

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



Annual Scrutiny Report 2023-24



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Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report 2023-24 which gives an overview of work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee.

All Scrutiny Members have effectively challenged and influenced the Council's decision-making process and added value to a wide range of activity, in order to deliver effective outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent, some of this work is highlighted in the following sections of this report.

Following changes to the democratic structure in 2022, Blaenau Gwent now has four scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council, and the new structure continues to allow non-Cabinet members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve and effectively challenge Cabinet on the decisions it makes.

The Council's Scrutiny function is made up of non-Cabinet Members. The non-Cabinet Members are appointed to sit on the Scrutiny Committees to support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

The Committees have no decision-making powers, however, they act as a check and balance on the powers exercised and decisions taken by the Cabinet.

Introduction (continued)

The Scrutiny Committees allow non-Cabinet Members to have a greater say in Council matters by:

- ◆ Assisting the Cabinet in the development of policy;
- ◆ Monitoring performance of the Council and its partners;
- ◆ Examining the impact and implementation of Cabinet decisions and policies;
- ◆ Holding the Leader, Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team to account;
- ◆ Listening to the views of the public and make sure the public voice is heard; and
- ◆ Scrutinising external organisations who provide services to our residents.

Scrutiny is most effective when it is focussed on a limited number of in-depth topics and priorities. When considering agenda items, Scrutiny Committees should have regard to the likely value and impact gained for any report or review. This will need to be carefully balanced against the time and resources required to undertake the activity.

Other items of interest or information required to enhance the Members knowledge and skills in a particular area, can be provided to Members via Member Briefing Sessions, Directorate Briefing Sessions and Member Training and Development.

All Scrutiny Meetings are arranged as hybrid meetings, i.e. Committee Members and Officers can attend virtually via Microsoft Teams or physically attend the meeting in the General Offices. Members of the public are also able to attend the meetings either virtually or physically.

All Democratic Meetings are recorded and uploaded onto the Blaenau Gwent website.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent

The four scrutiny committees of the Council are:

- ◆ Corporate Overview and Performance;
- ◆ Partnership;
- ◆ People; and
- ◆ Place.

As agreed at the May 2022 Council Annual General Meeting, each scrutiny committee comprises of 9 Elected Members.

Each scrutiny committee has a specific remit. Full details of the areas covered by each scrutiny committee are highlighted later in this report.

The scrutiny agenda structure has ensured members undertake in-depth challenge for each item under discussion. Council agreed that the number of items on a scrutiny agenda would be reduced to a maximum of two items, under the categories of 'Pre-Decision' and 'Performance Monitoring', this would ensure that the agendas were focussed and support effective decision making. The reduction in the number of items for scrutiny has also ensured that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is not being overburdened with monitoring items.

Expert witnesses / invitees have been invited and contributed to scrutiny meetings, including the Education Achievement Service (EAS), the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) and the Shared Resource Service (SRS).

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and developed their knowledge and understanding of specific topics.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny meetings are held to discuss and review the operational activity of Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent to contribute to improvements and ensure consistency of practice where appropriate.

Directorate briefings are also held quarterly with individual Directorates, to which all Members are invited. These closely focussed sessions provide information and detail on service areas to raise the interest and enthusiasm of Members.

Forward Work Programmes

Work to develop the **Forward Work Programmes (FWPs) for 2023-24** began in March 2023, work included:

- Meeting with service areas to consider topics for inclusion in the Draft Scrutiny, Council, Cabinet and Governance and Audit Forward Work Programmes.
- Met with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs to discuss the Scrutiny FWPs.
- The FWPs were formally signed off by each of the Committees in June 2023, then translated and made available for public view on the BG website.

The Forward Work Programmes being fluid documents, were regularly reviewed by Chairs and Vice-Chairs and officers throughout the year at Agenda Management meetings and by all committee members at each scrutiny committee meeting.

The Forward Work Programmes are available on the Blaenau Gwent Council website, links to individual Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Committee pages below.

