

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A Community Strategy for Blaenau Gwent

2010 – 2030

Consultation Draft



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A Welcome

Welcome to 'Making a Difference', Blaenau Gwent's new Community Strategy.

The purpose is to set out the key priorities for our communities from 2010 onwards and what will be delivered to make Blaenau Gwent an even better place to live, work and visit.

Our shared vision is for an exciting future in which everyone experiences the benefits that will come from the regeneration of our communities.

This is just the beginning. Everyone in Blaenau Gwent has a role to play. We must make the most of the opportunities that will come from the significant investment that has been secured as we are unlikely to see the same scale of funding for at least another generation.

We have to build on our successful start to ensure the whole of Blaenau Gwent benefits. By working together we can build first class services during what will be challenging times.

The Welsh Assembly Government has already shown its confidence in Blaenau Gwent through the massive investment they are prepared to make. I believe that when you have read this strategy you too will feel confident that collectively we will 'Make a Difference'.



Councillor Des Hillman

Chair of Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board

Leader of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

INTRODUCTION

Blaenau Gwent is changing.

The last 20 years has seen the area presented with a range of new social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities as it has moved from its traditional industrial past, and looked to regenerate itself for the 21st century.

The main issue driving this change has been the loss of Blaenau Gwent's traditional economic base. The closure of primary industries such as coal mines and steelworks have led to an overall loss in jobs, as we move towards an economy where our manufacturing and service jobs have to compete with all of the world's emerging regions and countries.

Also, the way we live our lives has changed. We are all influenced by technology, which has led to significant changes in the way we shop, communicate, enjoy our free time, and benefit from services such as health, care and education.

There have also been significant global pressures, with factors such as population growth and a dependence on fossil fuels putting pressure on our environment. This has brought issues such as oil price and climate change into every living room in Blaenau Gwent.

These are some of the key issues that our area has been challenged with in the last 20 years. Some of these challenges have been difficult and still pose concerns and problems today, such as low levels of employment. Others, such as improvements in our environment and technology have been more positive and have led to clear improvements in people's lives.

We should remember all the excellent work that has been done over the last few decades, all of which will provide a solid foundation that will help us achieve our vision of making:

Blaenau Gwent a better place to live, work and visit.

This Community Strategy will set out this vision by highlighting a number of key work areas, known as themes, in the foreseeable future for Blaenau Gwent. It will also outline what needs to be done for each theme, all of which have been identified as important by residents and organisations from Blaenau Gwent.

BLAENAU GWENT PAST AND PRESENT

A Story Of Continual Change Over Time

BLAENAU GWENT'S HISTORY

Before the early 1800s the area that is now Blaenau Gwent, was a quiet rural area dominated by farmland. The start of the industrial revolution in Great Britain was significant to the area, as people looked to take advantage of the abundant supply of primary resources that could be found in the area. In the first instance this took the form of ironworks, quickly followed by coal mining and steel making.



As the industries grew, so did the demand for labour, and the population of Blaenau Gwent grew remarkably. Between the early 19th and early 20th Century the population rose from around 1,200 to well over 110,000.

As our communities thrived so did the need for services such as education, health, shops and leisure opportunities. This led to the growth of a network of communities and neighbourhoods throughout the area, which make up the towns and settlements that we know today.

The people of Blaenau Gwent had a strong work and community ethic, and this was shown by them campaigning together to make improvements to their quality of life. Examples of this include the first ever Board of Health established in England and Wales, campaigning for electoral reform, abolishing company run shops, and the reduction in working hours, many of which influence the way people live their lives today.

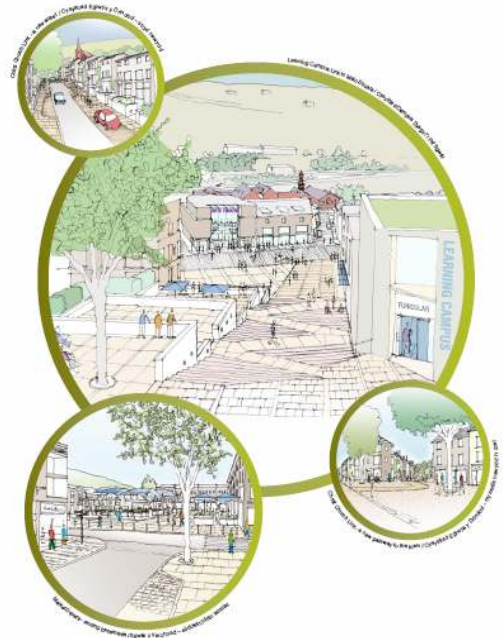
Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage, and is able to boast many ancient monuments, historical buildings and landscapes that reflect its unique archaeology and social history.

PRESENT DAY BLAENAU GWENT

The period from the late 1980s has seen the formation of Blaenau Gwent as it is known today. It became a County Borough Council in 1996 following local government reorganisation, changing from a district of the former Gwent County.

In the last 20 years the people of Blaenau Gwent have faced many challenges, with the closure of all the coal mines in late 1980s, and the Ebbw Vale Steelworks in 2002 leading to many job losses.

