

Blaenau Gwent

# Connect



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April 2026

## POSITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE BUDGET FOR 2026/27



During March, the council approved its budget and set its council tax level for the next financial year.



The budget continues to support vulnerable residents, protect frontline services, and keeps a rise in council tax as low as possible at 3.75 per cent, which is lower than originally planned and one of the lowest increases in Wales.

**Budget highlights include:**

- Protection of frontline services, with no service cuts.
- A 10 per cent increase in school funding.
- £11million allocated for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- £3million in efficiencies delivered through the Bridging the Gap programme and collaboration with Torfaen Council.
- Support for local groups and clubs delivering the Blaenau Gwent Deal.
- A council tax rise equating to 97p per week for Band A properties and £1.13 per week for Band B - the most common property bands in the borough.

An improved funding settlement, together with a range of efficiencies, means the budget continues to protect and invest in the services that matter most to local people. The revenue budget, alongside the capital programme, will deliver increased investment for schools, environmental services, and highways, while maintaining support for the most vulnerable in the community.

The budget also ensures the council will lead the way on being a fair employer; benefitting the lowest paid frontline staff, like teaching assistants, school catering assistants, care assistants and refuse and recycling workers. The council will receive £44.34million from council tax in 2026/27, which represents around 21 per cent of the council's funding. And to help residents most in need of financial support, the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will help over 8,000 residents on low incomes.

If you are on a low income or receive Universal Credit or Income Support, you may be entitled to a reduction in your council tax. Visit our council tax web pages to check.

Over the next five years over £80million will also be invested in capital works; including investing £1.4million in extending Tredegar Comprehensive School, investing £5million in waste infrastructure and vehicles, £1 million on industrial units, £3.9million on disabled facilities grants, a £1.2million investment in managing floods, £500,000 on the former Abertillery Library and £400,000 on Llanhilleth Pit head baths.

**Turn to page 2 to see budget headlines and lots more information on the Blaenau Gwent Deal.**

Scan the QR codes to watch local community groups including the Cwm Flood Taskforce, and 'Get Blaenau Gwent Breastfeeding' participants explain how they're already contributing to the Blaenau Gwent Deal.



## Investment in roads and funding secured for A4046 upgrade

More than £12.5million will be spent on improving the borough's highways over five years.



£5.4million of capital funding is being invested in resurfacing work between April 2025 and April 2030. A new £2.5million improvement scheme for the A4046, between Aberbeeg and Cwm, has also been announced with work due to start late summer. The investment is being made alongside an annual £1million budget for maintaining highways.

**Matt Stent, Service Manager Neighbourhood Services said:** "We are listening to our communities and continuing to invest in our roads. By identifying and securing additional funding, we are able to accelerate essential repairs and continue to deliver an ambitious resurfacing programme that will protect many of our roads for years to come."

"The A4046 is a vital route for our residents and businesses, and this funding will allow us to carry out essential improvements and secure the long-term future of this key road."

Since September, nearly 50 roads have been resurfaced, with additional structural repairs completed on safety barriers and bridges. The roads included in the programme have been selected following detailed inspections and engagement with local ward members.

The planned works on the A4046 between Aberbeeg and Cwm will deliver essential upgrades such as improved drainage, full carriageway resurfacing, and enhanced safety measures to protect the route for the long term. The council's annual highways budget includes emergency repairs such as potholes and drainage issues, as well as infrastructure maintenance.

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Young people make film about their Blaenau Gwent [see page 3](#)



Play areas to be refurbished [see page 4](#)



Third community kit room opens [see page 6](#)



Abertillery town boost makeover [see page 7](#)

# BLAENAU GWENT'S BUDGET AT A GLANCE 2026/2027

**£1 MILLION**  
TO MAINTAIN SERVICES  
FOR ADULT SOCIAL  
CARE CLIENTS



**£5.4 MILLION**  
CAPITAL INVESTMENT FOR  
ROAD IMPROVEMENTS  
OVER THE NEXT FIVE  
YEARS



IN ORDER TO MEET RISING  
INFLATION AND INVEST IN  
ESSENTIAL SERVICES OVER  
THE COMING YEAR A  
COUNCIL TAX INCREASE  
OF 3.75% HAS BEEN APPROVED



**£6.35 MILLION**  
OR AROUND A 10% INCREASE  
TO MEET SCHOOLS PAY  
INFLATION AND COST  
PRESSURES, INCLUDING  
ALN SUPPORT



AN ADDITIONAL  
**£409,000**  
TO MEET THE COUNCIL  
TAX REDUCTION SCHEME  
FOR THOSE IN MOST NEED,  
SUPPORTING OVER 8,000 HOUSEHOLDS