Blaenau Gwent Scrutiny in Figures 2023/24



27 Pre-Decision Scrutiny
Agenda Items



232 Unique Views of
Committee Meetings
Online



59 Member Briefings
Sessions held



69% of Members
attended Scrutiny
Committee meetings



8 Number of expert
witnesses / invitees
contributed to
scrutiny meetings



Place Scrutiny Committee
Most Viewed Scrutiny
Committee Meeting on
5th September 2023.



24 Formal Scrutiny
Committee Meetings
held

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee has had a busy year! There have been 10 meetings with 31 items for the committee to scrutinise. These items have been varied and include comprehensive reports on the Council's finances, as well as reports on policies and plans (to name a few).

In addition, there have been several member briefings to aid knowledge and enhance skills.

I am really pleased with the level of commitment shown by all members of the committee, both in terms of attendance and the level of engagement. The committee has asked probing and challenging questions and taken part in constructive debate on a number of the items presented. Committee members continue to make use of action sheets to ensure all action points are addressed at the next meeting.

The standard of reports has been excellent, and I must also recognise the work from the officers in both preparing and presenting these.

Special thanks must go to the vice Chair – Cllr J Thomas for her valued support throughout the year.



Cllr Joanna Wilkins
Chair, Corporate Overview and
Performance Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance at Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Joanna Wilkins (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Jacqueline Thomas (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Carl Bainton (June-October 2023) (1 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor John Hill (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Ellen Jones (8 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Chris Smith (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Councillor Tommy Smith (10 of 10 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Council as a whole with regards to Organisational Development, Communication and Marketing, Equalities, Customers and Citizens, Welsh Language, Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, this committee also monitor the financial management of the Council.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Engagement and Participation Strategy

Activity

A report was presented to the committee on 22nd June 2023. The report provided detail on Member and wider public involvement in the development of a new Engagement and Participation Strategy for the Council. The Committee was asked to agree to a joint Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny and Democratic Services Committee workshop on 18th July 2023 to shape the development of the initial strategy.

Outcome

At the workshop members were asked to consider the method and levels of engagement and participation to contribute towards the new strategy and to review the development plan for the policy; to consider how the new strategy will meet the requirements within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and other statutory obligations; and to review the development of the strategy through staff, public and member engagement. Members discussed that it was important that they have a visible presence during engagement in consultations and the importance of these being undertaken in the community rather than expecting the community to visit hubs. Members felt that the Council needs to be proactive in feeding back to the community, letting them know the outcomes of engagement and what is planned and what isn't and the reasons why, if something can't happen.

Members asked that documentation is simplified using easily readable infographics and communications and that learning from past events was undertaken.

The draft strategy was presented to the Committee in January 2024 and the committee agreed that the strategy progress to wider consultation. The final strategy will then be presented to the committee in July 2024.

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Fire Safety at Work Policy
- ◆ Digital Strategy
- ◆ Customer Service Strategy
- ◆ Workforce Strategy Review and Action Plan
- ◆ Review of Recruitment and Selection Policy
- ◆ Engagement and Participation Strategy
- ◆ Capital Strategy Review
- ◆ Strategic Equality Plan 2024-28
- ◆ Review of Agile Working, Agile Working and Flexible Working Policies
- ◆ Fostering Friendly Employer
- ◆ Council's Corporate Plan 2022/27 Review

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring
- ◆ Sickness Absence Performance 2022/23
- ◆ Annual Assessment of Council's Performance 2022/23
- ◆ Treasury Management 2023/24
- ◆ Welsh Language Annual Report 2022/23
- ◆ Health and Safety Annual Report

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Personal Safety/ Violence & Aggression Training
- ◆ Engagement and Participation Strategy Workshop
- ◆ Digital Strategy
- ◆ Results of Agile Working Policy
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 1
- ◆ Treasury Management
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 2
- ◆ Local Government Finance
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 3
- ◆ Corporate Services Directorate Briefing x 2

People Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The People Scrutiny Committee has continued its work to scrutinise and challenge across a wide-ranging work programme, with committee members using skills and experience to put forward recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

In Children's Services, the Committee has examined critical areas such as The Childcare Offer, National Adoption Service, Corporate Parenting, and work is continuing around the Children's Residential Provision in Blaenau Gwent and committee continues to monitor this work.