In an attempt to reduce the impact of this, significant effort was put into changing the focus of our economy towards the manufacturing and services industry. However, over the period there has been an overall loss of jobs as many of our young people and families have had to move away in search of work. This is highlighted by a 5% decrease in the population between 1991 and 2010, which is in contrast to the overall trend for Wales where there has been a 4% increase.



SOME OF THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING BLAENAU GWENT IN 2010

- Some of the highest levels of unemployment and economic inactivity
- Low levels of business start-ups, and poor survival rates for new businesses
- High level of benefit dependency
- One of the lowest income levels in England and Wales
- Comparably low levels of qualifications
- Below average educational attainment for our children and young people
- Lower than average life expectancy
- High levels of reported limiting long-term illness
- Ageing of the housing stock
- House prices significantly below the national average
- Comparably low levels of tourism

The impact of these issues cannot be under-estimated. Even so, in the last 20 years the area has seen significant improvement, following major levels of investment.

SOME OF THE MAJOR PROJECTS OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS

- Significant improvements in our natural and built environment, helped by flagship projects such as the Garden Festival in 1992, and the regeneration of old industrial sites across the local area, e.g. at Llanhilleth, Six Bells, Brynmawr and Tredegar.
- Improvements in the availability of quality modern housing, and the opportunity for more people to be able to own their own homes.
- Improvements in our transport system, with the opening of the Ebbw Valley Railway, and significant road improvements including the Heads of the Valleys Dualling and major trunk roads and bypasses.
- Continual improvement in educational attainment of our children and young people.
- The expansion and strengthening of our manufacturing sector.
- Significant investment in training and re-training programmes.
- Positive approach to helping people back into work.

SIGNIFICANT RECENT INVESTMENT IN BLAENAU GWENT

- £86 million for the Learning Works Scheme
- £12 million in new accommodation with care services for older people
- £111 million investment in housing as part of housing stock transfer
- £50 million state-of-the-art hospital at The Works
- The UK's first dedicated Green Skills Training Centre in Tredegar training over 1,000 people each year in renewable technologies
- Town centre renovation for all 5 towns through regeneration projects and grants
- The next stage of Heads of the Valleys Dualling from Tredegar to Brynmawr

The challenge Blaenau Gwent now faces is how it makes the most of the benefits these opportunities offer us for the people and communities of today, and the future. Blaenau Gwent continues its journey in becoming a better place to live, work and visit.

PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE



UNDERSTANDING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Each local Council in the Wales has a duty to lead a process called **community planning**. This involves working with other partners, some who have a duty in law, to develop and deliver a **community strategy**.

In simple terms, **community planning** is the process whereby local partners come together to identify the needs and issues of the local area, and outline a clear direction for the future. This includes developing a vision, and setting out what needs to be done and how it will be achieved.

This process leads to a document being produced called the **community strategy**. This brings together all the relevant information in one place. The community strategy should become the first place people go to find out what is planned for the area over a 10 to 20 year period. Therefore, it is important that people can easily understand what it is saying.

The community strategy cannot cover every issue that may be relevant to a local community. It should focus on those issues where partners, either together or individually, can make a difference over the longer term. However, an important part of the on-going community planning processes will be for local partners to produce an **action plan** that outlines practically what will be done to ensure we achieve our vision.

To make sure an area is on the right track, local partners must **review** what has been done every year. Once every four years a full-scale review must be carried out to see if the overall direction of the Community Strategy is still the best for the area as a whole. The community planning is an on-going process, which ensures that the Community Strategy is kept relevant for the area and its communities.

COMMUNITY PLANNING IN BLAENAU GWENT



In order to ensure that Blaenau Gwent carries out its duty, and that the area has a clear direction for the future, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council started a new community planning process in early 2009.

Part of this process was to review the previous Community Plan *Proud Past, Bright Future* covering 2005 to 2009. The lessons that we learned from the last community planning process have helped shape the approach we have taken this time. We also needed to think about changing at the local, regional and national level, including requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government, such as the requirements in law and other changes to the way public services are delivered.

LOCAL SERVICE BOARDS

Local Service Boards are part of a new approach to improve public service in Wales. The purpose of Local Service Boards is to enable existing public service organisations to work together more effectively.

Their role is to support, encourage and pursue joint working where it will mean better outcomes for local citizens. The development of the Local Service Board in Blaenau Gwent has seen key local partners come together to focus efforts on the challenges facing Blaenau Gwent, with the aim of unblocking barriers to improved services for citizens.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board is established as the group which has the responsibility to oversee the development of this community strategy.

BUILDING ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

The Welsh Assembly Government is encouraging public bodies to work together so that they jointly contribute to making a difference to local people. In Blaenau Gwent, there are five key plans that we need to consider when developing the Community Strategy.

To develop and deliver each of these plans for Blaenau Gwent, a number of groups were set up. These groups are called Partnerships and are made up of representatives from key organisations working in the area. Together these partnerships make up the partnership picture in Blaenau Gwent as shown below:



The above partnerships have developed the following key plans for Blaenau Gwent by assessing local need, and by involving local people, organisations and groups. Each plan sets out a series of aims and objectives. Please note that the Blaenau Gwent Local Land Development Plan is supported by a Regeneration Plan which aims to improve our economy.



(Electronic reader can click on the relevant image above for further details on each plan).

LIVING IN BLAENAU GWENT



The Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board funded the Living in Blaenau Gwent Resident Survey to understand how people felt about the area, and services they used, why they felt this way and what they thought could be improved.

