

**ANNUAL  
GOVERNANCE  
STATEMENT  
2016/17**

# Annual Governance Statement 2016 – 2017

---

## **Scope of Responsibility**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council ('the Authority') is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority also has a general duty under the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". A copy of the code is available from the Policy and Performance Division, and is also available on the Authority's website

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control in the Statement of Accounts.

## **The Purpose of the Governance Framework**

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify the key risks of the Authority, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to

manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. These will include achievement or not of the Council's policies, aims and objectives.

The governance framework has been in place at the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2017 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

In July 2017 the WAO published their Annual Improvement Report for 2016-17. The conclusion of the report was, "The Council is likely to meet its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement providing it embeds arrangements to enable it to meet current and future challenges".

A full list of the Proposals for Improvement made by the Wales Audit Office is available from the Corporate Performance Team, and progress against their achievement is included in the Joint Finance and Performance Report. A list of the proposals made during 2016/17 is attached at Appendix A.

## **The Governance Framework**

The governance framework includes the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements, along with an assessment of their effectiveness. The ways in which the Authority demonstrates this are discussed below. Each core principle set out in the Authority's Code of Governance is listed, along with the self-assessment of how well it is applied and how we propose to improve in future. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Managers, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and by comments from the external auditors and other regulators.

**Core Principle A**  
**Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values,**  
**and respecting the rule of law.**

### ***How we do this:***

A Governance Framework exists that sets out the standards and processes to be adopted by both Members and Officers. Codes of Conduct detailing Member / Officer relations are contained within the Constitution and both are required to make declarations of any interests that impact on their positions / functions. These documents are periodically reviewed and updated, and are influenced by best practice and recommendations from both internal and external regulators.

Members' declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer and Officers' declarations are held by Service Managers. All Council meetings have declarations of interest as part of the

agenda and any declarations are noted in the minutes with Members withdrawing or not taking part in the debate as appropriate.

A Policy Framework exists to guide both Members and Officers in fulfilment of their roles. This includes a Whistle-Blowing policy enabling Members, Officers and members of the public to report any concerns regarding the integrity and operations of the Authority. In addition, policies such as disciplinary or grievance procedures have been formulated for dealing with breaches to the codes.

Both Officers and Members are advised through the induction process of the standards of behaviour required by the Council throughout their term of office or employment. Continued adherence to the ethical values of the Authority is confirmed through a performance review protocol. This is complemented by a set of job descriptions for most positions in the Council, both for Officer and Member roles.

The Authority's constitution has a published Scheme of Delegation of Functions, which is agreed and published annually. This scheme details subject areas, and identifies the bodies or individuals responsible for decision making. It sets out the terms of reference for the various committees in operation. In addition both the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer have oversight of the decisions made by the Authority to ensure their lawfulness and financial probity.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

Each Committee conforms to legislative requirements including compliance with the Local Government Measure. The decision making process is documented and the Authority's Scrutiny Committees can 'call in' a decision which has been made by the Executive Committee but not yet implemented. No decisions were called in during 2016/17.

Work has continued to strengthen Blaenau Gwent's Scrutiny arrangements. The Scrutiny Action Plan continues to be implemented and monitored through Democratic Services Committee and Council. In April 2016, the WAO undertook a Review of Governance with a Focus on Scrutiny as part of the Council's planned programme of external audit. As per normal practice, the review highlighted a number of proposals for improvement and the Scrutiny Action Plan has been updated to include them.

Reference to the scrutiny function is also included within the Performance Management Improvement Framework

A mandatory session on the Constitution including roles and responsibilities was last held for Members in October 2015, with the next session scheduled for September 2017.

The Ombudsman received 19 stage three complaints for the period April 15 to March 16 in relation to Blaenau Gwent. Seventeen of these did not proceed, one was upheld and one was voluntarily settled. Information for the period 2016/17 is not yet available.

There was one whistle-blowing incident reported to the monitoring officer during the year. This matter continues to be investigated and is anticipated to be concluded during 2017/18.

Two complaints were received against members for the same period that were referred to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman deemed one to be a matter they would not investigate. The other commenced investigation but was discontinued when the Member was not re-elected to office, as it would no longer be in the public interest to pursue the case.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures which exist to guide Members and Officers to comply with the Council's expectations in terms of acting with integrity
- Linked to the point above, to evidence the robust application of the Authority's Code of Conduct, an Internal Audit review of the declarations of interest process will be undertaken
- Member induction process to be fully implemented to ensure all Members are aware of the requirement for them to maintain high standards of integrity
- In line with good practice, an Annual review (as a minimum) of the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation to ensure the Authority's governance and decision making processes remain fit for purpose
- Job descriptions to be developed for all positions setting out the roles and responsibilities of both Members and Officers

**Core Principle B**  
**Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Single Integrated Plan (SIP), 'Making a Difference 2013-17' was adopted by Council in June 2013. This plan sets out the main priorities for strategic partnership working.

Under the Local Government Measure, the SIP includes an Engagement Strategy for Blaenau Gwent. The Engagement Strategy sets out how partners intend to engage with citizens and communities. The Council has continued to develop the way in which it engages with the community. Over the last year, a review of the Citizens Panel has been undertaken to refresh the membership and integrate it with other engagement activity. A public engagement campaign called 'The Blaenau Gwent We Want' was undertaken throughout the Council area. In total, over 1000 people across Blaenau Gwent took part and we have combined their views with some key statistics to create a picture of what Blaenau Gwent is like today which is called our Wellbeing Assessment. The Let's Talk public engagement around the Council's budget for 2017/18 was also undertaken.