In Adult services, the Committee has examined a varied work programme scrutinising reports on critical areas such as, Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional (Gwent) Strategy 2023-2026, Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/23 and the Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2 updates, and critical areas such as the Integrated Care Fund and Living Independently.

In Education, the Committee have scrutinised reports and made recommendations to the Cabinet in areas that include home-to-school transport, ALN provision and strategies, Education and safeguarding, schools' admissions policy and the improving schools' programme. Members also continue to monitor recommendations from Estyn and deliberated on an end-of-year report from the Interim Director of Education.

The Committee agreed that both departments have responded well to external audits and developed solid action plans to address any external recommendations received.



Cllr Tommy Smith
Chair, People Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance at People Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Tommy Smith (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Jen Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Carl Bainton (June-Nov 2024) (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Jules Gardner (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor George Humphries (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor John P Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Godfrey Thomas (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor David Wilkshire (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **People Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Education and Social Services Directorates and Corporate Safeguarding.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2025/26

Activity

The committee was presented with the report and asked to provide their views on the documentation in preparation for 2025/26 admission round, prior to publication in April 2024.

Outcome

The committee considered the changes within the policy and asked questions regarding the capacity review; the changes relating to the admissions of applicants from neighbouring authorities and also regarding the allocation of places at Brynmawr Foundation School.

Following discussion, the committee supported the changes to the policy and recommended that Cabinet approve the policy.

Cabinet agreed the revised policy at its meeting on 10th April 2024.

People Scrutiny Committee

The People Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional (Gwent) Strategy 2023-2026
- ◆ Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy
- ◆ ALN Policy Review
- ◆ Education Digital Strategy
- ◆ School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Safeguarding Performance reporting for Social Services, Education and Corporate Safeguarding
- ◆ Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2022/23
- ◆ Improving Schools Programme
- ◆ Children's Residential Provision in Blaenau Gwent
- ◆ Progress Against Estyn Recommendations
- ◆ Director of Social Services Quarter 1 and 2
- ◆ Director of Education Quarter 1 and 2
- ◆ Key Stage 4 Results
- ◆ Proposed Sustainable Communities for Learning Rolling Programme

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Safeguarding in Education
- ◆ Education Directorate Briefing x 2
- ◆ Action Short of Strike (ASOS)
- ◆ Safe Reduction of the Children Looked After Strategy
- ◆ My Support Team
- ◆ Working with EAS
- ◆ South-East Wales Adoption
- ◆ WG Review of the Middle Sector & Key Stage 4 Data 2023
- ◆ Social Services Directorate Briefing
- ◆ Education Transformation
- ◆ Attendance, Exclusions & Elective Home Education

Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The committee met six times throughout 2023/24 and provided consideration and recommendations on a number of reports, such as providing considerations to the Cabinet on:

- Adoption of the Highway Asset Management Plan;
- Placemaking Plan for Abertillery;
- Adoption of Litter and Dog Bin Policy; and
- Serious Violence Duty.

The members have also attended a number of interesting and informative briefing sessions, covering a wider remit of areas.

Members have been engaging and have asked a number of probing and challenging questions to ensure a full understanding of the reports presented.

We look forward to continuing the work of this committee into 2024/25.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their attendance and constructive input over the year. Special recognition and thanks must go to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Ross Leadbeater for his support throughout the year.



Cllr Malcolm Cross

Chair, Place Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance at Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Malcolm Cross (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Sonia Behr (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Keith Chaplin (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Gareth A Davies (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Jules Gardner (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Lee Parsons (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Diane Rowberry (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Place Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Community Services and Regeneration Directorate, Decarbonisation and Climate Change, and Community Safety including CCTV.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Waste Management and Recycling Strategy Review

Activity

The committee was presented with the Abertillery Placemaking Plan and were asked to support the Plan, its vision and core ambitions for the future.