A well-established research company carried out the **Living in Blaenau Gwent 2009 survey**. In total, 1,000 people were interviewed face-to-face in their own homes from across Blaenau Gwent. The findings of the survey were reported back to the local partners in July 2009 to help shape the services they deliver. The headlines were included in Blaenau Gwent's Community Magazine *Connect* with a full report and public summary available. Some of the key things we were told:

More than half of people (53%) told us that they thought Blaenau Gwent was a 'very good' or 'good' place to live.

Over the previous 5 years, 11% of people thought the area had improved, 45% thought it had stayed the same, but the remaining 42% thought the area had got worse.

The top 5 things that people said need improving were job prospects, activities for teenagers, road and pavement repairs, clean streets and crime levels.

The top 5 things that make somewhere a good place to live were jobs, low crime, good housing, activities for teenagers, and clean streets.

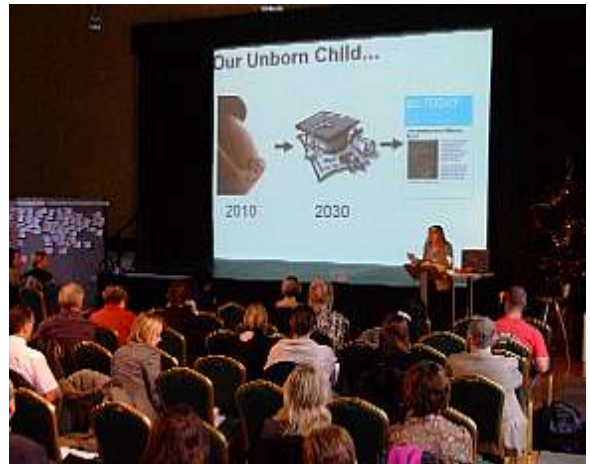
More than half of people said their quality of life was very good or good (52%).

Nearly a third of people (30%) said they were 'optimistic' about the future of Blaenau Gwent.



ENGAGING KEY PARTNERS AND ORGANISATIONS

The next step of the community planning process saw the key partners and organisations being involved in a series of events to consider the issues and to start building agreement on what the Blaenau Gwent 2010 Strategy should focus on.



The first series of events took place in November and December of 2009. The events were well attended by over 70 people, representing a variety of local, regional and national organisations.

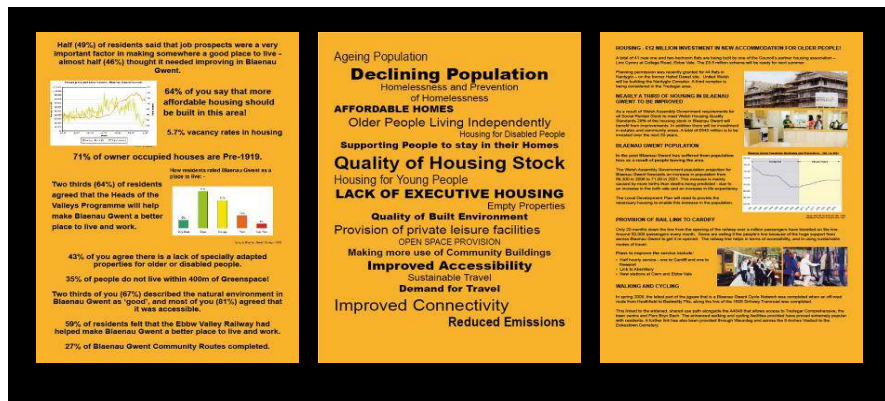
“Good opportunity to share thoughts and feed into developing the strategy”
Representative for Sports Council for Wales

“Certainly felt engaged. Thank you very much”
Representative for Peacehaven Tenants and Residents Association

Everyone had the opportunity to listen to a presentation featuring some key information about Blaenau Gwent, including:

- Significant global, national and local issues that have affected the area in the last 20 years;
- The key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the local area today;
- Thinking about how these things may affect the communities in Blaenau Gwent; and
- Some potential scenarios and challenges that Blaenau Gwent may face in the future.

Following this, everyone was asked to think about what they had heard, and they also had the opportunity to look over and discuss further important information presented at the event on different stands, an example of which is in the picture below.



Everyone was then asked to share their views by writing down what they believed to be the real issues facing Blaenau Gwent. They were also asked to think about when it was important that we tackle these issues.



“Food for thought, I look forward to the next session”
Representative for Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council

The information gained from the workshop was developed into seven key themes. At a second event in January 2010 the themes and key issues were presented back to everyone to consider. Discussion groups were held to gain an agreement around the focus for the community strategy.

“I felt really listened to, respected and that my view was as important as others”
Anonymous

“Good way of focussing people on the importance of the decisions being made”
Representative for Communities First

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



“I do feel that I have been able to engage with the shaping of the strategy. The events which I have attended have worked well”
Representative for Gwent Police Authority

THE 7 KEY THEMES FOR BLAENAU GWENT

Setting a Clear Direction from the Issues

The community planning process has allowed for seven themes to be identified for the Blaenau Gwent Community Strategy. Each theme is community focused and has its own vision. The seven themes are listed below, they are not in any particular order, nor are they intended to cover the complete responsibilities of partners in Blaenau Gwent.