HELPS SOCIAL CARE  
PROVIDERS MEET  
INCREASES IN THE  
REAL LIVING WAGE



**£600,000**  
TO FUND THE IMPACT OF THE  
REAL LIVING WAGE FOR THE  
LOWEST PAID EMPLOYEES IN  
THE COUNCIL'S PAY STRUCTURE



**£3.7 MILLION**  
TO SUPPORT LEISURE  
AND CULTURAL SERVICES  
PROVIDED BY ANEURIN  
LEISURE TRUST



## Need to get in touch? Need support with a council service or signposting to advice?



There are many ways you contact the council and access services online, but if you would like to speak to a customer service advisor face to face we have community hubs in all libraries around the borough. Scan the QR code for opening hours

### You can access support and advice on:

- Council tax and non-domestic rates information and advice.
- Benefits information and advice including Universal Credit, council tax reduction, free school meals, school clothing grants and benefit overpayments.
- Blue Badge Scheme
- Highways and street lighting
- Waste and recycling

You can also make payments (card only) and pick up battery recycling and food waste bags. On certain days, Citizens Advice are also available, see our website for more details. Other ways to contact the council:

- **My Services:** sign up or log in via our website
- **E-mail:** info@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- **BG App:** For download on mobile devices
- **Telephone:** 01495 311556 (out of hours emergency number also)

**Our community hubs also have digital exclusion officers available to help anyone struggling with online services - pay them a visit!**

## Charge for less in Blaenau Gwent

We have listened to your feedback. To help make public electric vehicle charging more affordable for residents, Silverstone has reduced the tariff for Dragon Charging 22kW fast chargers from 65p/kWh to 55p/kWh. Rapid chargers will remain at 65p/kWh, still among the most competitive rates in the borough. Thank you for sharing your views - they help us improve local services.



## Have a voice in local services

**Join one of our forums or register to have your say today! The council runs engagement forums where people can have their say about council services.**

These include the Lived Experience Network (for those with protected characteristics); the 50+ Forum and the Youth Forum. You can also sign up to be involved in any future consultations through My Services on the website.

## Citizens Assembly shapes the Blaenau Gwent Deal



**A group of residents has decided on seven principles which will guide a new way of working between the council, partners and communities.**

The Citizens Assembly met on three Saturdays in January and February, to find out more about the plans for a Blaenau Gwent Deal and decide how it will work in practice.

The assembly heard from senior officers in the council and the health service about the pressures of balancing increasing demand and reducing budgets, while continuing to help people to live happy healthy lives. They also saw examples of teams and organisations who are already working with communities to identify and develop local solutions. **To find out more, turn to pages 4, 5, 6 and 7.**

The assembly, which was held at Llanhilleth Miners' Institute and the General Offices, was supported by the Local Partnerships organisation and Sortition Foundation, which selected participants.

A total of 12,000 letters were sent to a cross-section of households inviting people to put themselves forward.

Around 300 residents responded and 40 were selected at random.

**Citizens Assembly member Chris Thomas, from Llanhilleth, said:** "I wanted to be part of the Citizens Assembly to see prospects improve for communities. I hope the Blaenau Gwent Deal will help regenerate community pride and prospects, make use of Gwent's natural environment, attract jobs and events and bring healthier prospects."

**Citizens Assembly Member Adam Wate, from Tredegar, said:** "I wanted to lend my voice and my lived experience to drive the thinking for the best Deal available for Blaenau Gwent. I want the best for the place I live, so let's make a difference together. I hope the Deal will create stronger communities, drive improvements in the area and provide a happier and friendlier place to live."

**See page 3 to read the Citizens Assembly's principles for a Blaenau Gwent Deal.**

## The Citizens Assembly will be invited to reconvene in early 2027 to give their views on the impact of the Blaenau Gwent Deal

**The Deal follows other steps taken by the council to improve people's health and well-being and reduce health inequalities.**

Last year, Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils became the first federated local authorities in Wales, which has meant best practices can be shared and some costs are reduced. They also became the first

Marmot Councils in Wales, with a commitment to tackling the root cause of health inequalities - housing, income and education, supported by local partners. People also gave their views as part of a widespread engagement exercise.

You can meet some of the Citizens Assembly members by scanning the QR code:





## Blaenau Gwent Deal 5 Missions

the what?

1. Early Years - Building Bright Futures
2. Inspiring Lifelong Learning, Ambition and Resilience
3. Wellbeing Through Community Leadership
4. Thriving Economy, Vibrant Places
5. Empowered Communities, Shared Power and Success



## Blaenau Gwent Deal 7 Principles

the how?