Outcome

The committee discussed the placemaking plan's five biggest strengths and opportunities that could support the Council in transforming the Town of Abertillery. The committee acknowledged that these strengths and opportunities would provide a solid foundation upon which to build Abertillery's future prosperity and community wellbeing.

The committee supported and recommended approval by the Cabinet in order that the plan be finalised and steps taken towards the implementation of the projects that were contained within it.

The Cabinet approved the Abertillery Placemaking Plan on 29th November 2023.

Place Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Highways Asset Management Plan
- ◆ Abertillery Placemaking Plan
- ◆ Litter and Dog Bin Policy
- ◆ Serious Violence Duty

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance End of Year report 2022/23
- ◆ Climate Change, Net Zero Annual Report 2022/23
- ◆ Waste and Recycling Annual Performance
- ◆ Disabled Adaptations – Quarter 2 2022/23
- ◆ Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance – Quarters 1 and 2 – 2023/24
- ◆ Overview Position of Blaenau Gwent Town Centre CCTV Zones 2023/24

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Waste & Recycling
- ◆ Bus Services
- ◆ Scale & Pace Project
- ◆ CCTV
- ◆ Destination Management
- ◆ Tai Calon
- ◆ Climate Change
- ◆ Town Centre Footfall
- ◆ Enforcement Service
- ◆ An overview of community safety
- ◆ Connected Communities
- ◆ Counter Terrorism
- ◆ HIVE
- ◆ Biodiversity Annual Review
- ◆ Cartrefi Hydrogen Homes Update
- ◆ Air Quality & The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill
- ◆ Disposal Policy
- ◆ Community Asset Transfers (CAT's)
- ◆ Waste & Recycling Fleet Renewal
- ◆ Energy Prospectus Annual Review
- ◆ Cardiff City Region
- ◆ Business Case Acquisition of a Commercial Premises
- ◆ Workplace Recycling Regulations (April 2024)
- ◆ Tai Calon Proposed Rule Change
- ◆ Serious Violence
- ◆ Biodiversity Workshop - Nature Emergency
- ◆ Biodiversity Workshop - Blaenau Gwent & Torfaen Local Nature Recovery Plan
- ◆ Biodiversity Workshop - Pollinator Policy

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The Committee has looked to scrutinise the main areas of oversight and governance arrangement of partner organisations so that they are adequate and effective, covering off the principles of good governance namely Accountability; Leadership; Integrity; Stewardship and Transparency.

The main Partners scrutinised included:

- The Regional Partnership Board;
- Shared Resource Service;
- Aneurin Leisure Trust; and
- Education Achievement Service.

Performance monitoring was conducted on Aneurin Leisure Trust, the Welsh Public Library Standards and the SRS.

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and further developed our knowledge and understanding of specific topics.

Members of this new committee worked well together and provided constructive challenge, assisted the Cabinet in the development of Policy as well as monitoring the performance of Partners.



Cllr Wayne Hodgins

Chair, Partnership Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance at Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Derrick Bevan (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor David C Davies (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Malcolm Day (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Ellen Jones (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Chris Smith (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Lisa Winnett (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Dean Woods (1 of 3 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Partnership Scrutiny Committee** is to monitor the oversight and governance arrangements of identified partners: Aneurin Leisure Trust, Shared Resource Service and Education Achievement Service. The Committee also received updates from the Regional Partnership Board.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Public Interest Report – Assurance Review Findings

Activity

Council considered a report of the Audit General for Wales' Public Interest Report on *'Deficiencies in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's governance and oversight arrangements in respect of the Council owned company, Silent Valley Waste Services Limited'*. Council agreed this report and recommended that *'The Council should commission a review to seek assurance that its governance and oversight arrangements in respect of other companies in which it had an interest were adequate and effective, and that the deficiencies identified in the report were not more widespread.'*

Outcome

The Committee supported the review and recommended to Council that:

- A Link Officer is identified within the Council to establish regular liaison meetings with Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by end March 2024
- Organise a Members Briefing on the operations and services provided by the Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria by end March 2024
- All relevant strategic documents, annual business plan and accounts for Gwent Archives and Gwent Crematoria are included in the Forward Work Programme for the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for 2024-25, and Council where relevant.
- Develop the Terms of Reference into a 'governance toolkit' for use by officers across the Council for providing assurance against existing companies and in the event of the establishment of any new ones by end March 2024.