Lively & Accessible Communities

Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in



Thriving Communities

Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive.



Fair and Safe Communities

Making people feel safer in our communities



Learning Communities

Giving people the skills to succeed



Healthy Communities

Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it



Green Sustainable Communities

Improving our environment today for tomorrow



Community Leaders

Working with, and for our communities

Many of the issues facing Blaenau Gwent are complex with no single solutions or individual organisation able to solve them on their own. The themes above are clearly linked, and progress against one issue very often has a positive effect on a number of other issues. For example, it is widely accepted that poor quality housing has a negative effect on a person's health, and that the opportunity to gain skills and education has a positive effect on a person's ability to gain employment.

The themed approach to this strategy will provide a structure for partner organisations to carry out co-ordinated, targeted projects and activities to achieve our vision. What follows in this section is the core of this draft community strategy. It provides more detail on each of these themes, and sets out what needs to be done. As part of the on-going community planning process how we will achieve this (an action plan) is being developed and will be an important part of the final document.



LIVELY & ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES



Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

The make up of the neighbourhood where people live is one of the key factors that shape people's lives. Key issues such as housing, transport, and available activities as well as the look and feel of an area are highlighted as things that make somewhere a good place to live.

Like many other places in South Wales, the neighbourhoods of Blaenau Gwent have been influenced by our industrial heritage and local landscape. On a positive note, this means we already have many well-established neighbourhoods and communities where there is strong community focus and spirit.

Moving forward into the future we need to ensure we build on what already exists, whilst meeting any new challenges.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



Having affordable decent housing, clean streets and activities for children and young people were all top factors in making somewhere a good place to live

Some of the top priorities for improvement in Blaenau Gwent were activities for children and young people, clean streets and affordable decent housing.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- The population has decreased by around 3,500 since the early 1990s.
- The population is expected to grow by around 2,000 people by 2031 because people are expected to live longer.
- By 2031 the area will have more people over 50 than ever, and fewer children, young people and working age people.

- There is a large number of old houses in the area, many built before 1919.
- One in five houses were identified as either unfit or in need of substantial repair.
- House prices have risen sharply since 2004 leaving many local people unable to afford new homes. On the other hand, the area has some of the lowest house prices in Wales.
- About one in ten people find it difficult to get around the area.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- The opening of the *Ebbw Valley Railway* to serve Blaenau Gwent
- Continuation of the *A465 Heads of the Valley Dualling* programme
- The Regeneration of *The Works* in Ebbw Vale
- Council Tenants ‘*Yes Vote*’ to transfer to *Tai Calon Community Housing* to meet housing quality standards
- Over 300 new private houses built throughout Blaenau Gwent

THE PLAN FOR LIVELY & ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES

Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Make suitable housing available for people
2. Ensure our neighbourhoods are places people want to live
3. Help people to get around

HOW WILL WE DO IT?



1. We will ***make suitable housing available for people*** by:

- a) Improving the quality of housing
- b) Making available an appropriate mix of housing types and size to meet need
- c) Ensuring housing is affordable

2. We will ***ensure our neighbourhoods are places people want to live*** by:

- a) Focusing regeneration in all of our neighbourhoods
- b) Making our neighbourhoods visibly more attractive
- c) Protecting and enhancing places and buildings that are important to Blaenau Gwent
- d) Offering a range of activities that fulfil people's lives

3. We will ***help people to get around*** by:

- a) Providing safe and reliable transport
- b) Ensuring our public and community transport system is what our citizens need
- c) Encouraging the use of a range of transport including walking and cycling

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- A new plan for local land development (LDP), support by neighbourhood regeneration programmes (HARPS)
- The next phase of the A465 Heads of the Valley Dualling (Tredegar to Brynmawr)
- Extend rail network and increase service frequency
- Housing Transfer to Tai Calon
- Clean Streets Campaigns
- Completion of cycle network in area



WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- People enjoy living in Blaenau Gwent
- People live in good quality homes
- Neighbourhoods look better
- People will have opportunities to participate in a range of activities
- People can get around easily
- People are less isolated



THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

The economy of any area is key to ensure that the whole area thrives. This is particularly relevant to Blaenau Gwent as the area stands at an economic crossroads. Blaenau Gwent is faced with new challenges and opportunities following the loss of a traditional economy centred on primary industries such as coal and steel.

The legacy of this loss is still felt throughout the area, even after the area has been successful in attracting many new manufacturing industries, and changing the focus of the economy more towards service based jobs.

Moving forward into the future we need to ensure we create an economic base that keeps the jobs that already exist and creates new jobs by helping new and existing businesses to thrive.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



Having good job prospects is the top factor that makes somewhere a good place to live.

