

# Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



## Annual Scrutiny Report 2024-25

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## Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report 2024-25 which gives an overview of work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee.

All Scrutiny Members have effectively challenged and influenced the Council's decision-making process and added value to a wide range of activity, in order to deliver effective outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent, some of this work is highlighted in the following sections of this report.

Following changes to the democratic structure in 2022, Blaenau Gwent now has four scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council, and the new structure continues to allow non-Cabinet members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve and effectively challenge Cabinet on the decisions it makes.

The Council's Scrutiny function is made up of non-Cabinet Members. The non-Cabinet Members are appointed to sit on the Scrutiny Committees to support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

The Committees have no decision-making powers, however, they act as a check and balance on the powers exercised and decisions taken by the Cabinet.

## Introduction (continued)

The Scrutiny Committees allow non-Cabinet Members to have a greater say in Council matters by:

- ♦ Assisting the Cabinet in the development of policy;
- ♦ Monitoring performance of the Council and its partners;
- ♦ Examining the impact and implementation of Cabinet decisions and policies;
- ♦ Holding the Leader, Cabinet and the Executive Team (formally Corporate Leadership Team) to account;
- ♦ Listening to the views of the public and making sure the public voice is heard; and
- ♦ Scrutinising external organisations who provide services to our residents.

Scrutiny is most effective when it is focussed on a limited number of in-depth topics and priorities. When considering agenda items, Scrutiny Committees should have regard to the likely value and impact gained for any report or review. This will need to be carefully balanced against the time and resources required to undertake the activity.

Other items of interest or information required to enhance the Members knowledge and skills in a particular area, can be provided to Members via Member Briefing Sessions, Directorate Briefing Sessions and Member Training and Development.

Over the past year, the majority of Scrutiny Meetings have been held virtually as the Council is currently looking at its accommodation options. Moving forward, Scrutiny Committee Meetings will return to being offered on a hybrid bases i.e. Committee Members and Officers can attend virtually via Microsoft Teams or physically attend the meeting. Members of the public are also able to attend Committee meetings.

All Democratic Meetings are recorded and uploaded onto the Blaenau Gwent website.

# Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent

The four Scrutiny Committees of the Council are:

- ◆ Corporate and Performance;
- ◆ Partnership;
- ◆ People; and
- ◆ Place.

Each scrutiny committee has a specific remit. Full details of the areas covered by each scrutiny committee are highlighted later in this report.

The scrutiny agenda structure has ensured members undertake in-depth challenge for each item under discussion. It is advised for each scrutiny agenda to a maximum of two items, under the categories of 'Pre-Decision' and 'Performance Monitoring', to ensure that the agendas are focussed and support effective decision making. The reduction in the number of items for scrutiny has also ensured that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is not being overburdened with monitoring items.

Expert witnesses / invitees have been invited and contributed to scrutiny meetings, including the Education Achievement Service (EAS), the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT), the Gwent Archivist, Tai Calon and Gwent Police.

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and developed their knowledge and understanding of specific topics.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny meetings are held to discuss and review the operational activity of Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent to contribute to improvements and ensure consistency of practice where appropriate. The Chair and Vice-Chair of Governance and Audit and Democratic Services are also invited to these meeting, dependent on the items for discussion on the agenda.

Directorate briefings are also held quarterly with individual Directorates, to which all Members are invited. These closely focussed sessions provide information and detail on service areas to raise the interest and enthusiasm of Members.

## Forward Work Programmes

Work to develop the **Forward Work Programmes (FWPs) for 2024-25** began in February 2024, work included:

- Meeting with service areas to consider topics for inclusion in the Draft Scrutiny, Council, Cabinet and Governance and Audit Forward Work Programmes.
- Met with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs to discuss the Scrutiny FWPs.
- The FWPs were formally signed off by each of the Committees in June / July 2024, then translated and made available for public view on the Council website.

The FWPs, being fluid documents, were regularly reviewed by Chairs and Vice-Chairs and officers throughout the year at Agenda Management meetings and by all committee members at each scrutiny committee meeting.

The Forward Work Programmes are available on the Blaenau Gwent Council website - [Scrutiny Committees](#)

# Blaenau Gwent Scrutiny in Figures 2024/25



**23** Pre-Decision Scrutiny  
Agenda Items



**153** Unique Views of  
Committee Meetings  
Online



**24** Formal Scrutiny  
Committee Meetings  
held



**Place Scrutiny Committee**  
Most Viewed Scrutiny  
Committee Meeting on  
**10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.**



**49** Member Briefings  
Sessions held



**6** expert witnesses  
have attended formal  
Scrutiny Committee  
meetings



**86%** of Scrutiny  
Members attended  
all Scrutiny  
Committee meetings



**8** site visits made by  
Members of the  
Scrutiny Committees

# Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

## Chair's Overview

The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee has met 8 times this year. The items for these meetings have been varied and include comprehensive reports on the Council's finances, as well as reports on policies and plans.