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Review of Governance and oversight arrangements of companies of which the Council has an interest
- ◆ Shared Resource Service
- ◆ Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring
- ◆ Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2021/22
- ◆ Local Well-being Partnership - Local Well-being Plan
- ◆ Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2022/23

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Aneurin Leisure Trust Sustainable Energy
- ◆ Gwent Archives
- ◆ Marmot Principles and Building a Fairer Gwent

Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

The Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee was established in March 2023, to scrutinise the effectiveness of the Regional Public Services Board.

The core statutory functions of the Committee are:

- To review or scrutinise the decisions made, or actions taken by the Board;
- To review or scrutinise the Board's governance arrangements;
- To make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- To consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- To carry out other functions in relation to the Board that are imposed on it by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In addition to these functions the Committee can also consider:

- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Assessment;
- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Plan;
- The effectiveness of performance measurement arrangements;
- The level of commitment from individual partners to the work of the Public Services Board;
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in communicating its work, objectives and outcomes to its stakeholders; and
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in addressing the issue of pooled funding to tackle priorities.

To enable it to fulfil its scrutiny function the Scrutiny Committee will be provided with evidence in the form of:

- Assessment of local well-being;
- Annual reports; and
- Reporting on joint projects directed by the *Regional Public Services Board*.

The Committee should recognise that the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 only allows there to be scrutiny of the 'corporate body' of the PSB, and not the individual members. The legislation states:

"The committee can require any member of the board to give evidence, but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a member of the board under this Act."

Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

The membership of the committee comprises of an equal number of elected members from each local authority area, excluding Cabinet Members and also nominated additional members from partner organisations:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Caerphilly County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Monmouthshire County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Newport City Council – 2 Elected Members
- Torfaen County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – 1 Elected Member
- Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations – 1 Representative
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service – 2 Elected Members
- Natural Resources Wales to be involved but no representative on the Joint Scrutiny Committee

A workshop was held in March 2023, at which the committee agreed:

- Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson
- Quorum
- Voting
- Time and Preferred Day of Future Meetings
- Pre-Meeting arrangements
- Cycle of Meetings

Since March 2023, the committee has met four times and has considered items that include:

- Gwent Well-Being Plan 2023-2028
- Terms of Reference for the Committee
- Gwent Public Services Board Draft Performance Management Framework
- Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health Equity and the Social Determinants
- Gwent Well-Being Plan 2023-28 Delivery Plan Development

It is intended to hold the first meeting of the 2024/25 cycle during September 2024, to consider:

- Gwent Public Services Board Annual Report
- Delivery Framework for the Gwent Public Services Board Marmot Region

Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees

	Agreed Committee Membership Numbers	Number of Meetings held June 23 – Apr 24	Total Members to Attend June 23 – Apr 24	Actual Attendance June 23 - Apr 24	% of Attendance June 23 - Apr 24	% of Attendance Sept 22 – Apr 23	Number of Meetings Held Sept 22 – Apr 23
Corporate Overview and Performance	9	10	90	79	88	92	9
People	8	6	54	43	80	83	6
Place	9	6	54	49	90	82	5
Partnership	9	3	27	25	92	86	4
Overall Total	36	25	225	156	69	87	24

How the public can get involved in the Scrutiny Process

Members of the public are welcome to attend any Committee meeting to observe proceedings (unless there is an exempt item). Committee agendas and papers are published one week in advance of the meeting, on the Council's website. Currently Scrutiny meetings are offered to be held on a hybrid basis with some members being in a meeting room at the General Offices and some attending virtually via Microsoft Teams. All meetings are recorded and uploaded to the council website, normally by the following day, to enable members of the public to view the meetings online. Nevertheless, should a member of the public request to attend the General Offices or via Microsoft Teams to observe a meeting, provisions are be put in place to enable the committee meeting to be observed.