1. More Public Involvement in Shaping the Place
2. Fostering Volunteering & Community Leadership
3. Community Hubs
4. Shared Power through Joint Effort
5. Pride and Potential for the Future
6. Recreating Thriving Town Centres
7. Learning and Listening



# Blaenau Gwent Deal shapes 2026/27 plan

The Blaenau Gwent Deal will be embedded into the council's service planning for 2026 and beyond, closely linked to the priorities in its Corporate Plan.

Service plans will outline key activities and measures which will help the council, and its partners work with communities and address inequalities in the borough, according to the principles developed by the Blaenau Gwent Citizens Assembly.

Examples include plans to support more community resilience groups to respond to emergency incidents like flooding; support for local clubs and organisations to take over and run their own facilities and growing community-based reuse, repair and recycling initiatives.

This planning is supported by the council's 2026/7 budget, which will be delivered alongside the council's business-as-usual services, such as adult and children's social services,

education, waste and recycling, highways maintenance and public protection.

**Chief Executive Stephen Vickers said:** "Our planning this year is particularly important because it begins to show how the council will work differently with our communities through our Blaenau Gwent Deal.

"The Deal is not separate from the Corporate Plan - it is the way we will deliver its ambitions by aligning culture, systems and our service models with our well-being objectives.

"The Corporate Plan sets out what we want to achieve and The Deal shapes how we will work with our communities, businesses and partners to achieve it."

Progress will be monitored by officers quarterly, and a six-month report will be provided to councillors. You can read the Corporate Plan on the website.



## DEAL PLEDGES



"The Deal is a new social contract between the council, residents, communities and partners. It reshapes the relationship between the council and the public by shifting from "doing to" towards "doing with", rooted in shared responsibility, prevention, fairness, and community power." **Stephen Vickers, Chief Executive, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils**

"The Blaenau Gwent Deal is transformative because it changes the conversation. It enables us to shape conversations around the needs of our population and really transform services in the context of the way people live their lives and not in the way we wish to provide services." **Professor Tracy Daszkiewicz, Executive Director for Public Health and Strategic Partnerships at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.**

"We're proud to support The Deal. As the regional support body for the voluntary and community sector, we believe resilient communities are built from within, and the third sector is central to that. Local people, groups, and volunteers are essential to The Deal's success. The organisations we support already bring communities together, tackle inequalities, and improve wellbeing across Blaenau Gwent. GAVO is committed to playing our part - alongside the volunteers and organisations that make Blaenau Gwent strong and vibrant." **Huw Lewis, Regional Strategic Lead for Blaenau Gwent, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO)**

"Aneurin Leisure Trust is extremely proud to be an important part of supporting The Deal. As a not-for-profit charitable trust, we invest every penny back into improving our services as well as constantly exploring all funding streams to further improve the facilities and ensuring they are sustainable and fit for the future. All areas of Aneurin Leisure Trust play an active part in helping residents improve their physical and mental wellbeing and we look forward to continuing to improve community life through our alignment to The Deal." **Phill Sykes, Managing Director, Aneurin Leisure Trust**

"The Deal is innovative and groundbreaking and provides an ideal opportunity for us to work in close partnership with the council and other key stakeholders. The Deal will help us truly hear the voices of local communities and deliver on their needs, whether through developing new affordable homes, investing in existing homes or improving trust through a dynamic focus both on local people and place." **Andrew Myatt, Director of Communities and Housing, Tai Calon Community Housing**

## Young filmmakers celebrate where they live!

A group of young people have come together to make a film about what Blaenau Gwent really means to them.

'Our Blaenau Gwent' was shown to family and friends, as well as local councillors and partners, in a screening at the Metropole Theatre, Abertillery in March.

The documentary focuses on the people and places that mean most to the young people involved, told in their own words, and harnessing

the valleys community spirit which they value.

The film is part of the BG Arts: Make It Film project, delivered in partnership with learning technology company Aspire 2Be, using external funding. Participants gained a full introduction to the filmmaking process, developing skills in research, scriptwriting, interviewing, presenting and production management.

**Erin Richards said:** "Being able to work on this project allowed me to grow my confidence and even reconnect with a friend I lost touch

with after school. It was a really great experience that allowed me to develop transferrable skills that I would love to use in the future with whatever opportunities are presented to me."

**Luisa Munro-Morris, Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families said:** Our recent Citizens Assembly on the Blaenau Gwent Deal told us they really wanted to see young people involved in shaping the places they live and having pride in their local area, this has given young people the opportunity to do just that, and they have fully embraced it."



You can watch 'Our Blaenau Gwent' by scanning the QR code:



## Transforming Breastfeeding in Blaenau Gwent

A powerful partnership between local mums, health professionals, and the council, has resulted in a remarkable turnaround in breastfeeding rates.