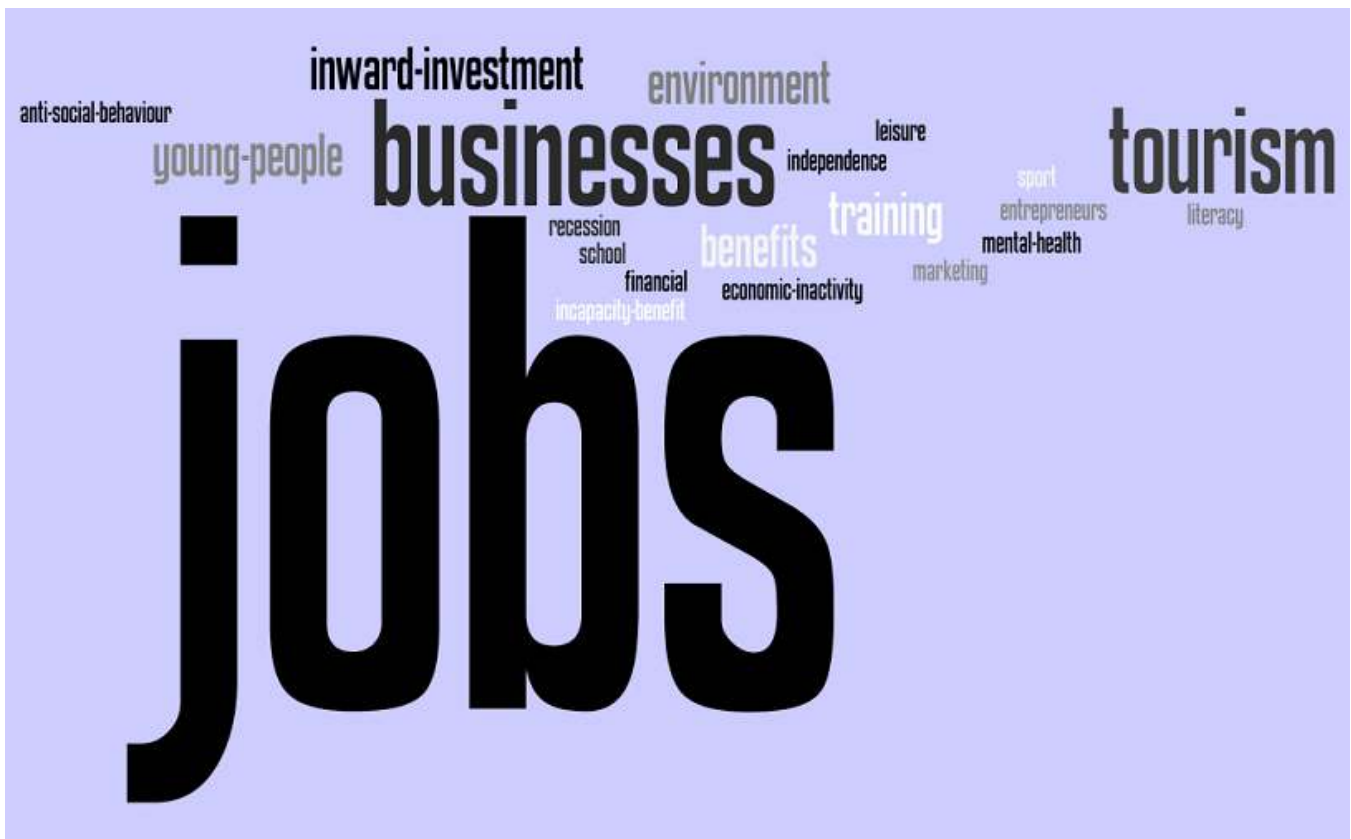
Job prospects were identified as the issue that is the most in need of improvement to make Blaenau Gwent a better place.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- There is a low level of employment – 62% compared to 69% for Wales
- There is a high level of unemployment - 13% compared to 8% for Wales.
- Levels of self employment are low - 5% compared to 9% for Wales.
- There are low numbers of business start-ups every year.

- Over one-quarter of people who live in Blaenau Gwent (28%) work in manufacturing jobs. This is well above the average for Wales (14%).
- A high proportion of working age people claim some kind of benefits - 30% compared to the 20% for Wales.
- Comparably low levels of household income - £25,800 compared to £30,600 for Wales.
- There are high numbers of vacant shops and buildings in our town centres.
- Two out of five people rate the retail opportunities in our towns as poor or very poor.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- *British Gas Green Skills Training Centre* for renewable technologies in Tredegar
- Programmes to help people back into work such as *JobMatch* and *Bridges into Work*
- *Alchemy Suite for Budding Entrepreneurs* at Lakeside Business Centre, Nantyglo
- New high quality Business Units at *Roseheyworth North Business Park*

THE PLAN FOR THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Offering the opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Get more people into work
2. Nurture our people and businesses to succeed
3. Provide support and guidance to help people facing financial pressures

HOW WILL WE DO IT?

1. We will ***get more people into work*** by:

- a) Ensuring people have the right range of support and opportunity to work
- b) Helping existing businesses become stronger
- c) Widening our economy to attract new businesses

2. We will ***nurture our people and businesses to succeed*** by:

- a) Providing the right support for businesses
- b) Helping entrepreneurs develop and succeed
- c) Growing social enterprise to maximise the benefits to our communities

3. We will ***provide support and guidance to help people facing financial pressures*** by:

- a) Reducing barriers to work
- b) Ensuring people know what they are entitled to
- c) Supporting people to become better at managing their money

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- *JobMatch, Future Jobs Fund, Bridges into Work*
- Further Development of Business Park at Tredegar and New Business Park at *The Works* in Ebbw Vale
- Town Centre & Out-of-Town Retail Developments
- Securing Funding for *Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor*
- Promotion of Tourism
- New Business Incubation Facilities

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- More people are in work
- There are more job opportunities
- Local businesses succeed
- There are more social enterprises
- Higher household income
- People manage their money better



FAIR & SAFE COMMUNITIES

Making people feel safer in our communities

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

People want to live in communities that are fair and safe.