The Council is currently preparing an Engagement and Participation Strategy to include ways in which members of the public can engage in the democratic process. Some common themes received from the public during the consultation were:

- Optimise timing of committee meetings to ensure working people can participate.
- Providing more information about the decision-making process and decisions or outcomes from committee meetings via communications channels.
- Increased opportunities for people to engage directly with councillors, either face-to-face or via online MS Teams or Zoom meetings.
- Encourage people to participate in local democracy, with 80-90% of respondents wanting to see 'more' opportunities to find out how the Council works and attend, watch, speak or submit questions to Committee meetings.
- Some interest in learning more about the role of a County Borough Councillor and how to become one in future.
- Work will be undertaken throughout the 2024/25 cycle to embed some of the consultation themes more effectively into the democratic process.

Agendas, reports and minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's Website: [Councillors and Committees | Blaenau Gwent CBC](#)

Members of the public can suggest items for the Scrutiny Committees either by writing, emailing or phoning the Democratic Team. Information can also be found on the Council's Website: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Get Involved with Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

All contact information can be found at the end of this document.

Legislation

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains a number of provisions to promote diversity, involvement and participation in council democratic arrangements. Some of these provisions include:

- Encouraging local people to participate in decision making;
- Development of a Participation Strategy;
- The electronic broadcasting of meetings and multi-location meetings;
- Develop a multi-location meeting policy;
- A review of the council's petition scheme; and
- Opportunities for job sharing for members of the Cabinet.

Well-being of Future Generations (WCFG) Act

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development - the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, ensuring that all our service areas are giving it due consideration so that the services we provide meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a designated public body under the WCFG Act, therefore, has a duty to ensure it is giving due consideration to the act.

The Council's corporate reporting template requires officers to consider how the report topic supports the WCFG Act.

This led to a new Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process -being developed which incorporated wider policy considerations beyond equality and socio-economics such as:

- ◆ Well-being of Future Generation Act Goals;
- ◆ New Corporate Objectives;
- ◆ Armed forces (new national duties); and
- ◆ Community Safety considerations.

The Policy Team continues to provide on-going support, advice and guidance to those completing the IIA process.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

As a defined public body in Wales, the Council must fulfil a specific duty for the assessment of impact. This relates to the likely impact of any new or existing (when reviewed) policies or practices. There is a key focus when assessing impact on the ability to meet the Council's three general duties under the Act, including assessing any positive or negative impact on groups covered by the nine protected characteristics.

Where it has been deemed there is a substantial (or likely) negative impact the Council must report this, accordingly, outlining any decisions taken with any mitigations considered/actioned.

A review of the way the Council carries out impact assessments was undertaken in 2021/22. This fell in-line with new legal expectations from the Act, the Socio-Economic Duty.

The process was also strengthened to ensure all equality and socio-economic factors were fully considered when making decisions, reviewing existing or developing new policies. The requirement to carry out and report on impact assessing continued to be expected in corporate reporting templates for decision making.

Future Planned Developments

- Implementation of the democratic aspects of the Participation and Engagement Strategy to support how members of the public can engage in the democratic process.
- Live broadcasting of full Council meetings will commence within the 2024/25 cycle.
- Identifying how young people can actively engage in the democratic process
- Involving the Chair and Vice Chair of Governance and Audit Committee and Democratic Services Committee in the remit of the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Terms of Reference when agenda items relate to chairing and skills.
- As agreed by Council, following a recommendation from Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee, a pilot will commence holding meetings later in the day in order to increase participation in the process.

Contact Information

If you would like to find out more about the work we have undertaken or how to become involved in future Scrutiny activity please contact:

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You can contact your local Councillor and talk to them about Scrutiny.

Contact details for Councillors can be found on our website at [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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Ebbw Vale
NP23 6AA

Web: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Blaenau Gwent \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Additional documents which may be of interest to you can be found on our website.

Council Minutes, Agendas and Reports

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Council Minutes, Agendas & Reports \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Council's Constitution [Blaenau Gwent CBC: The Council Constitution](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 [Local Government and Election \(Wales\) Act 2021](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 [Well-being of Future Generations Wales](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.