

Foreword

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys – Blaenau Gwent provides a unique environment to live, work and play. Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future.

The Tech Valleys Vision, Valleys Regional Park and Cardiff Capital Regional Deal combined with new transport links through the soon to be completed Heads of the Valley Road and rail routes to Cardiff bring a bright future. Together with the amazing location and surrounding parkland our people and communities make Blaenau Gwent great. Our people have influence on the local, national and international stage in the arts, sport and politics for many generations – putting Blaenau Gwent on the map for all the right reasons.

The role of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners is to maximise on the assets we have, doing more with less and doing it better. It is right that we recognise the challenges we face. The historical decline of heavy industry continues to impact on employment prospects and intergenerational opportunities. We face issues with health and wealth inequality, the rise of online shopping and the impact on our town centres and social issues affecting our families and young people. As a Council we face increasing demand for some of our services putting more pressure on our available budgets. But we are tackling these issues head on with our partners, businesses and the local community. We are looking at how we spend our money to achieve the best outcomes for our residents, we are supporting new and existing businesses, we are looking at our assets to achieve new income streams and we are removing barriers to enable residents to access what they need. All in all, we are looking forward to a positive future.

Across Gwent, all councils, including Blaenau Gwent, will work towards becoming a region that aims to tackle and reduce inequalities, based on the Marmot principles. We will work across all public services in our area to ensure that our policies, approaches and resources are geared towards creating a fairer, more equal society for today's residents and future generations. This will be at the centre of how we develop and deliver our services across early years, education and skills, transport, housing, places and spaces, and jobs and businesses. As an anti-poverty council, we will do everything within our power to raise expectations and tackle inequalities using a universal proportionality approach, whereby universal support is provided but resource is focused on where it is needed most. By valuing and promoting good health, education and learning we can help people to reach their full potential. This in turn will contribute to creating better informed and connected communities throughout Blaenau Gwent that are fair, open and welcoming to all; where everyone gets to play an active part.



**Councillor Stephen
Thomas**
Leader of the Council

Stephen Vickers
**Joint Chief
Executive**



Introduction

Welcome to our Annual Self-Assessment and Well-Being report for 2023–2024. The report provides an assessment of service delivery throughout 2023/24, including what we have done well and, more importantly, where further improvements are required. The focus of the self-assessment is the Council’s Corporate Plan priorities, known as Well-being Objectives, and providing an assessment of how well the Council feels it has achieved these and where further improvement is required.

The self-assessment has been written to consider:

- **How well are we doing? Narrative of the activity that has taken place;**
- **How do we know? Qualitative and quantitative evidence provided; and**
- **What and how can we do better? Actions to implement over the coming years.**

This self-assessment has been developed and includes the information available at a point in time. The Council’s approach to self-assessment is an ongoing and fluid process of review, and the assessment will be updated as and when more information becomes available.

Like all public bodies across Wales, we are required to comply with certain statutory duties. This Self-Assessment and Well-Being Report, combines our statutory reporting requirements and statutory publishing duties, under both the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections Act 2021. Both Acts require:

- An annual report to be published to report of our progress against our Well-being objectives (WBFG Act 2015); and
- Publication of an annual Self-Assessment Report, setting out the extent to which we are meeting our performance requirements.

Local Government & Elections Act 2021

This is our third report, under the requirements of the Local Government and Elections Act 2021 and at the heart of this new performance regime, is the requirement for all councils to keep their performance arrangements under review. Councils need to do this through robust, continuous self-assessment of their findings, of which are reported through this annual report.

Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (WBFG Act) puts into law seven priority well-being goals that all public bodies are required to work towards. It details the way in which public bodies must work and collaborate with each other to improve the well-being of Wales.

In working towards these goals, public bodies are required to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. This report demonstrates how we have linked our key priority well-being objective areas to this Act and our commitment towards it.