Generally, Blaenau Gwent is seen as a safe place to live. However, in recent years overall levels of crime and anti-social behaviour have been slowly rising. This coupled with people's perception of crime and anti-social behaviour has meant that making Blaenau Gwent safe will be an important issue to get right for our people.

Additionally, we will need to challenge ourselves to ensure that our communities are fair places to live. All people living, working or visiting Blaenau Gwent should feel valued and included, with key issues being tackling social exclusion, creating understanding and acceptance amongst people, and making sure that justice is seen to be done.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



“Low levels of crime was one of the top factors that make somewhere a good place to live” .

“Level of crime was identified as one of the key factors that is most in need of improvement to make Blaenau Gwent a better place”.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Overall, level of crime has increased since January 2009.
- Above average number of crimes per 1,000 people.
- Criminal damage to vehicles, theft from vehicles and actual bodily harm make up over one-third of all crime.
- Anti-social behaviour is increasing - up by 4% from 2008 to 2009.

- The big anti-social behaviour issues for people include rubbish and litter, anti-social use of vehicles, and children and young people hanging around on the streets.
- Just below half of Blaenau Gwent people (48%) agree that the local police and council are dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the area.
- Almost all people feel safe walking alone during the daylight (97%), but only 61% feel safe walking alone after dark.
- Three out of five people know many people in their local area (61%).
- Over one-third of adults have a poor or very poor perception of young people (38%).

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- Involving Blaenau Gwent people in the *PACT Meetings* about their issues
- Move towards *Neighbourhood Policing* to be more responsive to people in Blaenau Gwent
- Specific projects to improve safety in Blaenau Gwent, e.g. *Bobby Van Scheme*, *Streetsafe*, and *Neighbourhood Watch*
- Projects to improve justice e.g. the *Community Reparation Scheme*

THE PLAN FOR FAIR & SAFE COMMUNITIES

Making people feel safer in our communities

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Create a community where people feel safe and secure
2. Ensure people feel valued and included in our communities
3. Deliver fairer communities

HOW WILL WE DO IT?

1. We will ***create a community where people feel safe and secure*** by:

- a) Tackling crime & anti-social behaviour
- b) Reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol misuse
- c) Assuring people that issues that affect them are being dealt with

2. We will ***ensure people feel valued and included in our communities*** by:

- a) Removing the barriers that cause exclusion
- b) Building on our strong community spirit
- c) Celebrating what makes Blaenau Gwent special

3. We will ***deliver fairer communities*** by:

- a) Recognising and promoting people's rights
- b) Promoting understanding and acceptance within our communities
- c) Making sure that justice is seen to be done

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- Neighbourhood Policing supported by PACT process
- Continuing effective *Crime Prevention Initiatives*
- *One Stop Shop* for Domestic Abuse
- Tackling disability inequality via the *Access for All* Forum
- A plan for improving *community cohesion*
- *Youth Detach Outreach* programme
- Introducing poverty projects such as *Beat the Crunch*

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- People feel safer
- There is a strong community spirit
- People appreciate Blaenau Gwent more
- People know their rights
- Blaenau Gwent is a fair place to live
- Visible Justice

LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Giving people the skills to succeed

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

Education and learning are the key building blocks of opportunities for all people. By providing high quality education and learning opportunities we will secure the long-term social and economic well being of Blaenau Gwent.

We need to prepare our children and young people with the right skills that prepare them physically, mentally and socially for work in later life by having excellent school and vocational training opportunities, as well as pathways to further and higher education. We also need to ensure that opportunities are available for people who need to re-train or learn new skills in later life.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



“Education was in the top ten factors that make somewhere a good place to live”.

“One of the top barriers to work is a lack of qualifications”.

“One in 10 adults participate in learning opportunities, such as day, evening or distance learning classes”.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- One in 10 households in the area had children under the age of 5.
- One in three households in the area have children or young people in full-time education (under the age of 19).
- There are significant gaps in antenatal education across Blaenau Gwent.
- Education attainment at the age of seven is well below the Welsh average. Girls out perform boys in literacy, maths and science.
- The qualification level of parents is known to be particularly important in determining later outcomes for the child. Many parents in the area have poor basic skills.

- There are very low levels of aspiration for many children and young people in Blaenau Gwent, however this is difficult to prove.
- Blaenau Gwent has the second highest level in Wales of young people not in education, employment and training.
- Despite improvements since 2002, Blaenau Gwent still suffers from low levels of adult skills, with one in five adults having no qualifications (19%).
- Fewer people have higher qualifications e.g. at least 2 'A' levels (35%) when comparing to Wales as a whole (46%).

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- The *Learning Works Scheme*
- *Flying Start* programme
- *Learning Pathways 14- 19* and vocational opportunities for young people
- Improved attendance and attainment of local pupils at *GCSE* and *A Level* standard
- Developed *Learning Action Centres* in towns across the area and *BiG Learning Community*
- Increased number of childcare places, and the *Integrated Children's Centre* in Blaina

THE PLAN FOR LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Giving people the skills to succeed

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Give children a good start in life
2. Ensure people are aiming high and achieving
3. Make people feel good about themselves and able to meet life's challenges



HOW WILL WE DO IT?