Under the wellbeing legislation, public bodies must also set and publish their Wellbeing Objectives and Wellbeing Statement by 31 March 2017. A series of facilitated workshops were held with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team (WCLT) (formerly Wider Corporate Management Team) to discuss and formulate the Wellbeing Objectives. The objectives and accompanying Statement were developed, agreed by Council and published by the

legislative deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Evidence and data from the Wellbeing Assessment and Engagement Events were used to support the development of the objectives. The actions and measures to deliver against the objectives have been identified and the new administration is currently reviewing the objectives in light of any manifesto commitments made in the local elections. This information, as part of the requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure, was published by the statutory deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> July 2017. More information on the actions and measures contributing to each of the objectives will be detailed in Business Plans and other strategic documents. The national data sets (performance information for Wales Government) are also being used to support this work.

The Social Services and Wellbeing Act continues to be embedded into the day to day practice of the Department over the last 12 months. Good progress continues to be made with Staff training now delivered on the principles of the Act and procedures to support compliance with the Act continue to be developed locally and across the greater Gwent region. We are continuing to work with staff in relation to leading the required cultural and operational changes that the Act require and the Workforce Development Team are now rolling out a programme of more Act specific training across the social care sector.

The Council has an established engagement framework for staff and the Council's Organisational Development policies lay out procedures to support this.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

To ensure relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the Councils policy development and decision making processes, comprehensive engagement events have been held throughout the year.

The Engagement Team has supported a number of engagement and participation activities and events including: monthly Youth Forums; six-monthly School Grand Council; quarterly Over 50's Network and Forum; Access for All Forums; Let's Talk Engagement Programme and engagement around the Abertillery 3-16 School. The Council also continues to develop its use of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

A staff survey was undertaken in August / September 2016, that identified opportunities for improvement in staff engagement. It highlighted four service areas that are to receive Organisational Development intervention and actions are being built in to service business plans to address the issues noted. The main areas of concern were around communication and the effectiveness of the performance review scheme. A further staff survey will be issued in October / November 2017 to monitor progress.

All relevant Audit Certificates have been received. Engagement arrangements with WAO are in place with monthly meetings with the Head of Policy and Performance and the Head of Paid Service / Lead Director respectively. Quarterly meetings are also undertaken which includes the Leadership, relevant Executive Member and the Chair of the Audit Committee.

Regular termly meetings are held with Estyn in line with good practice, and the Authority has update meetings between the Lead Corporate Director, political leaders and the Welsh Government Link Officer as and when required.

The Social Services department has now developed an Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) team for children and adults and the teams were settled in their new bases in advance of it going fully live in April 2017. In addition like many authorities across Wales we have also launched Dewis Cymru website, [www.dewis.wales](http://www.dewis.wales), to support the Social Services and Wellbeing Act. This resource provides information on a wide range of community and national resources to help people maintain or improve their wellbeing.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Improved engagement with staff through continued implementation of the staff survey action plan. This will include a focus on the four areas identified as requiring intervention.
- Continue to hold various stakeholder engagement events to influence / inform decisions

**Core Principle C**  
**Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Authority's vision is set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP). The Authority's CIP acts as the Council's business plan and is directly linked to the priorities in the Single Integrated Plan. The CIP was approved by Council in October 2012 and covers the 5 year period to 2017. The plan sets out three high level priorities each of which are defined by a number of outcome statements setting out the focus of our activity. The three priorities are:

- Children and young people's learning and achievement levels are maximised.
- People and Communities are enabled to help themselves.
- The living environment is vibrant and attractive.

The three high level priorities are directly supported by improvement objectives identified via internal and external engagement and suitable evidence.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA) established statutory Public Service Boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing across Wales by strengthening joint working across all public services. The Authority is one of five statutory members of the board.

The PSBs replace the voluntary Local Service Boards (LSBs) in each local authority area. The Blaenau Gwent PSB was established with an agreed Terms of Reference and a PSB Scrutiny Committee has also been set up through our agreed democratic processes. The Wellbeing Assessment for the area was undertaken and published in May 2017 with the Council leading on this work. We are now working with the PSB on the development of their collective Wellbeing Objectives. Various training sessions have also been provided for Members on the statutory requirements of the new legislation, the PSB and the PSB Scrutiny Committee role. As part of the transition from the LSB to the PSB a review of its strategic partnership framework was also commissioned. This involved creating new sub groups to support the PSB in the delivery of the existing SIP and the development of the new statutory requirement for a Wellbeing Plan by May 2018. The new structures and their effectiveness will be subject to continuous review and quarterly performance monitoring. As the 2018 Wellbeing Plan develops these could be changed or altered so that they best fit the needs of the PSB and through it the needs of Blaenau Gwent.

The Authority has a Strategic Equality Plan that was agreed by Council in May 2016. The plan was subject to comprehensive engagement including through the Access for All Forum and the Older Peoples Network as part of its development.

The Authority is committed to the principles of the Wales Procurement Policy that identifies Procurement as a strategic enabler, delivering key policy objectives to support the Council's economic, social and environmental priorities.

The Authority receives a capital allocation from Welsh Government that is used along with the capital receipt reserve to form a capital programme. The funding is allocated based on departmental bids for projects. The bids are analysed and scored in line with a set of criteria that consider, amongst other things, the projects alignment with corporate and national priorities.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

To monitor progress and ensure their relevance there will be an annual review of the Wellbeing Objectives of the Authority and how they contribute to the National Wellbeing Goals.

Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken against all relevant proposals. They are also included within the business planning framework. The Annual Report to the Equality and Human Rights Commission was submitted within the appropriate timescales. A new Strategic Equality Plan has been developed covering the period 2016-2020, and came in to force in April 2016.



Welsh Language Standards were agreed by Welsh Government in March 2015. Blaenau Gwent Council were issued with an initial Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice in September 2015. Of the 176 standards, the Council has been assigned 171 standards. Appropriate challenge for appeal to defer implementation against a number of the standards was submitted to the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioners, in line with the agreed national procedure. This has led to a number of variations in the standards, and the Council has been issued with an updated Compliance Notice in August 2017. The Annual Welsh Language Report was sent to the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioners within the appropriate timescales.

