

Selecting Our Objectives

We are committed to making Blaenau Gwent more equal and sustainable through the delivery of our Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan acts as the Council's business plan and sets out the vision, values and priorities for 2022/27. It outlines not only what the people of Blaenau Gwent can expect from the Council but equally, what the Council is asking from its citizens and partners. We want to support residents to become more independent in order to reduce demand. Working in this way will ensure we are getting the most out of our limited resources; by focussing on this mission, we will secure value for money and improve people's lives whilst simultaneously reducing costs.

This strong positive relationship is focussed on addressing the same problems in order to deliver healthier, happier, more independent communities that will make for a sustainable, prosperous Blaenau Gwent. Resilient communities sit at the heart of the council being more sustainable and will result in us being able to spend the limited resources available to us more efficiently, needing to spend less money on those Council services that cost the most money.

We continue to take our aspirations forward in all that we do and, over the last 12 months, a number of key fundamental pieces of work have been undertaken as we work towards delivering our Corporate Plan and become a more sustainable and resilient Council. Some of these areas have been pulled out below but are referred to frequently throughout the report.

Federated Approach

Blaenau Gwent Council entered into an innovative collaborative working agreement with Torfaen Council during 2024/25, with the first Joint Chief Executive post in Wales. An initial 'discovery phase' was initially agreed in June 2024, to begin exploring the potential for efficiencies and for increasing innovation and creativity across both authorities.

Both councils are taking a forward-thinking approach to address current challenges and address future demands. It is recognised that local government in its current form is facing an uncertain and unsustainable future, therefore the Elected Members and Officers across both councils are taking a proactive stance in finding new solutions that go beyond the usual 'salami-slicing' approach. This has led to an open consideration to align the councils to create a strong, strategic foundation for the change that is needed. In January 2025 both Councils agreed to make these arrangements permanent.

Corporate Structure

For a number of years Blaenau Gwent Council operated with a temporary senior management structure. It was recognised that this was unsustainable and not conducive for moving the organisation forward. The agreement in January 2025 to work with a Joint Chief Executive paved the way for making the organisational structure more stable and productive.

The corporate structure in Blaenau Gwent Council sees a number of in place (working just within Blaenau Gwent shown in green) and joint posts (working across both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Council's shown in blue) now operational:



Marmot Masterplan and the Communities Approach

Following Gwent Public Service Board's (PSB) commitment to become a Marmot region, and Torfaen Council's approach to become a Marmot Council, Blaenau Gwent has also taken on this mantle and is systematically reshaping the Council's operating model. A 'Communities Approach' is being designed to ensure we are not just saying the right things and doing more of the same but that we are delivering real tangible change.

As part of this process the Council has worked to develop a Marmot Masterplan working alongside Torfaen Council. The 'Masterplan' is an ambitious programme of work that will be implemented and measured in the short (end of year), medium (end of Council term in 2027) and long term (end of Masterplan in 2030). The Council has been working to align all of its monitoring, via the business planning approach, to the Masterplan.

In common with other regions of Gwent, it's an unfortunate fact that communities in Blaenau Gwent face some of the worst health disparities in Wales. Addressing generational inequality across the county, demands that we take a longer-term perspective. Being a Marmot Council, offers us a chance to focus, and to use our resources and wide-ranging influence to tackle sources of inequality.

This approach has enabled us to work with Torfaen Council to develop a Masterplan. This Masterplan builds on and dovetails our existing Corporate Plan. It recognises a need to plan over a longer period of time, in the knowledge that this work will take us well beyond the current Corporate Plan for 2027. Our Corporate Plan continues to remain active and relevant, representing the first 5 years of our journey towards our longer-term aspiration to reduce inequity in Blaenau Gwent. Furthermore, our Masterplan shows we are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot Council, over future generations.

The Council has in place a Corporate Plan Annual Delivery Plan as well as supporting service level business plans. The implementation of these supports a contribution to a much longer-term endeavour. Activity is not linked to a single year but supports us in our journey and aspirations for the future. Furthermore, these aspirations go well beyond the end of our current Corporate Plan in 2027 and are part of a longer-term journey, as we aim to meet the needs of future generations.

Future Development of the Marmot Masterplan

The measures listed in our Masterplan will continue to be refined and improved over time as new datasets become available or are developed internally. In doing so we will ensure that the plan is always being supported with the best possible data to evidence the impacts of our actions, including those associated with the recommendations made in the 'Building a Fairer Gwent' report.