1. We will ***give children a good start in life*** by:

- a) Preparing and supporting people to be good parents
- b) Getting opportunities right for early years provision and encouraging family participation

2. We will ***ensure people are aiming high and achieving*** by:

- a) Raising people's aspirations
- b) Offering people a choice from a wide range of education, training and learning opportunities, and supporting them to succeed

3. We will ***make people feel good about themselves and able to meet life's challenges*** by:

- a) Helping people develop pride and confidence
- b) Providing support to help people so they can deal with life changes

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- Flying Start and Sure Start programmes
- Foundation Phase Learning
- 14-19 Pathways especially in relation to the reduction of young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS)
- School Transformation agenda
- Delivery of the 2 year childcare plan and development of an additional Integrated Children's Centre
- Adult Learning and RISE Network



WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- Children get a good start to life
- Improving educational attainment
- People are more confident
- People want to succeed
- People are more adaptable
- People have better life skills



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

Health is one of the key factors that affect people’s quality of life, therefore to get healthy communities we will need to have healthy people. Many things affect our health and the way we feel. These include personal factors such as our genes and biology, environmental factors such as our living environment and climate, and also our lifestyle factors such as alcohol and smoking, diet and physical activity.

Generally, the health of people from Blaenau Gwent is poor when comparing to the national average, with people from Blaenau Gwent more likely to have a lower life expectancy, and more likelihood of suffering from serious illnesses such as diabetes, respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases and musculoskeletal disorders and injuries. Therefore, we have considerable challenges to meet in order to improve the general health and well-being of the people of Blaenau Gwent, but also the opportunity to encourage people to take more personal responsibility.

Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



“Good health was in the top ten factors that makes somewhere a good place to live”.

“One-third of them felt that at best their health was fair”.

“Almost two-thirds of people we spoke to had seriously attempted to make health changes in the last year”.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Compared to the rest of Wales, there are high levels of poor health caused by smoking, alcohol, poor diet and lack of physical activity.
- Other factors affect health and wellbeing, such as people being out of work, transport and the environment .
- As we expect the overall proportion of older people to increase, we will need to reshape the way we provide health and social care services.

- Carers need to be supported, as they make a major contribution to health and well-being.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- Development of *Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan*, the new local hospital
- Improving the quality of services people receive in primary care
- Improved services in areas such as mental health, long term health conditions, learning disabilities and substance misuse
- Stronger working relationships between Health and Social Services staff
- Helping parents to give children a healthy start in life through *Sure Start* and *Flying Start*
- Schemes for children and young people e.g. *Appetite for Life*, *Social and Emotional Aspect of Learning*, *Reach Out for Sexual Health* and *MEND - Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!*
- Helping adults to make lifestyle changes through *GP Exercise Referral*, *Mentoro Allan*, food cooperatives and healthy eating in practical cookery

THE PLAN FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Helping people to be healthy and get the right care and support when they need it

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Improve people's physical and mental health and well-being
2. Provide quality care and support to people when they need it

HOW WILL WE DO IT?

1. We will **improve people's physical and mental health and well being** by:

- a) Helping people to make informed choices about their health based on good information
- b) Reducing the harm caused by smoking, alcohol and drug misuse
- c) Create the right social and physical environment for people to be healthy

2. We will **provide quality care and support to people when they need it** by:

- a) Supporting people to lead happy and independent lives
- b) Ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time
- c) Helping to improve the health of people experiencing the greatest disadvantage

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- Launch of *Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan*, the new hospital
- New Health and Social Care Plans
- *A Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Alliance* to tackle the underlying causes of ill health
- Further development of '*Health Challenge Blaenau Gwent*'
- Review premises such as local GPs, dentist, opticians and pharmacies
- Developing integrated health and social care services for older people
- Extra Care Housing Scheme

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- People are physically healthy
- People make good health choices
- People have good mental well-being
- People are being cared for properly
- People are able to live independently
- People are receiving fair services

GREEN & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Improving our environment today for tomorrow

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

For over 100 years, the natural assets of Blaenau Gwent provided the area with prosperity through employment. However, the extraction and use of natural assets such as coal and steel came at a cost to our local environment. For many years the image portrayed of Blaenau Gwent was like many other South Wales industrial communities with issues such as smog, scarred landscapes and pollution of rivers not being uncommon.

However, these days are now long gone and over the last 20 years Blaenau Gwent's natural environment has become one of the areas biggest assets. The natural environment is now greener and more accessible to both residents and visitors.

Even with the improvements to our natural environment in recent years, Blaenau Gwent people are still subject to global pressures and threats, such as climate change and over-reliance of fossil fuels for energy. As a consequence, the challenge now is to sustain the good work by looking to continually improve and safeguard our natural assets. We must also ensure the people of Blaenau Gwent can play their part in this so that future generations can benefit. Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that:



“Our natural environment was either very good or good”.

“Our natural environment had improved in the last five years”.

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- The natural environment is accessible to 4 out of 5 people.
- The natural environment is well used by people living in the area, with over 50% doing some outdoor activities every month.