Social Services produces an Annual Report which provides a balanced overview of performance information, statistics, case studies and our achievements to show the impact our work has had on individual's lives as well as the key challenges we have faced. The last report was published in July 2017. The information contained in the report will be of interest to a wide audience that includes citizens living in Blaenau Gwent and regulators.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Continued implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language Standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent.
- Development of action plan to ensure the Council meets its corporate duties in relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and implementation of action plan during 2018.
- Annual review of the Wellbeing Objectives to ensure their continued fitness for purpose and alignment to the National Wellbeing Goals

**Core Principle D**  
**Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Authority has strengthened its Performance Management Improvement Framework to ensure a consistent approach and accountability for performance improvement. This process is being aligned to the risk management and project management frameworks to provide one approach for data collection and monitoring.

The "One Council" approach adopted by Members and Officers continues to be a primary driver. This involves a number of design principles supporting our ambition to be a modern, smart Authority providing leadership to enable people and communities to thrive. All transformation and financial efficiency projects are developed in line with the design principles and follow the Project Management Framework.

The Project Management Framework provides consistent practice and guidance across the Council to help those involved in projects to deliver successful outcomes. The use of the Framework ensures that all projects undertaken / completed are subject to the appropriate approval processes and that reviews of the success of these projects is carried out. This will enable the Council to learn lessons for the future and mitigate the possibilities of the same problems occurring in future projects.

The Transforming Blaenau Gwent programme has clear objectives and focuses on a number of elements that support its delivery;

- Financial efficiency
- Robust governance framework
- Cultural and organisational change
- Improving educational standards
- Strong focus on performance
- Workplace transformation and agile working
- Engagement and communication

The Authority has a Strategic Transformation Team that facilitates the overall governance arrangements for the Financial Efficiency Projects (FEPs), leading on cross cutting projects, ensuring adherence to the Project Management Framework and identifying service improvement across the Council. A Programme of Review for the Financial Efficiency Projects will ensure robust challenge of projects and identification of issues in achieving the agreed savings.

The Council has an established Programme Management Board which includes both Members and Officers who act as a development body for all transformation and financial efficiency projects. They agree actions upon key projects that have been highlighted by project leads and monitor the delivery of those actions.

A Strategic Procurement Board has been developed to oversee spending decisions, exercising stronger governance in line with its Medium Term Financial Strategy. The board provides challenge with regards to the merits of each spending proposal and ensures a consistent approach to spending in line with the objectives of the Authority.

The corporate reporting format has been designed to guide officers and members to consider the key implications of any proposals put forward. The report has defined areas for considering options appraisal, risk, staffing and financial impact, along with the contribution to the National Wellbeing Goals. This assists in the process for making informed and transparent decisions, and ensures the links between budget and planning are considered.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Authority presents the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Joint Finance and Performance Report to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. This report highlights key messages, performance information, workforce information, financial analysis, FEP progress, WAO proposals for improvement and directorate and corporate risks.

Robust self-evaluation arrangements continue to be refined. The process enables us to gather and use good quality information to better understand how we are performing.

Internal peer challenge sessions which include Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and the relevant Executive Member and Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny have continued in order to ensure an extra level of accountability as well as providing a 'golden thread' from service level planning to directorate level planning. All of this information has improved the consistency of how we capture information, and this has been used to inform our priorities and plan our business.

The Strategic Transformation Team receive monthly progress against each project and collate it to facilitate a report into the Wider Corporate Leadership Team and the Project Management Board on a quarterly basis that identifies progress against the Financial Efficiency Projects and major projects within the Council.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations for Improvement:***

- Continued work on the alignment of the Performance Management Improvement Framework with other arrangements such as Risk Management and Project Management, providing a consistent and cohesive approach
- Further embedding of the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme and ongoing review to ensure it continues to support improved service delivery throughout the Council
- Continued embedding of the self-assessment and performance review processes as part of the Performance Management and Improvement Framework

**Core Principle E**  
**Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**

### ***How we do this:***

Blaenau Gwent has 42 elected members who collectively make up the decision making body for the Authority. This is complemented by an officer structure of trained and experienced people.

Most policy decisions are developed by the Executive Committee, which for 2016/17 has comprised the Leader and seven Members with individual portfolio responsibilities. For 2017/18 the number of Members on the Executive Committee has been reduced to five, to include the Leader, who also has a portfolio responsibility. The portfolios have been agreed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council in May 2017.

In addition to the Executive Committee, the Authority's Committee structure also comprises three decision making Committees (1 x Planning and 2 x Licensing), four Scrutiny Committees, a Public Service Board Committee, a Standards Committee, a Democratic Services Committee and an Audit Committee.

Members are appointed to these Committees, each of which is supported by relevant officers. Payments to Members who are in positions which attract a senior salary are in line with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

There are three statutory posts in place namely the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer. These are satisfied by the appointments of the Temporary Lead Corporate Director, the Head of Legal and Compliance and the Chief Finance Officer, respectively. These post holders are charged with ensuring elected Members receive appropriate legal and financial advice.

The appointment of the Temporary Lead Corporate Director was made in March 2016 following the redundancy of the Chief Executive post. A new permanent position of Managing Director has been created and is being recruited during the Summer 2017 to fulfil the role of Head of Paid Service.

There are three further officer roles, namely, the Corporate Director of Education, the Corporate Director of Social Services and the Head of Democratic Services, who undertake statutory functions for Education, Social Services and Democratic Services respectively. The Corporate Director of Social Services was appointed in April 2017 with the successful candidate having first acted up to this role for a period following the retirement of previous Director. One further director holds the position of Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration.

