

**BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**COUNCILLORS ANNUAL REPORT**

**Councillor: Steve Thomas**

**Party: Labour**

**Ward: Tredegar Central & West & Ward**

**Section 1 – Roles and Responsibilities**

I am Deputy Leader of the Council and the Executive Business Manager, this role incorporates the Local Service Board/Public Services Board, Well Being of Future Generations, Reforming Local Government, Culture, Customs and Practices of Council, Policy & Performance (Strategy) and Regulatory Engagement, Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme, Collaboration, Remuneration Panel and Member Development. In this role I also provide political direction with regard to the Executive Work Programme and Agenda as well as overseeing the Performance Coaching of the Councils Management Team (CMT). I have also been nominated as one of the Members who undertake Members Personal Development Reviews.

**Section 2: Constituency Activity**

I represent Tredegar Central and West Ward which comprises of Ashvale, Gwent Way, Town Centre, Bedwellty Pits, Cefn Golau and Church Street areas. I have arranged for constituents to visit me at my office in order to discuss issues with my Ward Colleagues and relevant officers. I have also made arrangements for site meetings where required. I am in regular contact with Tai Calon on many housing issues as reported by constituents and in some instances the wider Community.

I endeavour to resolve all matters brought forward by constituents and during the past year I have written numerous letters and emails with regard to Ward matters. I will pursue concerns raised on their behalf with officers, external organisations and seek meetings to ensure the matter is addressed as soon as possible.

I have attended and arranged meetings with the local Police and the Community Safety Team to assist in addressing anti social behaviour raised by concerned residents. I follow up all complaints received to ensure they are resolved.

**Section 3: Executive and Scrutiny Activities**

I lead the work of the Executive and participate in the Executive's collective decision making, responding to Scrutiny as appropriate. Members and Officers frequently request meetings to discuss strategic/Council matters. During the last year I have attended 498 meetings including Council, Executive, Executive/Corporate Management Team, Circuit of Wales, Education Recovery Board, Programme Board, Local Service Board and Town & Community Councils. I have also met with Ministers to discuss Local Government, Finance, Education and wider political/council matters.

During 2014/15 my overall attendance at statutory meetings was approximately 97%, I attended 34 meetings out of the 35 statutory meetings.

I have had meetings with elected Members, Trades Unions, neighbouring authorities, external organisations. As Chair of the Local Service Board I work closely with our partners, therefore I am fully engaged with issues that involve our wider community. I was invited to Chair the Programme Board which was established to deliver savings across the Council as part of the Transformation Programme.

**Section 3: Executive and Scrutiny Activities (Cont/d)...**

As Deputy Leader I meet regularly to discuss Council business with Regulators, key individuals from the Wales Audit Office, Welsh Government officials, local AM and MP. I hold regular meetings with the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors in relation to Transformation Programme, Corporate Assessment, Annual Improvement Report and other issues which arise. I also meet with Corporate Management Team to have regular updates on progress within education, governance and financial matters on key issues.

I have regular dialogue with members of Scrutiny in order to discuss issues in relation to Portfolio and other matters. I also attend Joint Scrutiny Committees when appropriate and Scrutiny Committees relevant to my role as Executive Business Manager if invited by the Scrutiny Chair.

Prior to the Internal Challenge and Governance arrangements series of interviews I arranged meetings with key Elected Members and officers to give consideration to the key themes to be discussed.

**Section 4: Training and Development**

As part as my role in the WAO Internal Challenge programme/interviews I arrange briefings with officers for Members.

As part of Member Development the Authority now undertakes Personal Development Reviews for all Members, the first round of the reviews were recently undertaken and following feedback Members training needs were identified. These findings will be fed into the training programme which will be available for all Members with some elements of training around core topics being mandatory. The Member Development Training Programme is continually reviewed and monitored to ensure we are undertaking the relevant training to Members requirements.

**Section 5: Initiatives, Special Activities and Issues**

In light of the serious financial difficulties that the Council experienced throughout 2013, I established and continue to Chair a monthly Cost Pressure Sub Group with relevant officers to monitor budgets pressures, the outcome of these sessions has seen the Council move from a serious deficit position to a favourable one at the end of the financial year.

As part of the my role in the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme I strive to drive forward improvements which will lead to better service delivery and produce a new modern performance driven local authority that really delivers for people of Blaenau Gwent. The Programme Board oversees the work being taken forward and findings are reported on a monthly basis. The work achieved has been recognised by external regulators in the Annual Improvement Report.