government are valuable, but they must be accompanied by an honest account of trade-offs, resource constraints and the outcomes that should act as a shared "north star" across departments. A stronger focus on prioritisation would help ensure that activity across government is aligned with the long-term wellbeing goals of the Act, rather than adding further complexity to an already pressured system.

### 3. Anything else?

Carnegie UK has worked with partners in Wales across a range of topics. We recently worked with the Institute of Welsh Affairs (IWA), the Centre for Welsh Politics and Society/WISERD, and the Co-production Network for Wales to convene a conversation among people who have lived and worked with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act in order to gather and share learning, with findings outlined in our [recent report](#).

We heard that, while there have been examples of successful co-production within the public sector in Wales, these have not addressed wider structural issues in the public sector. Observations suggest that there has been limited success in creating strong connections between community groups and public services. This is reflected in Carnegie UK's [Life in the UK Index](#), which finds that democratic wellbeing lags behind other areas of wellbeing, and is lower in Wales than the UK average.

Carnegie UK believes that public participation should be treated as a core feature of effective public administration and is central to improving democratic wellbeing. For Wales, this is particularly relevant to the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where involvement is one of the five ways of working and where long-term decisions depend on understanding what matters to people now and for future generations.

As noted in Carnegie UK's "[Blueprints for Democratic Wellbeing](#)" report, evidence shows strengthening public participation helps public bodies build trust, surface lived experience, test difficult trade-offs and improve the legitimacy of decisions about priorities, prevention and spending. Furthermore, Carnegie UK's recent [parliamentary polling on deliberative democracy](#) showed that MSs were open to using deliberative approaches.

The Committee should therefore consider how participatory and deliberative approaches can be used more consistently across Welsh public administration, including how institutions are supported to act on what they hear and demonstrate how public input has shaped decisions.