Service reviews and self-evaluations have been undertaken by Heads of Service and Service Managers to establish any capacity issues that exist or may arise to ensure these are managed, and actions are implemented to mitigate. These can range from structural reviews, prioritisation of workload and termination of low priority tasks.

The Authority has a clear set of strategic outcomes, supporting actions and competencies which relate to service delivery. Both Members and Officers receive appropriate training to enable them to develop / enhance the necessary skills to fulfil their roles.

A Performance Coaching Scheme exists for Officers and a Personal Development Review Scheme (PDRs) for Members to ensure an appropriate level of competency and to identify any further training needs or continuous professional development requirements that are required for the job role, or to prepare them for future roles. Most officer posts have a detailed job description and person specification, and selection is made through a robust recruitment process to meet the specific skills and competencies of the post.

Role descriptions for Members are established and included in the Constitution. Work is ongoing in developing the role descriptions for the newly formed positions of Chair and Vice Chair of Council.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Member Development Strategy has been endorsed by Council and the Member Induction Programme is in the process of being implemented following the recent local election on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017. Procedures for Member Personal Development Reviews (PDR) have also been established, and are offered to all Members. The Council holds Level 1 of

the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development awarded by the Welsh Local Government Association, recognising the Authority's good practice in this area.

Establishment of a mentoring scheme for Members has been agreed by Council and six Councillors undertook relevant training to become Mentors. This is currently being considered in light of the new administration and associated Member Induction Programme.

The positions of Mayor and Deputy were removed from the Council's establishment at the AGM held in June 2017. They were replaced with the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of Council. These roles do not carry a senior salary. Civic duties will be undertaken by the Executive Members going forward.

A Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) (formerly Corporate Management Team) operates within the Authority, consisting of the Temporary Lead Corporate Director, supported by departmental leaders. These meetings are minuted and key information is disseminated to all officers through an established reporting structure.

The Authority monitors performance reviews through the management structure, feeding concerns up to CLT as appropriate. There is an established Engagement and Consultation Framework agreed with and in place for trade union involvement.

With the austerity measures implemented by the council there continues to be a reduction in external training opportunities however in house, on the job training continues and essential external training is still undertaken. The lack of investment in workforce development has been recognised as a corporate risk. Both managers and staff have the ability to discuss capability and capacity issues as part of the performance review process.

Two staff have been the subject of the capability process during the period April 2016 – March 2017, and supportive actions continue to be required at the end of the year.

Thirty four internal grievance procedures were instigated between April 2016 and March 2017. 26 remained open at the close of the year.

The Authority has operated a Leadership Programme since January 2016 designed to build leadership knowledge and skills in those with managerial responsibilities up to and including Wider Corporate Leadership Team (WCLT) level. The programme is being adapted in 2017 to provide bespoke sessions based on the needs of individual services and focusing on their priorities.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Review and delivery of Member induction and training programme to ensure it provides new Members with the knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles and responsibilities
- Review of the Member Personal Development Review process so that all Members receive appropriate training and development for their roles
- Following the creation of the positions Chair and Vice Chair of Council, role descriptions are to be developed

- Creation and delivery of an enhanced Leadership programme targeting Service specific needs

**Core Principle F**  
**Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.**

***How we do this:***

The Authority has in place a Risk Management Framework that includes a Risk Management Strategy and a Risk Management Handbook. The risk management arrangements are set out in the Performance Management and Improvement Framework. These set out the risk appetite of the Council and provide a methodology to ensure the consistent assessment / prioritisation of the risks the Authority faces and any mitigating actions.

The Authority continues to produce the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Joint Finance and Performance Report which highlights progress in relation to finance, performance, risk and financial efficiency.

The Council has a corporate policy in place to deal with complaints, that the Council has adopted, and each department has a nominated Complaints Officers. Complaints information is included in the joint finance and performance report.

An Audit Committee has been established in line with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) receiving reports from internal and external regulators on the internal control environment, risk and governance. The committee provides appropriate challenge and scrutiny in line with its terms of reference that are included in the constitution.

As a Local Authority it is necessary that we collect and use personal information to perform many of our day-to-day operations. The Council is committed to protecting this information and ensuring that it is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act. In line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) the Authority has established its post of Information and Governance Officer as the Data Protection Officer for the Council. A range of policies and procedures are in place to support this role.

***Review of Effectiveness:***

During the year one of the Authority's key governance systems was subject to an internal audit, namely the Financial Efficiency Projects Process. A follow-up audit was also conducted of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The findings of these audits were reported to the Audit Committee as appropriate. The outcomes of both audits were positive and did not identify any concerns to be reported in this statement.

WAO undertook a review of Governance, with a focus on Risk Management, in which they made a number of proposals for improvement. An action plan is being developed in response to the issues raised.

The highest level risks faced by the Authority are recorded on the Corporate Risk Register. The main risks facing the Authority during the period were:

Risk Description	Potential Impact
Failure to plan for and transform services in the light of current public sector funding outlook.	Significant reactive and unplanned reductions in front line services
The ICT provision supporting Council services is not resilient and fails to provide assurance requirements in terms of operational functionality and data security.	Medium to long terms loss of IT systems. Potential security breaches. Loss of data.
Business Continuity. Large scale incident / loss affecting the delivery of services.	Business continuity processes are not robust enough to enable the provision of key services in an emergency.
If the Council does not have the appropriate capacity and capability in the workforce, then its service specification will not be delivered effectively.	Not having the capacity and capability to deliver services.
Failure to deliver improvements in educational attainment (particularly Key Stage 4) will result in an adverse impact on outcomes and life chances for children and young people.	<p>Educational standards remain low in comparison with Welsh averages.</p> <p>Inability to offer a broad range of educational opportunities which will ultimately result in an adverse impact on pupil life chances and affect the realisation of full potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of confidence in the ability of the Council to provide quality education resulting in long term negative effects on the perception and confidence of Blaenau Gwent schools.</li> <li>• Increased social exclusion and social deprivation.</li> <li>• Failure to deliver a Corporate Priority.</li> </ul>
Failure to improve attendance rates within the Council.	Unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and financially support the cost of sickness absence.
If the Council cannot further improve / increase recycling rates then it will fail to meet national waste targets resulting in financial penalties from the Welsh Government.	WG recycling targets not met with both financial and reputational consequences.
Failure to comply with the Welsh Language Act and implement the associated Welsh Language Standards.	Poor service delivery, financial sanctions and reputational issues.
Failure to comply and meet with the new legislative changes under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) following Supreme Court Judgement will result in a failure to meet statutory obligations under	<p>Possible Litigation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to meet statutory obligations under Mental Capacity Act 2005 due to the increase in applications and</li> </ul>

<p>the Mental Capacity Act 2005.</p>	<p>individuals are unlawfully deprived of their liberty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backlog of requests affecting workload and staff morale / increased sickness</li> <li>• Additional workload affecting service provision.</li> <li>• Potential litigation for breach of human rights has increased in likelihood due to the improved knowledge of the Act and availability of representatives (Relevant Person's Representatives) to facilitate challenge.</li> <li>• Unable to meet current demand</li> <li>• Budget pressures due to the need to fund dedicated posts and backfill any secondments to Joint Gwent DoL Safeguarding Team.</li> <li>• Reputational damage and legal challenge if timescales are not complied with</li> </ul>
--------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

A copy of the full Corporate Risk Register can be obtained from the Risk Management and Insurance Section.

All financial efficiency and transformation projects are risk assessed using the Corporate Risk Management Framework. Risks are highlighted and considered by the Wider Corporate Leadership Team and Programme Management Board. Decisions on managing those risks are agreed during those meetings and monitored as part of the project management arrangements that are in place.

Project Management training is provided and supporting documentation is available for all staff who deliver projects and is mandatory for identified officers. Guidance documentation and support is available to members and officers for Financial Efficiency Projects to ensure a consistent approach is taken in developing and delivering those projects.

***Recommendations for Development:***

- To assess and demonstrate its compliance with the Local Government Measure and the aims and objectives of the Council, an annual report of the audit committee will be developed summarising the year's activity and evidencing their responsibilities as part of the governance arrangements.
- Further embedding of the Risk Management process to ensure consistent application.
- As part of the Authority's ongoing commitment to managing its risks, the anti-fraud, anti-corruption and anti-bribery policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate
- Continued inclusion of key governance systems in the internal audit plan to ensure key elements of the governance framework are prioritised and examined annually



- Development of an action plan in response to WAO findings for Risk Management and implementation of the actions in due course

**Core Principle G**  
**Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.**

***How we do this:***

Decision making processes for both Officers and Members are set out in the Constitution. Boundaries are clearly defined and the Committee structure includes decision making, scrutiny and regulatory functions. A set of Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules have been adopted to ensure consistency, transparency and value for money in financial management and procurement. The Chief Finance Officer ensures the Authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010). An annual statement of accounts is produced and presented to Members for scrutiny. A period of public consultation is held where members of the public can inspect the accounts.

An Audit Committee is established that has the primary functions of reviewing financial reports and challenging governance arrangements. The Committee aims to seek assurance that the governance framework operating within the Authority is robust, effective and efficient. This is achieved in part through the Committee receiving this Annual Governance Statement. The role and scope of the Audit Committee are set out in the Constitution.

The Internal Audit Service works on a risk based approach, to an annual audit plan, in order to assess the internal control environment of the Authority. The work of the section is prioritised in line with the Authority's objectives. The results of all audit work are reported to the Audit Committee who can, if necessary, call Officers to account where weak control is identified. Policies are maintained for Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery, and Anti-Money-Laundering. Adherence to these is considered as part of the work of the Internal Audit function.

Council meetings are held open to the public and minutes are published on the Authority's website. A number of meetings have previously been webcast but resources are not available to continue with this initiative at present.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Council strives to ensure Continuous Improvement in the delivery of its services through its improvement planning process and the Performance Management Improvement Framework. It has strengthened these arrangements to align them with risk management and project management as well as identifying levels of accountability.

The remit of the Wider Corporate Leadership Team has also been reviewed in 2016. Its broad purpose is to effectively support the Corporate Leadership Team in its role in providing strategic direction to the organisation. The WCLT is also a forum to disseminate information and communicate messages, network with colleagues and peers and provide personal development opportunities. A number of other groups involving the current members of WCLT have now been rationalised including Programme Steering Groups for both Performance and Improvement and Financial Efficiency, to ensure the best use of senior management resources.

A performance management system, utilised by the whole Council is in place which incorporates the majority of the Council's business planning and performance arrangements, so that we have one place for information management and monitoring. The system works to avoid duplication and to provide a consistent approach across the Council. The system includes statutory monitoring as well as business plans, self-evaluations, equalities, risk, projects and business continuity.

The Authority's assurance arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. The Internal Audit Service is subject to regular review by the Authority's external auditors, who place reliance on the work carried out by the section where possible. In addition the service has undergone an external quality assessment during the year that found the service to conform with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Internal Audit Services issued 40 audit opinions during the year.

<b>Audit Grading</b>	<b>No of audits</b>
Full Assurance	8
Reasonable Assurance	24
Limited Assurance	7
No Assurance	1

The numbers of Limited Assurance and No Assurance audit gradings decreased compared to their equivalent gradings for 2015-16. In addition to the graded reports, the service has continued to undertake a number of investigations concerning minor incidences of petty theft and improper use of the Authority's assets/resources. Whilst the overall audit opinion on the adequacy of the internal control environment has improved to reflect Reasonable Assurance for the year, there is a notable weighting towards one directorate for the poorer gradings and referrals. As such the level of audit coverage in this area will need to increase for 2017/18 in order to provide additional assurance with regard to controls in this directorate. The Wider Corporate Leadership Team continues to receive periodical reviews of Internal Audit findings to ensure corrective action is taken resulting in the outcome of improved internal controls.