Importantly, the adoption of the Marmot principles and the development of the outcomes and measures represent only a small part of the work we must do to become a Marmot council. In order for Blaenau Gwent and our partners to have any meaningful impact on the wider determinants of health the approach must penetrate all parts of the organisation and run far beyond reporting against a list of outcome measures.

Through our planning processes, we are therefore questioning how we do things, adjusting as necessary to ensure we are maximising the impact on sources of inequality and inequity in Blaenau Gwent. We are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot Council, but this must be matched by our actions. Therefore, reviewing what we do and how we measure impact will be under constant review in the years to come, as we develop stronger delivery mechanisms to reach our outcomes.

Without doing so, we will never be able to address the social determinants of health, which, for the residents of Blaenau Gwent, will inevitably mean they are far less likely to reach their full potential and far more likely in the future to be the recipient of a Council or wider public service intervention.



The Characteristics of an Outstanding Council



Following the approach undertaken in Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent has further developed and adopted the characteristics of becoming an outstanding Council.

As an organisation it is important to not only review the services we are delivering to our residents and businesses, and the impact they are having, but we must also ensure that our own internal processes and systems are working well, ensuring we are using the resources available to us as efficiently and effectively as possible, with robust controls, systems and processes supporting every aspect of the Council's activity.

Where our Corporate Plan focuses on the improvements we will deliver for the people who live and work within Blaenau Gwent, our framework for an Outstanding Council sets out how we will become a more efficient and



effective organisation, better equipped to deliver our Corporate Plan aspirations. In the same way as we do for the Corporate Plan; we will monitor the key actions that we believe will take us forward to become an outstanding Council.

The diagram above outlines the 8 characteristics which we will use to define what an outstanding Council looks like to assess our performance against. This framework will be used alongside our Corporate Plan to provide a focus for organisational development and to support the development of our annual self-assessment. This year will be the first time of the Council reporting against the Characteristics of an Outstanding Council. This detail can be found at page 63 to 83.

The framework for an Outstanding Council was developed considering what is important for the Council to deliver, as well as embracing the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 by giving consideration to the sustainability principle, and the 7 defined areas of corporate governance. These characteristics, along with our organisational values, will help us to create the right conditions to apply the 5 ways of working in a consistent and meaningful way.

Each characteristic is supported by a defined definition to assist us in the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of them. This enables the Council to be clear on the areas the Council is looking to improve in pursuit of being an outstanding council

Our Corporate Plan 2022/27

Our Corporate Plan was adopted by Council in October 2022 and will be in place for the duration of the existing Council administration, up to 2027. The Corporate Plan sets out an ambitious programme of activity for the Council in order to support communities to thrive. The Corporate Plan is the Council's commitment to the communities of Blaenau Gwent, to provide modern and high quality services which support economic growth and well-being.

Although our approach to communities, Marmot, and the federated model have been implemented since, they do not change our Corporate Plan, only strengthen our ability to deliver it.

The Plan outlines four high level priorities, also known as Well-being Objectives, each of which are underpinned by solid and sustainable business plans, which describe the activity to be undertaken by each service area of the Council, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. The Corporate Plan 2022/27 Well-being Objectives are:

- **Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent;**
- **Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities;**
- **An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place; and**
- **Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient.**

The Council has a responsibility to the people of Blaenau Gwent to help improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area. By setting a small number of strategic priorities within the Corporate Plan it will allow efforts to be concentrated on delivery in these areas and ultimately, help to improve the quality of the lives of residents.

The Objectives have been developed using extensive research and understanding of local community need following various engagement activities. Owing to the timing of the development of the Gwent Well-being Plan and the development of the Council's Corporate Plan, evidence from the Well-being Needs Assessment and

public consultation were used as evidence for the Corporate Plan. The main areas of priority emerged as:

- Reducing the inequalities that exist within our communities – this directly links to the Corporate Plan priority - Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent as well as the targeted work being undertaken by the Council's Cost of Living working group;