The campaign 'Get Blaenau Gwent Breastfeeding' is helping to improve early years outcomes and provide a support and social networks for new mums.

Blaenau Gwent had one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the UK and Europe, a factor closely linked to child health, maternal wellbeing, and wider health inequalities. To understand why, the council and health partners turned to the people who knew best – the mums themselves.

Through conversations, feedback sessions, and honest discussions about the barriers they faced, mothers helped shape a new approach, which also saw them also get involved by becoming trained volunteer peer support workers. These volunteers now run drop ins and community groups across the borough, offering a warm welcome, reassurance, and practical support.

Local mums have also proudly featured in campaign advertising. Such is the success, that the council's early years teams have presented their work to national conferences and to fellow local authorities.

**Peer supporter Danielle Webb said:** "I really valued having time to develop as a person, not just a parent. It feels amazing to pass on what I've learned and help even one other mum."

**Fellow volunteer Alex Klebe added:**

"The training created a safe space to share experiences and learn from others."

The campaign is also helping to shift attitudes and normalise breastfeeding in everyday spaces. A total of 87 public buildings and businesses have now signed up to the Breastfeeding Welcome scheme in the borough.

**Ceri Bird, Service Manager for Children's Services, said:**

"This campaign is changing culture, confidence and community support around breastfeeding in Blaenau Gwent. It embodies The Blaenau Gwent Deal and shows what can be achieved when we work with the community and partners to make something wonderful happen. When we listen to residents, trust their knowledge, and work together, truly meaningful change is possible."

The success of 'Get Blaenau Gwent Breastfeeding' is being extended further to a new nutrition pathway, aiming to encourage healthy eating habits amongst young children and their families – aiming to also reduce health inequalities as part of The Deal.



## Pupils publish recipe book

Pupils at Willowtown Community Primary School, Ebbw Vale, have taken learning beyond the classroom by creating and publishing a unique children's community recipe book, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of their local area.

The project, which was entirely pupil-led, saw children select recipes from families within the local multicultural community, including treasured dishes passed down through generations. From start to finish, pupils researched, wrote, and illustrated the book themselves, demonstrating creativity, teamwork, and a strong sense of community.

Designed as a child-friendly, beginner-style cookbook, the publication aims to encourage families to cook together, build confidence in the kitchen, and inspire independence.

**Headteacher Mel Evans said:** "This project is a fantastic example of pupil voice and creative learning in action. Our children have worked incredibly hard to produce something meaningful that celebrates both learning and community."



**Year 5 pupil, Caleb Rich, said:** "The potatoes and lettuce we have grown in our community garden were taken into the Big Bocs Bwyd Shop and some parents took them home and made a healthy meal. I enjoy learning about how to grow food and how to make it healthy."

The local community can access meal kits and items from the Big Bocs Bwyd, helping improve eating habits and supporting families on a low income.

This is supported by a group of trusted parent volunteers whose support continues to make the project a success. You can purchase a copy of the book from the school or Amazon now!

## Over £200,000 investment into play areas

**Three children's parks are to be refurbished. New modern, accessible play equipment will be installed at:**

- Pennant Street Park, Ebbw Vale
- Brynawel, Brynmawr
- The Recreation Ground, Brynmawr

The council has worked closely with local elected members to identify what each site needs, with a focus on early years provision and accessible play elements wherever possible.

In several areas, play spaces are also being maintained and supported by local community groups. The council has been working collaboratively with these groups to help secure funding and source suitable equipment, reflecting the cooperative ethos of the Blaenau Gwent Deal.

This latest investment builds on a series of improvements carried out in recent years, with

priorities identified through a review into play facilities in 2019. Alongside the refurbishments, work is underway to develop a new Play Strategy for Blaenau Gwent.

A priority is to give every child the best start in life and play is so important for the development of their cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills. These much-needed improvements will ensure children have safe, fun, and inclusive spaces to enjoy.



## River Centre Learning Community praised for nurturing and inclusive environment

**The River Centre 3-16 Learning Community in Blaenau Gwent was removed from special measures following a highly positive monitoring visit by Estyn.**

Estyn confirmed that the school has made sufficient progress against all recommendations, highlighting stronger leadership, improved pupil behaviour and a more nurturing and inclusive culture across the school. Inspectors noted greater leadership stability, a settled staffing structure and a clear shared vision focused on meeting pupils' emotional needs.

They also observed consistently positive behaviour, with pupils described as calm, respectful and engaged. The River Centre 3 - 16 Learning Community provides education and support for children and young people who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs or who are unable to attend mainstream school for a period of time.



**Lakeview litter volunteers lead the way**

A dedicated group of volunteers from the Lakeview Day Centre in Brynmawr are making a big difference in their community with weekly litter picking sessions.