The annual report of the Director of Social Services was published in July 2016, summarising the performance of the service during 2015/16. The report capturing activity during 2016/17 will not be available until the Summer of 2017. During 2016/17 the Social Services and Wellbeing Act continued to be the focus of the department with Blaenau Gwent working towards the principles of the act whilst facing significant cost pressures. The cost pressures related to increased costs within the care sector as a result of the introduction of the minimum living wage, and the increased numbers of looked after children within Social Services.

The Authority received and processed 811 Freedom of Information requests during the year compared to 608 in the previous year. Although this equates to an increase of 33%, the service areas continued to respond promptly with 84.83% of the requests being responded to within 20 working days.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Managers to implement the actions identified to address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Managers to ensure systems for which they have responsibility have robust internal controls to further improve the integrity of the Authority's processes.
- Review of the Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

### **Significant Governance Issues**

We have been advised on the implications of the results of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose subject to the significant governance issues to be specifically addressed as outlined below:

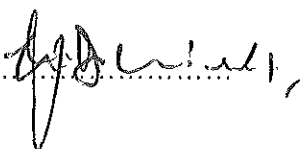
<b><i>Issue</i></b>	<b><i>Action</i></b>	<b><i>Responsible Officer</i></b>
The economic situation remains a concern to the Public Sector in Wales and the indications from the Welsh Government are that the tough financial settlements will continue for the foreseeable future. This will pose significant challenges for the Council and it will be critical for the Council to demonstrate that it has appropriate governance arrangements in place to manage its	Financial monitoring statements are reported regularly into Scrutiny and Executive Committee via the Joint Finance & Performance Report and quarterly portfolio budget forecast reports. The provisional outturn for 2016/17 is a favourable position of £0.071m. This is after the net use of reserves of £2.65m, mainly used to assist in addressing the significant in year cost pressure	Chief Finance Officer

<p>financial affairs and plan towards achieving a sustainable financial position.</p>	<p>within Children's Services and the impact of the implementation of the mandatory living wage within the Social Care Sector.</p> <p>Monthly progress reports on the financial efficiency projects are provided to Wider Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and to the Executive Committee, where project progress is appraised. Regular progress reports are also given to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee. As at March 2017 the Financial Efficiency Projects identified for 2016/17 (either as part of the budget setting process or subsequently) have achieved £4.61m in line with the savings target and a further £5.3m savings proposals have been agreed by Council and built into the 2017/18 base budget. For the medium term future, the Council intends to adopt a strategic financial plan which will focus on its core functions. Within this framework the Authority will be looking at ways to achieve savings whilst mitigating the impact on services.</p>	
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

### ***Certification of the Annual Governance Statement***

In conclusion there has been positive movement for the Authority's Governance Framework during 2016/17 and the progress made against the areas for improvement identified in the 2015/16 AGS are shown in Appendix B.

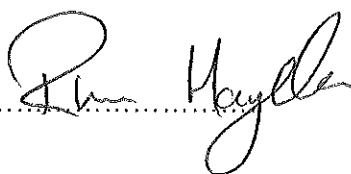
Whilst there remain some areas that require development or further improvement, in considering the governance framework and its application as detailed in this statement, we are of the opinion that the governance arrangements in place for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are effective and remain fit for purpose, providing an adequate level of assurance for the Council.

(signed).....

**Councillor Nigel Daniels**

**Leader of the Council**

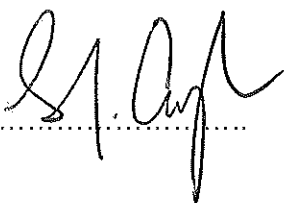
**September 2017**

(signed).....

**David McAuliffe**

**Chief Finance Officer**

**September 2017**

(signed).....

**Stephen Gillingham**

**Lead Corporate Director**

**September 2017**

## Appendix A

### WAO Proposals for Improvement 2016/17

<b>WAO Financial Resilience Report 2015/2016 (Issued 04/2016)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Proposals for Improvement</i></b>	
1.	The Council should develop fully costed savings plans which underpin its medium term financial plan.
2.	Having developed fully costed savings plans for the medium term, the Council's medium term financial plan should outline the level at which it intends to maintain its General Reserve.
3.	The Council should ensure that savings plans are sufficiently detailed to ensure that Members are clear as to what the plans are intended to deliver and that the delivery of those plans can be scrutinised appropriately throughout the year.
<b>Governance Review with a Focus on Scrutiny 2015/16 (Issued 04/2016)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Proposals for Improvement</i></b>	
1.	Evaluate the impact of member support and training to improve the quality of chairing and questioning at scrutiny meetings.
2.	Consider holding meetings between the chairs of scrutiny committees and the Chair of the Audit Committee meeting to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strengthen the planning of, and links between, the forward work programmes of scrutiny committees and the Audit Committee; and</li><li>• Consider future officer reporting of follow-up actions resulting from reports of external review bodies.</li></ul>
3.	Review the Council's Scrutiny Arrangements Action Plan to ensure that the actions are SMART and include the BRAG2 criteria in the plan to help members monitor progress.
4.	Evaluate the impact that the Council's scrutiny function has on improving outcomes for local people.
5.	Evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function in engaging with the public.
<b>Human Resources 2012 Review – Progress Follow-Up (Issued 05/2016)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Proposals for Improvement</i></b>	
1.	The Council should assess HR & Organisation Development (OD) capacity in light of changes to service delivery and working practices such as Agile Working, the Management Development Programme and the further development of iTrent.