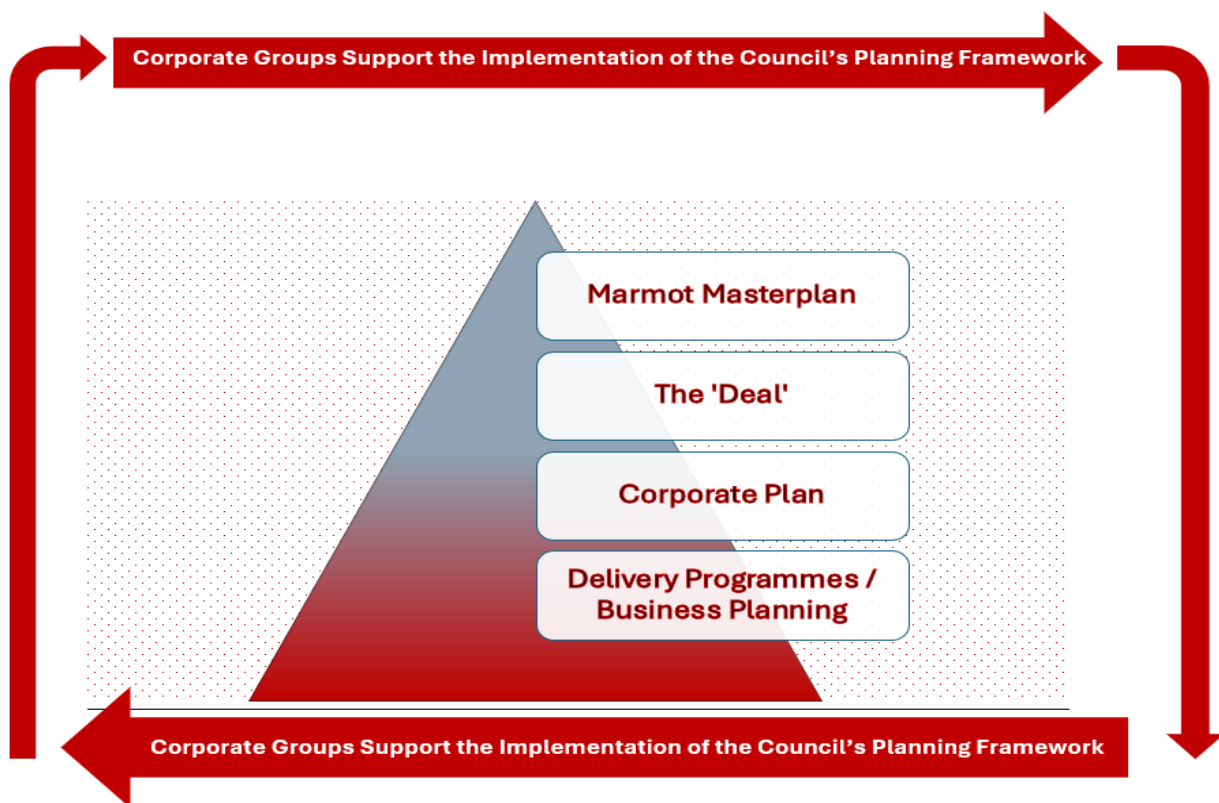


- Creating safe communities – this directly links to the Corporate Plan priority - Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient;
- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment - this directly links to the Corporate Plan priority - Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities; and
- In order to work towards delivery of the priorities, the Council needs to be able to do this effectively and within resources, therefore, a fourth priority has been developed specifically for the Council - An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place.

A full version of our Corporate Plan is available to download here [corporate-plan-2022-2027.pdf \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://corporate-plan-2022-2027.pdf (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

Sitting within our Corporate Plan is our statutory Well-being Statement which explains in more detail how we have derived our objectives and how they will contribute to the 7 national well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Our Well-Being statement also acts as a key driver for improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Blaenau Gwent by seeking to ensure ‘that the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

As well as our Corporate Plan, there are a range of other key documents that provide a clear direction and vision for the future, based on the needs and aspirations of the local communities. These align with our Corporate Plan objectives and organisational vision to ensure that we can deliver services and make improvements.



Gwent Public Service Board

The Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) is a statutory partnership that brings together public services from across Gwent to improve well-being, both now, and in the long term. PSB's are required to assess the well-being of the area they cover and form well-being plans on a five-year cycle. Membership of the Gwent PSB can



be viewed [here](#).