Registered with Keep Wales Tidy Cymru, the group includes individuals with a range of abilities who work with the council's community outreach provision - to keep local streets clean and welcoming.

The volunteers regularly collect between four and six bags of rubbish per session, tackling local hotspots such as verges, main roads, and areas around the retail park in the town. Last year, they gathered an impressive 170 bags of litter. Residents often stop to thank the group, who proudly share their enjoyment of the work and the difference it makes. Local businesses have joined in too, including McDonald's.



This shared effort reflects the ethos of The Deal - communities, organisations, and residents working together to protect and improve the place we live. The group is now learning how to reduce, reuse, recycle, and exploring creative ways to repurpose materials. Future plans include visits to local recycling centres and the Cardiff Energy Recovery Facility to deepen their understanding of how waste becomes a resource for powering homes.

Their message is simple: everyone has a part to play in keeping Blaenau Gwent clean, green, and proud.



**Investment approved for Tredegar Comprehensive School**

Tredegar Comprehensive School is to get an extension with new space for learning and upgraded catering and canteen facilities.

The project, delivered by contractors Knox & Wells, includes a small extension and remodelling of the main school building, creating a more flexible learning and teaching environment for pupils and staff.

The council's priority is for every young person to be ambitious, healthy and to reach their full potential. The remodelling will provide a learning environment that will support our young people in this, and provide staff and pupils with a modern, flexible space

that will make a huge difference to their school life now and in years to come.

The work is due for completion later this year.



**Pupils get arty for Not In Miss Out**  
School pupils have been busy designing posters to promote our new school attendance campaign - 'Not In Miss Out'.

We're working with schools to boost attendance rates in the county borough, promoting school as being important for learning but for a whole range of other things too, such as physical and mental wellbeing, socialising and fun! The winners received vouchers. The designs will be used to promote the campaign.

**THE TALENTED WINNERS ARE:**

**Secondary School:** Courtney Callaghan (Ebbw Fawr Learning Community)

**Juniors: Winner** - Mohkam Singh (ALC Six Bells Campus)

**Runner-up** - Isobel Prosser (St. Joseph's Primary)

**Infants: Winner** - Bobby Jones (ALC Tillery Street Campus)

**Runner-up:** Maggie Reed (ALC Tillery Street Campus)

**Apprenticeship programme wins partnership award**

Our Shared Apprenticeship Programme – *Aspire* – is a national award winner! The *Aspire* team, together with colleagues in the Merthyr *Aspire* scheme, scooped the Collaboration and Partnership Award at the *iese* Awards.

These awards recognise public sector organisations for their efforts in improving and transforming local services, celebrating the outstanding work of councils, public bodies, and their partners. *Aspire* is where businesses really come into their own as part of The Deal, working with

the support of the council and training providers to take on apprentices, giving people the opportunity for a sustainable career and developing a skilled workforce for the region.



**IN BRIEF**

**Ebbw Fawr Learning Community extension**

Students are enjoying extra classroom space and eating areas at Ebbw Fawr Learning Community's secondary phase.

The major milestone in the school's journey includes six brand new classrooms and dedicated canteen provision. The fantastic new space has been designed with pupils at the heart of it, and is a bright, modern learning environment that supports creativity, collaboration and high-quality teaching.

**Special recognition for school catering assistant**

Sonia Blanchard has been presented with a special recognition certificate by the council for her long service. 81-year-old Sonia is still serving up dinners at Cwm Primary School.

Her commitment, warmth, and tireless energy have made a lasting impact on generations of children in the village. Thank you Sonia!



**Blaen-y-Cwm praised by Estyn**

Well done to Blaen-y-Cwm Primary in Brynmawr for their inspection report from Estyn.

Inspectors noted a commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment where pupils can thrive both academically and personally.



## Building community resilience through nature

**Sirhowy Hill Woodlands is a striking example of how people can come together to build a resilient, thriving community.**

Despite replanting efforts between 1985 and 1990, the woodlands remained largely neglected for decades. Littering, poor access, and a lack of maintenance became growing concerns for residents, prompting calls for action and a renewed vision for the site.

Instead of standing back, residents formed the Friends of Sirhowy Woodlands CIC, a group committed to managing, restoring, and championing the nature reserve. This has turned into a vibrant, multi generational voluntary community, all united by a passion for nurturing nature and making the woodlands a valued local asset.

The council's natural environment team supports the group in accessing funding and delivering activities that contribute to high-quality, well-managed woodlands accessible to all.

Volunteers have received training in sustainable woodland management, food growing, and nature stewardship, and work to create welcoming green spaces for wellbeing and outdoor learning. Regular litter picks bring residents together to improve the woodland, socialise, and enjoy the benefits of being outdoors. Small actions have added up to create a cleaner, more inviting nature reserve.