2.	The Council should evaluate the effectiveness and consistent application of its actions to address its high level of sickness absence.
3.	The Council should improve its HR management information by collating the completion rate of Return to Work Interviews (RTWs) and include this information in the key HR performance indicators data set.
4.	The Council should update its equalities information published on the Council's website to conform to the Single Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Duty.
5.	Add the Whistleblowing and Equality policies to the list of key policies that are required to read by new employees as part of the Induction process.

Details of progress against these proposals can be obtained from the Corporate Services and Strategy Directorate.

**Appendix B**

Recommendation for Improvement made in the 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement	Action Undertaken during 2016/17	Further Action Required
<b>Core Principle 1 – Focusing on the purpose of the Authority and on the outcome for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area</b>		
Continued alignment of the PMIF with other arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work has progressed to incorporate the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and 5 ways of working into Council planning which will be included in the updated PMIF.</li> <li>• The Well-being Objectives for the Council have been developed with full engagement from both officers and Members (from the last and new cycle) and agreed using evidence from the Well-being Assessment (this supports the FGA individual body duty). The Council received its Certificate of Compliance in August 2017 which assessed its Well-being Objectives.</li> <li>• Review of arrangements to support the proposals for improvement from external regulation</li> <li>• A review of the self evaluation approach was undertaken and now includes how activity supports the National Well-being Goals and for 2017/18 the Council's Well-being Objectives.</li> <li>• A review of the (joint) Finance and Performance Report has been undertaken and the format has been significantly enhanced. This format is to be further enhanced for quarter 2 2017/18 onwards to align the chapters to the Council's Well-being Objectives to show progress against these rather than Directorate focussed chapters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A refresh of the PMIF document is planned to update all the work that has been undertaken</li> <li>• Update Joint Finance and Performance report to have chapters that follow the Council's Well-being Objectives.</li> </ul>



<p>Further embedding of the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly report to Scrutiny and Wider CMT</li> <li>• Facilitation of the Financial Efficiency Programme 2016/17</li> <li>• Service area cut as part of the FEPs for 2016/17 by 50 % FTE</li> <li>• Work programme aligned to planned development of Council Plan – Transforming Blaenau Gwent Plan to be reviewed in line with this</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme review 2017/18</li> <li>• Financial Efficiency Programme 2017/18</li> </ul>
<p>STT undertaking service reviews to gain assurance or otherwise of correct provision and Value for Money across the Council as well as further developing standard operating procedures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further work on reviewing new policy and improvement made with regard to managing Stand by</li> <li>• Review of Caretaking and building responsible officer at Council Offices EV and General Offices EV – response to Health and safety risks – review of service specification and delivery model design and new model implemented</li> <li>• Waste review further to urgent need for corrective action – fundamental improvements as part of Collaborative Change Programme and leading specific areas</li> <li>• Recycling review – improvements made to routes, work programming, processes and procedures</li> <li>• Review of Catering Service as a result of poor performance information – implementation plan with Project Team and Directorate</li> <li>• Review of the Customer Contact Centre scoped and planned for early 2017/18</li> <li>• Review of Transactional HR systems and processes – improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme review 2017/18</li> <li>• Financial Efficiency Programme 2017/18</li> </ul>

	<p>plan in place and aligned to the development of ITrent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project support and implementation for the Council's Customer and Digital Strategy; implementation of mobile app, website, social media platform, CRM platform etc.</li> </ul>	
<p>Review of the Performance Management System and further development where relevant. Implementation of phase 2 of the performance consolidation model and targeted work on areas of data quality that have been identified as needing to improve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next phase of performance consolidation was agreed with the Environment and Regeneration directorate and now includes an Environment Data Officer in the consolidated team. Support has been provided in the first instance to improving the monitoring and data collection of the Waste and Recycling information. This has been included into a Waste Data Pack that has been scheduled into the Forward Work Programme of the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development.</li> <li>• Work has been undertaken on data quality across directorates. Targeted support has been started with the Environment Directorate including Technical Services, Fly Tipping and Street Cleansing. Support is also being provided to the Leisure Trust.</li> <li>• A review of the data nationally being collected is being undertaken and following the 2016/17 data release the Corporate Performance Team will target areas requiring most support.</li> <li>• At this stage it has been agreed to not provide specific support to OD regarding their sickness data as the issue with data collection is owing to the use of 2 systems and once ITrent has been</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further support to Directorates and their data and service improvement linked to the outcome of the national data collection.</li> </ul>

	embedded this issue will be resolved.	
<b>Core Principle 2 – Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles</b>		
Continue to implement the scrutiny development action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A review of the Scrutiny Action Plan has been undertaken to ensure that it is SMART.</li> <li>• A review has also been undertaken on how to report against the action plan and from now on a similar report to the Joint Finance and Performance Report will be used. The action plan is reported to Democratic Services Committee who recommend to Council.</li> <li>• The Priorities within the Action Plan are linked to WAO Proposals for Improvement including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Evaluating member training</li> <li>○ Links between Scrutiny and the Audit Committee</li> <li>○ Improving outcomes for the community</li> <li>○ Improving engagement with the public</li> </ul> </li> <li>• These are monitored via the relevant business plan (Performance, Scrutiny and IT Team) and through the Joint Finance and Performance Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further progress the Scrutiny Action Plan</li> </ul>
Implementation of actions and weaknesses identified in internal audits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plans developed for all audit output</li> <li>• Quarterly meetings held with departmental management teams and Corporate Leadership Team to discuss audit outcomes and highlight progress against actions</li> </ul>	
Development of an engagement framework for elected members and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Communication/engagement framework in place</li> <li>• Staff Communication/Engagement Working Group in place</li> <li>• Staff Panel established</li> <li>• Trade Union</li> </ul>	