Gwent PSB adopted its first [Well-being Plan](#) in July 2023, setting out how public services will collaborate to respond to some of Gwent's key well-being challenges. The plan runs from 2023-25 and sets out two interconnected well-being objectives and five underpinning steps to be delivered over a five-year delivery period. Gwent PSB well-being objectives:

1. *We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all; and*
2. *We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.*

Five underpinning steps:

1. *Take action to reduce the cost-of-living crisis in the longer term;*
2. *Provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes;*
3. *Taking action to reduce our carbon emissions, help Gwent adapt to climate change, and protect and restore our natural environment;*
4. *Enable and support people, neighbourhoods, and communities to be resilient, connected, thriving and safe; and*
5. *Take action to address inequities, particularly in relation to health, through the framework of the Marmot Principles.*

To support the PSB to tackle the high levels of inequality across Gwent, it has begun working with the Institute of Health Equity, using guiding principles identified in Professor Marmot's review, [Fair Society, Healthy Lives](#), for achieving greater health equity. Since the original review, a further two principals have been identified, as important to improving health. The 8 Marmot Principles:

1. Give every child the best start in life	2. Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.	3. Create fair employment and good work for all.	4. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.	6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.	7. Tackle racism, discrimination, and their outcomes.	8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together.

The regional Gwent PSB Delivery Plan 2024-28 is centred around four Areas of Focus for well-being as agreed by the PSB in December 2023, aiming to address some of the recommendations from the [Building a Fairer Gwent: Improving Health Equity & the Social Determinants](#) report through the regional well-being delivery plan:

- Everyone has the Best Start in Life;
- Everyone has the same Economic Chances;
- Everyone lives in a Place they feel Safe; and
- Everyone lives in Climate-ready Communities where our Environment is Valued and Protected.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Partnership (LWP) is the Local Delivery Group of the Gwent PSB. The Partnership has identified local well-being priorities aligned to the regional Well-being Plan through public and stakeholder engagement. Some key areas of focus and priorities which have clearly emerged from stakeholder engagement activity, which were adopted by the LWP in June 2024 are:



Travel and Transport	Food	Reducing Inequalities	Climate and Nature
- Active Travel - Community Transport - Sustainable & low-emission Transport uptake	- Food Insecurity & access to affordable food - Access to healthy food - Local food growing - Developing the local Food Economy & Community Food Initiatives	- Tackling Poverty & Cost-of-Living - Services, support and signposting for Older People - Tackling Loneliness & Social Isolation - Volunteering & local network of community groups	- Access to Land & local Green Spaces - Nature & Biodiversity loss, awareness raising and making the most of our natural environment - Local involvement in regional climate programmes

The LWP identified that the regional Delivery Plan should be data and outcomes oriented, whilst providing an opportunity for the Local Delivery Group to focus on what they hope to achieve locally for the benefit of their communities and follow an evidence-based approach to make a meaningful, lasting impact.

For more info please see recent report to the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in April 2025:

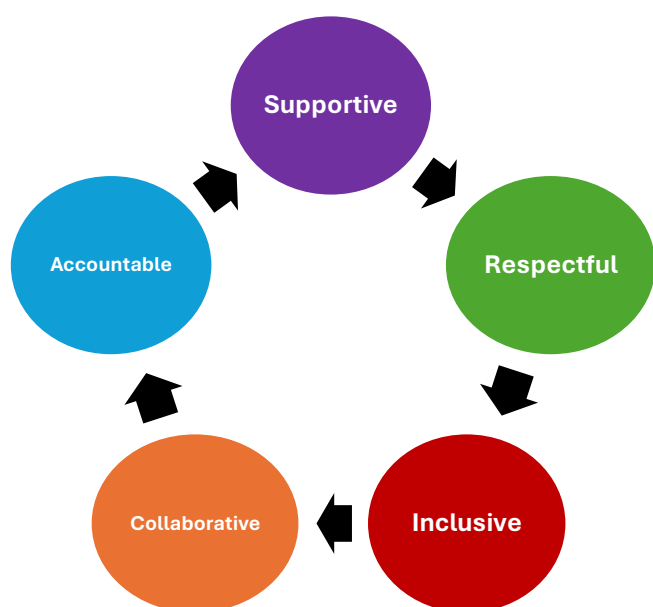
<https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s17298/Report.pdf?LLL=0>

The Council's Vision and Values

The ethos of our reconfigured Executive Team places a strong emphasis on collective responsibility and mutual support to achieve shared goals, in working towards our Well-being Objectives. The Council's vision is:

‘Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities’

The core values of our council are - to be:



Our Vision and Values reflect who we are as a Council, how we do things, and how we are shaping the future by ensuring that these apply to everything we do. Our values play an essential part in the culture of our organisation.

Our values will only be made real by the behaviour we demonstrate. This includes how we do things; how we treat others; what we say and how we say it.

The changes we continue to make to our organisation will put our vision and values as well as sustainability at the heart of everything that we do, both in terms of what we are looking to achieve, but also in the way we will work towards our objectives.