A new onsite wellbeing hub provides early years learning opportunities and acts as a focal point for community events and positive environmental impact, and what began as a simple patch has grown into a thriving community garden. Through 'Plant to Plate' sessions, local school groups learn how food is grown in nature-friendly ways - helping build healthier habits and boosting food literacy.

**Volunteer Susy Arnold said:** "Sirhowy Hill Woodlands is a unique site - not only as a thriving nature spot but as a hub for food growing,

volunteering and community events. Our enthusiastic volunteers are knowledgeable, welcoming, and passionate. The council has been really supportive, this shows what can happen when we all work together for the good of our community."

**Nadine Morgan, the council's ecologist, said:** "We're committed to working with the group to create a biologically diverse site where informed management increases value for nature conservation. The group's commitment has shaped Sirhowy Hill Woodlands into a dynamic, multi-purpose site for learning, research and innovation - with community at its heart."



## COMMUNITY KIT ROOM OPENS IN EBBW VALE



**Deal partner, Aneurin Leisure, is addressing inequality by helping anyone who wants to participate in a sport access kit.**

A third community kit room has been opened in Ebbw Vale Sports Centre, with established kit rooms already at Abertillery and Tredegar. Aneurin Leisure Trust run leisure and cultural facilities and adult education in Blaenau Gwent, including

sports centres, Bedwellty House and Park and Parc Bryn Bach. The kit room project provides free sportswear to children and adults and has supported over 600 people to date, helping reduce financial barriers to participation and promoting inclusion, wellbeing, and access to sport across the community.

**A huge thank you to everyone who has supported the community kit room initiative so far.**

## People in Blaenau Gwent love their libraries!

**More people in Blaenau Gwent say their local library has made a real difference to their life than anywhere else in Wales.**

Libraries in the borough performed exceptionally well in 2024/25, a Welsh Public Library standards report has found, with visitors increasing by 26 per cent compared to the previous year.

Libraries in Blaenau Gwent are managed by the Aneurin Leisure Trust, in partnership with the council. These days, libraries are

about more than just books, they offer a wide range of services and support.

This includes digital inclusion initiatives, Citizens Advice and the council's community hubs which provide face to face advice on council services. There are also a range of social clubs and groups held at the venues. Libraries are at the heart of our communities. They provide far more than books - they offer spaces where people connect,

learn, and access vital support and services.



## Ebbw Vale is pitch perfect

**Ebbw Vale Sports Centre's 3G pitch has been refurbished – protecting a key sporting facility for years to come.**

The pitch serves many clubs, schools and community groups across Blaenau Gwent. This refurbishment ensures the pitch meets modern

performance standards and continues to provide a high quality, safe playing surface for local teams and young people to enjoy.

This facility is more than just a sports pitch. It is a community asset that supports health, wellbeing and participation at every level.



## Hospice co-founder honoured

**The council has presented Jayne Medlicott MBE, co-founder of the Hospice of the Valleys with a Special Recognition Certificate.**

Jayne was celebrated as part of International Women's Day which this year recognised the contribution of women who strengthen our communities through leadership, compassion and commitment.

Jayne was presented with the award at a special presentation at Bedwellty House and Park, where guests reflected on the significant impact of Jayne's work on local services and community care across Blaenau Gwent. Jayne played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Hospice of the Valleys, inspired by her personal experience of

caring for her husband, Glyn. From modest beginnings in Tredegar with a small team, Jayne helped to develop one of Wales's first 24-hour at-home palliative care services.



"It was a tremendous honour to receive this award" Jayne said. "It was wonderful to bring together my sons, former colleagues, current staff, and councillors to reflect on the journey of Hospice of the Valleys, and to celebrate how it continues to grow and support so many families across our community."

**DIY SOS Abertillery style!**

The council, businesses, residents and local councillors came together for a one-week town boost in Abertillery, ending in a special one-day makeover of Somerset Street.

The community came together to give the street a real glow up, including painting street furniture, painting murals, cleansing, putting up bunting, and even vinyl wrapping empty shops. Prior to

this, a series of workshops and sessions were held with businesses and the local community to explore how people can be encouraged to use their town centre.

The makeover in March showed what is possible with collaboration, creativity and a modest budget. This took real buy in from the community - thanks to everyone who came along and helped show what can really be achieved when

everyone works together. This is The Deal!



**Joint LDP gets underway**  
Councillors in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen have backed a proposal for a Joint Local Development Plan.

Local Development Plans are developed by local authorities to guide future developments, land use and infrastructure requirements over a 15-year period.