- People from Blaenau Gwent have major concerns about the cost of home energy (72%) and fuel for transport (52%).
- There are 2 Special Areas of Conservation, 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and 1 Local Nature Reserve. There are a number of proposed sites for 6 Local Nature Reserves.
- There are over 83,000 trees covering 9% of land. These include 14 Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland sites, and 3 Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.
- 96% of people in Blaenau Gwent use kerbside recycling.
- Over one-third of people from Blaenau Gwent said nothing would persuade them to use their car less.

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- First area in Wales to roll out weekly food waste collection for all households
- Working towards exceeding the 65% Wales average for street cleanliness
- *British Gas Green Skills Training Centre* for renewable technologies in Tredegar
- Improvements in access to *Rights of Way* across Blaenau Gwent
- Heads of the Valley funding for Biodiversity in schools grounds
- Eco-Committees developed at most schools

THE PLAN FOR GREEN & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Improving our environment today for tomorrow

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. *Protect and enhance our natural landscape*
2. *Make a local difference to climate change*



HOW WILL WE DO IT?

1. We will ***protect and enhance our natural landscape*** by:

- a) Getting people to value and use what we have
- b) Enhancing our parks, open spaces and countryside
- c) Protecting our plants and animals

2. We will ***make a local difference to climate change*** by:

- a) Reducing our carbon footprint
- b) Reducing the negative impacts on our environment by making better decisions

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- Introducing sustainable solutions for the way we dispose of our waste
- Heads of the Valley *Low Carbon Programme*
- Energy Saving Schemes, such as *household insulation schemes*
- Walking trails in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fach
- Restoration of Bedwellty House and Park
- Wetland Centre, River Improvements and Community Energy Schemes at The Works in Ebbw Vale



WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- People value our natural environment
- People use the natural environment more
- Plants and animals thrive
- Blaenau Gwent reduces its carbon footprint

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Working with, and for our communities

WHY DO WE NEED THIS THEME?

Blaenau Gwent is renowned for its strong political and community leaders. The area has long been at the heart of national and regional agendas, with decisions and actions taken in Blaenau Gwent changing the political landscape and how we organise and live our lives.

For Blaenau Gwent, leadership has never been more important, as we look to outline a clear and concise vision for the regeneration of the local area. The focus of this theme will need to ensure that key people, organisations and agencies deliver on their responsibilities to work together to ensure that Blaenau Gwent is a better place to live, work and visit. Additionally, we will look to ensure that local people are involved, allowing them to have a good understanding of the issues facing Blaenau Gwent, allowing them to give their opinions based on good, reliable information.

We need to ensure that local people can trust leaders and organisations driving forward change in Blaenau Gwent, so they can feel confident that the right decisions are being taken. A considerable amount of effort has already been made to help make this happen, however, we have a long way to go and we know this because Blaenau Gwent people told us through the *Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey* in 2009 that they :



Do not feel informed about things such as services that could benefit them

Like to know what is happening, but are happy to let others get on with the job (67%)

Feel that public service providers do not have a good understanding of the issues & concerns that affect them and their families (36%)

Also, we know from a number of good information sources the following about Blaenau Gwent:

- Very few people get involved in community meetings or consultations, or participate in voluntary activities (7%)
- Two out of three people have never expressed an opinion on the delivery of public services to the service provider.

- Most people that don't want to get involved say that it is because it won't make any difference
- Most people (75%) that give opinions only give them on issues that affect them directly

During the Community Strategy Events the key partners and organisations outlined the key issues that are important to Blaenau Gwent now and in the future for this theme. These issues can be seen in the picture below where the bigger the word, the more times that issue was raised.



WHAT GOOD THINGS ARE WE BUILDING ON?

Below are just a few of the good things which have been done in Blaenau Gwent in the last 5 years:

- A number of key initiatives to involve local people e.g. Living in Blaenau Gwent Survey, PACT process, 50+ Forum, Youth Forum and Access for All
- Improving volunteering opportunities
- Community development support from organisations to people in communities who want to make a difference
- Establishment of Blaenau Gwent Local Service Board
- Strengthening partnership working in Blaenau Gwent for Children and Young People, Health and Social Care, Regeneration and Community Safety
- Securing the Eisteddfod 2010 at The Works, Ebbw Vale
- The Blaenau Gwent Community magazine *Connect*
- Over £5million in efficiency savings

THE PLAN FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

Working with, and for our communities

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

Our aims are to:

1. Get people more involved
2. Work together to provide better outcomes for people
3. Make people feel confident in public services



HOW WILL WE DO IT?

We will ***get people more involved*** by:

- a) Involving people in decision making
- b) Getting more people volunteering

2. We will ***work together to provide better outcomes for people*** by:

- a) Setting out clear priorities for the area
- b) Providing joined up services
- c) Getting better value for public money

3. We will ***make people feel confident in public services*** by:

- a) Working hard to offer excellent services that benefit people
- b) Ensuring people know what is happening

EXAMPLES OF SOME KEY PROJECTS

- A joint organisation approach to communication and engagement
- A set of clear plans that local people understand
- Focusing service provision around our neighbourhoods
- Plans for joint commissioning of work
- Improving efficiencies with public money



WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

- People feel informed
- People are participating in community activities
- People feel part of their community
- People feel that they can make a difference in their community
- Better services available