	<p>Engagement/Communication Framework in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Survey August 2016 – feedback Autumn 2016</li> <li>• Staff Engagement Events January 2017</li> <li>• Areas identified for support from OD - support plans in place for service areas who requested</li> </ul>	
Continued implementation of the staff survey action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plan from survey lead to the development of the above</li> </ul>	
On-going engagement with the regulators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a schedule of liaison meetings with SG, BE as the WAO Lead contact and quarterly meetings with leadership and WAO and BE, SG.</li> <li>• In additional regular engagement with Estyn and CSSIW also take place</li> </ul>	
<b>Core Principle 3 – Promoting the values of the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour</b>		
Embedding of the action points from the new Strategic Equalities Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate messages sent out to all staff via Chief Officer Message on adoption of the 2016-20 Strategic Equality Plan (SEP)</li> <li>• Equalities strengthened in business planning processes for Tier 2 Head of Service Level .</li> <li>• Equality Impact Assessment further strengthened in Outline Business Case Financial Efficiency Project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointment Equality Officer (May 2017)</li> <li>• Review of the Equality Impact Assessment Framework</li> <li>• Directorate Sessions on Equality and Diversity</li> <li>• Elected Member Training</li> <li>• Refocusing the Corporate Equality Network on action in the SEP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping opportunities for engagement with people from protected characteristics.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Inclusion of the Key Governance Systems in the Internal Audit planning cycle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key governance systems risk assessed and prioritised within the audit planning cycle</li> <li>• Audits of key governance systems undertaken during 2016/17</li> </ul>	
Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures.		

<p>Implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language Standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Welsh Language promotional strategy was developed presented through the democratic processes and agreed by Council</li> <li>• Work towards compliance with the standards has been undertaken, including where suspension is agreed (e.g. standard 41)</li> <li>• On-going advice and guidance support to organisations on the implication of the Welsh Language Standards, including advice and guidance available of intranet</li> </ul>	<p>Implementing a new translation process for all Council.</p>
<p>Work to implement the action plan to meet the corporate duties of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Leadership Team have agreed that the organisation approach will have an initial focus that will follow the 7 core areas suggested by the WLGA.</li> <li>• The focus of the work has initially been with the Corporate Services and Strategy and Resources Directorates.</li> <li>• The aim has been to provide support and guidance but also to build confidence and awareness, working towards building the principles of the Act and 5 ways of working into normal business and practice.</li> <li>• We have undertaken desktop research to gather some examples of practice from elsewhere and did an initial mapping exercise to capture the potential areas that could be reviewed.</li> </ul> <p>Information has been gathered into a Council action plan which is being drafted. We have included the lead Member and officer for each area, and referenced the 5 ways of working.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise the Corporate Plan</li> <li>• Consider how to evaluate the impact of the activity and mapping its reporting route through the democratic process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Core Principle 4 – Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk</b></p>		
<p>Managers to implement the actions identified to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly meetings held with departmental</li> </ul>	

<p>address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Management Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Follow up audit process to evidence improvement.</p>	<p>management teams and Corporate Leadership Team to discuss audit outcomes and highlight progress against actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any follow up actions not implemented highlighted to management during these meetings</li> </ul>	
<p>Development of action plans to address internal control issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action plans developed for all audit output including proposed action, responsible officer and timescale for completion</li> </ul>	
<p>Continued embedding of the governance framework including business plans, risk registers and self-evaluation etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above ( PMIF)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Core Principle 5 – Developing the capacity of Members to be effective and ensuring that officers – including the statutory officers – also have the capability and capacity to deliver effectively</b></p>		
<p>Continued implementation of the PDR and Member Development Programme.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Head of Democratic Services has been tasked by Council to undertake a review of the Democratic processes and support mechanisms and this will include the PDR process.</li> <li>• The Member Development Programme has been developed linked to the priorities within the business plans and the items within the Forward Work Programmes of Committees.</li> <li>• The Member Development Programme for 2017/18 is being developed a few months at a time as there has been a demand for training and support for members linked to new arrangements and legislation as well as the Council having a number of new members elected in May 2017.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Democratic Services to implement the changes identified from the Members regarding support</li> <li>• Implement the changed PDR approach</li> <li>• Implement an amended Competency Framework for Members</li> </ul>
<p>Continued embedding of the self-assessment and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See above on Self Evaluation as part of the PMIF</li> </ul>	

performance review processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FADE is used by the Education Directorate on a termly basis and these are used to inform their business plan updates.</li> </ul>	
Further embedding of the Leadership programme.		
<b>Core Principle 6 – Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust local public accountability</b>		
Develop the “Let’s Talk” 2017/18 budget setting engagement process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ‘Let’s Talk’ engagement programme for 2017/18 was implemented, and key engagement events were held to support the Council decision-making in January 2017.</li> <li>The findings of the programme were presented through professional and political processes</li> <li>Press release on the programme and the decisions taken were carried out in March 2017.</li> </ul>	
Continue to develop activity under the Blaenau Gwent Engagement Strategy, including with reference to key legislative changes, e.g. the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the social Services and Wellbeing Act.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership Engagement Group held with representation from a range of partner organisations making up the Public Services Board</li> <li>Implementation of the ‘Blaenau Gwent We Want’ Programme to support the development of the Well-being Assessment for the area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further engagement events of the ‘Blaenau Gwent We Want’ to support the development of the Well-being Plan</li> </ul>
Work towards implementation of the third sector agreement and associated action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Third Sector Agreement was endorsed by the LSB (as it was at the time, now PSB) and Executive Committee both in April 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue dialogue with GAVO to progress next steps.</li> <li>Seek nomination for the voluntary sector liaison committee for 2017/18.</li> </ul>