Councillors were told a Joint LDP would take up to six months longer to complete than separate Regional Local Development Plans but offered more benefits in terms of cost savings, plans for a joint "blueprint for growth" strategy, a stronger regional influence in regional and national forums and more impact in addressing social inequalities.

Councillors in both authorities approved the option for a joint LDP and both RLDPs will be withdrawn, which will need to be approved by Welsh Government.

**Time for a spring clean!**  
Thanks to everyone who took part in Keep Wales Tidy annual spring clean event.

Events included: A council organised event with a class from St Mary's RC Primary School in Brynmawr, along with students from Coleg Gwent, litter picking Central Valley in Ebbw Vale; Residents from Cwmtillery and members of Pentref Tyleri group litter picking around the Jim Owen Field and surrounding area over two days; Brynithel Community Group carrying out a litter pick in and around Brynithel.



**Communities to shape economic future**

An ambitious plan for economic growth and regeneration that is shaped by residents has been set out by Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils. Thriving Together – Tech Valleys Growth Corridor is a joint vision to create a more prosperous region for residents, communities and businesses by 2035, focusing on three overarching themes: Infrastructure and Investment, Business and Employment Growth and People and Skills.

The 10-year blueprint is a strategy with a difference because it will be developed by and delivered with communities. For example, the future of town centres will be identified and shaped by the people who use them, with different priorities for individual towns.

In the Sirhowy valley, a new Neighbourhood Board will be set up by this summer. The board will be made up of residents and partners, who will decide on the projects, empowering communities to think about what they want to see.

Across the borough, money will also be available to improve community spaces, children's play areas and high streets in Nantyglo, Blaina and Brynmawr. The plan will be supported by a joint Local Development Plan. Details on how to get involved will be available soon.



**Connect**

**BG Connect is published by Blaenau Gwent Council.**

It is produced in-house and printed by Reach PLC on paper made from 100 per cent recycled fibres carrying FSC, PEFC and Blue Angel certifications. BG Connect is delivered to homes throughout Blaenau Gwent and a small supply is also available to pick up in customer care centres and libraries.

**It costs just 19p to design, print and deliver to your home. Once read please pop it in you kerbside recycling.**

**Flood response and community resilience strengthened**

The council is better prepared for weather warnings and has carried out significant infrastructure upgrades in areas previously affected by flooding.

In addition to this, we have been working more closely with communities on resilience and planning - empowering and equipping them to help themselves in times of crisis, inspired by the new Blaenau Gwent Deal.

An independent review carried out after Storm Bert made 19 recommendations for improvement. The council has responded to ensure the safety and well-being of residents during severe weather. Critical gullies and culverts are inspected regularly, and new sensors have been installed in some

areas which monitor water levels and help improve response times.

Major drainage works have been delivered in Cwm and Llanhilleth, with flood gates to be provided for properties identified as being most at risk.

These arrangements have been well tested during several storms and warnings this winter. In Cwm, the Flood Task Force, a group set up by residents to work closely with and supported by the council, has gone from strength to strength.

An emergency hub has been established, Flood Sax distributed, and training delivered to empower residents and strengthen local preparedness.

**Cwm Flood Task Force member, Sallie Jones says:** "We want to do whatever we can do, in partnership and with support from the council, to keep our community safe and supported during a crisis. In our experience, the council is now much more prepared for weather warnings, working closely with us and the local community to address any issues.

"Together, we are more resilient and in a better position to be able to address any future issues."



**Volunteers fix household items for free**

**Over 600 items have been given a new lease of life at repair cafes in Blaenau Gwent**

Repair cafes are a partnership between the council, local organisations and talented members of the community who give their time for free to fix people's broken household items. This is a great example of The Deal, as this just wouldn't be possible without the dedicated volunteers. From vacuum cleaners and TVs to jewellery and children's toys, hundreds of successful repairs have been carried out. The cafes are also helping people boosting their confidence, learn new skills and socialise, helping wellbeing and community connection.

Luke Mason is a volunteer at the Rassau Repair Café in Ebbw Vale.

**He said:** "Helping others is an honest and caring way to live your life. To bring happiness to clients that we may have solved their problems is the best feeling."

Find out where repair cafes are held on our website. The council is looking to grow the number of repair cafes – watch this space.



# Your Council Tax for 2026/2027

The council will receive **£44.3 million** from council tax in 2026/27. This represents only around **21%** of our funding.

The council administers a Council Tax Reduction Scheme, that helps over **8,000** residents on low incomes.



The financial forecast remains challenging with a **£8.7 million** funding gap to be addressed between April 2027 and April 2031.



<b>Children, Young People &amp; Families</b>	<b>£97,910,150</b>
<b>Adults &amp; Communities</b>	<b>£48,240,940</b>
<b>Economy &amp; Place</b>	<b>£4,926,530</b>
<b>Neighbourhood Services</b>	<b>£24,121,030</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>	<b>£15,139,230</b>
<b>Council Tax Reduction Scheme</b>	<b>£11,329,040</b>
<b>Capital Financing and other costs</b>	<b>£8,317,370</b>

## Council Tax Self Service 2026/2027

Did you know most Council Tax services are now available online? Using our online service is the quickest and easiest way to manage your council tax. You can:

- Report changes
- Make payments
- Apply for discounts

You can do this all-in-one place, at a time that suits you. Visit the council tax pages on our website or the **Blaenau Gwent app** to get started.

	Expenditure on services £*	(less)	Income from services £*	=	Net expenditure £	
	2025/26	2026/27	2025/26	2026/27	2025/26	2026/27
Children, Young People & Families	113,389,170	122,873,890	23,159,560	24,963,740	90,229,610	97,910,150
Adults & Communities	59,378,560	60,947,390	12,222,950	12,706,450	47,155,610	48,240,940
Economy and Place	9,766,510	9,461,510	5,359,200	4,534,980	4,407,310	4,926,530
Neighbourhood Services	29,782,580	30,777,210	6,654,560	6,656,180	23,128,020	24,121,030
Corporate Services	19,759,930	21,631,980	5,816,560	6,492,750	13,943,370	15,139,230
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	10,919,560	11,329,040	0	0	10,919,560	11,329,040
Housing Benefit Subsidy	26,636,480	26,637,370	26,751,880	26,751,880	-115,400	-114,510
Capital Financing & Other Costs	11,880,500	11,880,500	0	0	7,577,730	8,317,370
<b>SERVICE TOTAL</b>	<b>281,513,290</b>	<b>295,538,890</b>	<b>79,964,710</b>	<b>82,105,980</b>	<b>197,245,810</b>	<b>209,869,780</b>

### PRECEPT REQUIREMENTS

A precept is an annual sum that organisations like the police and community councils levy for their services and the council collects on their behalf.



Keeping vital local services going and keeping council tax bills as low as possible.



Plus Precepts from:		
Community Councils	767,820	789,410
Police & Crime Commissioner for Gwent	7,998,210	8,558,924
<b>Total Before Funding</b>	<b>206,011,840</b>	<b>219,218,114</b>
Sources of Funding:		
Revenue Support Grant	130,414,000	142,196,000
Redistributed Non-Domestic Rates	24,120,000	23,334,000
Funded by Council Tax	51,477,840	53,688,114

	£ Amount Precepted 2025/26	£ Amount Precepted 2026/27	£ Increase
Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent	7,998,210	8,558,924	560,714
Community Councils:			
Abertillery & Llanhilleth	434,023	445,611	11,588
Brynmawr	50,000	50,000	0
Nantyglo & Blaina	105,000	115,000	10,000
Tredegar	178,797	178,797	0
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>8,766,030</b>	<b>9,348,332</b>	<b>582,302</b>

### COUNCIL TAX DEMAND

A summary of the total Council Tax charge for 2026/27 covering Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Community Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gwent for each council tax valuation band is below:

	A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £	I £
Abertillery	1,726.25	2,013.95	2,301.66	2,589.37	3,164.79	3,740.20	4,315.62	5,178.74	6,041.86
Brynmawr	1,681.91	1,962.22	2,242.54	2,522.86	3,083.50	3,644.13	4,204.77	5,045.72	5,886.67
Nantyglo & Blaina	1,690.74	1,972.53	2,254.31	2,536.11	3,099.69	3,663.27	4,226.85	5,072.22	5,917.59
Tredegar	1,687.59	1,968.85	2,250.11	2,531.38	3,093.91	3,656.44	4,218.97	5,062.76	5,906.55
Ebbw Vale	1,662.69	1,939.80	2,216.91	2,494.03	3,048.26	3,602.49	4,156.72	4,988.06	5,819.40

### REVENUE RESERVES

We need to keep reserves and provisions to help with unforeseen circumstances. We have used our reserves in 2025/26, and intend to use them further in 2026/27. Revenue reserves planned for 2026/2027 - £2m to establish a transition fund to meet demand within Children's services and funding to support the Deal and Family Conflict. This table sets out our actual and estimated positions.

	31/03/2025 (Provisional)	31/03/2026 (Forecast)	31/03/2027 (Forecast)
Council Fund	13,969	12,472	12,472
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	29,042	28,315	26,315
Earmarked Revenue Reserves - Capital Purposes	4,911	5,161	5,362
School Balances	-1,277	-3,864	-3,864
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46,645</b>	<b>42,084</b>	<b>40,285</b>