In addition, there have been several member briefings to aid knowledge and enhance skills.

I am really pleased that attendance and involvement by committee members continues to be excellent, and I thank each and every one for their valued input – they have asked probing and challenging questions and taken part in constructive debate on a number of the items presented. The committee continue to make use of action sheets to ensure all action points are addressed at following meetings.

The reports have continued to be of a high standard, and I must also recognise the work from the officers in both preparing and presenting these.

Special thanks must go to the vice Chair – Cllr J Thomas for her valued support throughout the year.



***Cllr Joanna Wilkins***  
***Chair, Corporate Overview and***  
***Performance Scrutiny Committee***

## Member Attendance at Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee

- Chair:**  
Councillor Joanna Wilkins (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Vice-Chair:**  
Councillor Jacqueline Thomas (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Keith Chaplin (6 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Gareth A Davies (6 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor John Hill (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Ellen Jones (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Ross Leadbeater (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Chris Smith (7 of 8 meetings attended)
- Councillor Tommy Smith (8 of 8 meetings attended)

**Remit of the Committee:**  
The main areas of responsibility of the **Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Council as a whole with regards to Organisational Development, Communication and Marketing, Equalities, Customers and Citizens, Welsh Language, Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, this committee also monitor the financial management of the Council.

## Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

| Topic: Blaenau Gwent Engagement and Participation Strategy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| A report was presented to the committee on 27 <sup>th</sup> June 2024. The report required members to consider the revised Engagement and Participation Strategy and supporting action plan.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p>The Committee made the following recommendations to Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>the proposed Engagement &amp; Participation Strategy 2024-28, including the recommendations noted by Scrutiny for the supporting action plan, be approved;</li><li>a trial whereby a meeting(s) be held later in day be considered; and</li><li>a working group be established with appropriate elected member involvement to continue to ascertain and develop how the public would like to see the Council engaging in communities.</li></ul> <p>Cabinet accepted the Scrutiny Committee recommendations.</p> <p>The Working Group has been established, and the first meeting was held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, a Terms of reference is to be developed and further meetings will be arranged.</p> <p>A trial of a Scrutiny Committee meeting to start later in the day, is to be proposed as part of the 2025/25 Forward Work Programme.</p> |

## Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

### Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Menopause and Menstrual Policy
- ◆ Workforce Strategy Review and Action Plan
- ◆ Engagement and Participation Strategy
- ◆ Reviewed Violence and Aggression Policy
- ◆ Capital Strategy Review
- ◆ Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report

### High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring
- ◆ Sickness Absence Performance 2023/24
- ◆ Annual Assessment of Council's Performance 2023/24
- ◆ Treasury Management
- ◆ Welsh Language Annual Report 2023/24
- ◆ Health and Safety Annual Report

### Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ The Introduction of Council Tax Premiums on Empty Properties
- ◆ Procurement Reform
- ◆ Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Financial Challenges 2025/26 Onwards
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 1
- ◆ Treasury Management
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 2
- ◆ Local Government Finance
- ◆ Budget Monitoring Quarter 3

# People Scrutiny Committee

## Chair's Overview

The People Scrutiny Committee has continued its work to scrutinise and challenge across a wide-ranging work programme, with committee members using skills and experience to put forward recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

In Children's and Adult Services, the Committee has examined a varied work program in critical areas such as, Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023/24, CIW – Fostering Services, Social Services Staff Capacity and Grant Funding, the committee continue to monitor this work.

In Education, the Committee have scrutinised reports and made recommendations to the Cabinet in areas that include, Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy, Improving Schools Programme, The Future of School Improvement Services in Blaenau Gwent LA, Sustainable Communities for learning, Attendance, Exclusions and Elective Home Education, Key Stage 4 Results. Members also worked with officers to re-establish the Getting to Know Our Schools Sub-Group, Members of the Committee have visited schools across Blaenau Gwent talking to headteachers and senior leaders to get a greater understanding of the school estate.

The Committee agreed that both departments have responded well to external audits and developed solid action plans to address any external recommendations received.



***Cllr Tommy Smith***  
***Chair, People Scrutiny Committee***

## Member Attendance at People Scrutiny Committee

**Chair:**

Councillor Tommy Smith (6 of 6 meetings attended)

**Vice-Chair:**

Councillor Jen Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Sonia Behr (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Jules Gardner (3 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor John Hill (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor George Humphries (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Godfrey Thomas (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor David Wilkshire (6 of 6 meetings attended)

**Remit of the Committee:**

The main areas of responsibility of the **People Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Education and Social Services Directorates and Safeguarding.

## Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

| Topic: Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2026/2027 and Consultation on Catchment Area Review                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| The committee was presented with a report to consider the new Admissions Policy which also incorporated a catchment area review on the 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2025.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <p>The committee considered the changes within the policy and asked questions regarding the catchment area review.</p> <p>Following discussion, the committee recommended that Cabinet approve the Blaenau Gwent Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2026/2027; however, the Scrutiny Committee did not support the findings from the catchment area review and recommended that Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>do not support the Consultation on the Catchment Area Review and agree that a separate report on the catchment area review be submitted for further scrutiny, considering the concerns raised about topography, demographics, access to transport, parental choice, friendships of pupils being broken, the active travel review and also the need to consider the consultation responses contained within the current report. The overriding concern was to support cluster working and give children the best chances in life.</li></ul> <p>The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was invited to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> April, to provide the reasons for the scrutiny committees recommendation. The Cabinet accepted the Scrutiny Committee’s recommendation, and a further report will be brought to Scrutiny during 2025/26.</p> |

## People Scrutiny Committee

The People Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

### Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy
- ◆ Additional Learning Needs Policy Review
- ◆ Getting to Know Our Schools Sub-Group
- ◆ The Future of School Improvement Services in Blaenau Gwent Local Authority.
- ◆ School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education

### High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Safeguarding Performance reporting for Social Services, Education and Corporate Safeguarding
- ◆ Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2023/24
- ◆ Improving Schools Programme
- ◆ Care Inspectorate Wales – Inspection of Fostering Services
- ◆ Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
- ◆ Key Stage 4 Results
- ◆ Sustainable Communities for Learning Rolling Programme
- ◆ Attendance, Exclusions and Elective Home Education
- ◆ Social Services Staff Capacity and Grant Funding

### Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ ICT & Digitalisation in Schools
- ◆ Corporate Parenting Progress
- ◆ Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy
- ◆ Educated Other than at School provision
- ◆ Eliminating Profit from Children's Care
- ◆ River Centre
- ◆ The Education Anti-Racism Plan
- ◆ Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Blaenau Gwent
- ◆ Key Stage 4 Data

# Place Scrutiny Committee

## Chair's Overview

The committee met seven times throughout 2024/25 and provided consideration and recommendations on a number of reports, such as providing considerations to the Cabinet on:

- Local Area Energy Plan;
- Waste and Recycling Fleet Renewal; and
- Additional Day Closure of HWRC and Green Bag Charges

The members have also attended a number of interesting and informative briefing sessions, covering a wider remit of areas.

Members have been engaging and have asked a number of probing and challenging questions to ensure a full understanding of the reports presented.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their attendance and constructive input over the year. Special recognition and thanks must go to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Ross Leadbeater for his support throughout the year.



***Cllr Malcolm Cross***

***Chair, Place Scrutiny Committee.***

## Member Attendance at Place Scrutiny Committee

**Chair:** numbers are in bold in other sections...

Councillor Malcolm Cross (6 of 7 meetings attended)

**Vice-Chair:**

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Sonia Behr (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Keith Chaplin (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Gareth A Davies (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Jules Gardner (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Jonathan Millard (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Lee Parsons (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Diane Rowberry (6 of 7 meetings attended)

### Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Place Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Community Services and Regeneration Directorate, Decarbonisation and Climate Change, and Community Safety including CCTV.

## Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

| Topic: Waste & Recycling Fleet Renewal                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| The committee was presented with the report which gave a brief overview of the current Waste and Recycling fleet, possible options on its renewal in the short and medium term, and the funding options identified to enable its renewal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>The committee discussed the options within the report and considered budget implications and supported the replacement of Waste &amp; Recycling fleet with the more efficient, cleaner diesel-powered vehicles until such time the appropriate vehicles and infrastructure was in place to transition to ULEV's; and the committee also recommended that Council provide the most cost effective appropriate funding for the like for like replacement of its Waste &amp; Recycling fleet.</p> <p>Council considered and agreed the recommendation at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2025.</p> |

## Place Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

### Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Local Area Energy Plan
- ◆ Replacement Local Development Plan Delivery Agreement
- ◆ Waste and Recycling Fleet Renewal
- ◆ Empty Property Strategy – Public Consultation

### High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance End of Year report 2024/2025
- ◆ Climate Change, Net Zero Annual Report 2023/24
- ◆ Annual Community Safety report 2024/25
- ◆ Waste and Recycling Annual Performance
- ◆ Annual CCTV Monitoring report

### Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Local Development Plan
- ◆ Travelling Ahead
- ◆ Crimestoppers UK
- ◆ Placemaking Plans:
  - Abertillery
  - Brynmawr
  - Tredegar
  - Blaina
- ◆ Cardiff Capital Region
- ◆ Woodland and Green Spaces Strategy
- ◆ Tai Calon Draft Corporate Plan
- ◆ Public Rights of Way
- ◆ Care & Repair Agency
- ◆ CCTV Member Briefing:
  - Ebbw Fawr
  - Upper Ebbw Fach
  - Lower Ebbw Fach
  - Sirhowy Valley

# Partnership Scrutiny Committee

## Chair's Overview

The Committee has looked to scrutinise the main areas of oversight and governance arrangement of partner organisations so that they are adequate and effective, covering off the principles of good governance namely Accountability; Leadership; Integrity; Stewardship and Transparency.

The main Partners scrutinised included:

- Aneurin Leisure Trust;
- Education Achievement Service;
- Gwent Crematoria; and
- Gwent Archives.

Performance monitoring was conducted on Gwent Archives, Aneurin Leisure Trust, and the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and further developed our knowledge and understanding of specific topics.

Members of this committee worked well together and provided constructive challenge, assisted the Cabinet in the development of Policy as well as monitoring the performance of Partners.



***Cllr Wayne Hodgins***

***Chair, Partnership Scrutiny Committee.***

## Member Attendance at Partnership Scrutiny Committee

**Chair:** numbers are in bold previously....

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (3 of 3 meetings attended)

**Vice-Chair:**

Councillor Derrick Bevan (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor David C Davies (2 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Malcolm Day (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Ellen Jones (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Chris Smith (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Lisa Winnett (3 of 3 meetings attended)

Councillor Dean Woods (2 of 3 meetings attended)

### Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Partnership Scrutiny**

**Committee** is to monitor the oversight and governance arrangements of identified partners: Aneurin Leisure Trust, Education Achievement Service, Gwent Crematoria and Gwent Archives.

Additional partnership arrangements also include Library Services, Shared Resource Service and Local Well-being Partnership Delivery Programme.

## Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

| Topic: Leisure and Library Services – Aneurin Leisure Trust                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| The Committee received a report at its meeting on 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2024, the report provided Members with a high-level summary of Aneurin Leisure Trust's (ALT) performance and focuses on the financial challenges that the Trust faced. The report provided a snapshot of all contracted services to enable informed decisions to be made about the future of leisure, library and adult community education services.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p>The Committee considered the report and noted the position of the Aneurin Leisure Trust, however, the Committee could not recommend any of the options presented in the report to Council.</p> <p>The Committee decided to propose a fourth Option to Council, that detailed business cases be considered and scrutinised by the Committee, when available, for the future delivery of services provided by Aneurin Leisure Trust.</p> <p>Council considered a report at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and following a discussion it was agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a Member Working Group be established with the service provider to consider and discuss alternative options. This would ensure that Members were involved from the inception of the development of the business cases;</li><li>• Appropriate officers meet with the Chair of the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee as soon as possible to establish the terms of reference of the Working Group.</li></ul> <p>A Terms of Reference was developed and the Working Group has met three times to date. The outcome of the Working Group is to be reported to Scrutiny during the 2025/26 cycle of meetings.</p> |

## Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of high-level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

### High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership and Food Resilience
- ◆ Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Annual Return 2023/24
- ◆ Gwent Archives
- ◆ Local Well-being Partnership
- ◆ Leisure and Library Services - Aneurin Leisure Trust

### Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Awen Trust
- ◆ Gwent Archives
- ◆ Shared Resource Service
- ◆ Gwent Crematorium

## Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee (managed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council)

The Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee was established in March 2023, to scrutinise the effectiveness of the Regional Public Services Board.

The core statutory functions of the Committee are:

- To review or scrutinise the decisions made, or actions taken by the Board;
- To review or scrutinise the Board's governance arrangements;
- To make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- To consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- To carry out other functions in relation to the Board that are imposed on it by the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

In addition to these functions the Committee can also consider:

- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Assessment;
- The effectiveness of the Wellbeing Plan;
- The effectiveness of performance measurement arrangements;
- The level of commitment from individual partners to the work of the Public Services Board;
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in communicating its work, objectives and outcomes to its stakeholders; and
- The effectiveness of the Public Services Board in addressing the issue of pooled funding to tackle priorities.

To enable it to fulfil its scrutiny function the Scrutiny Committee will be provided with evidence in the form of:

- Assessment of local well-being;
- Annual reports; and
- Reporting on joint projects directed by the *Regional Public Services Board*.

The Committee should recognise that the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 only allows there to be scrutiny of the 'corporate body' of the PSB, and not the individual members. The legislation states:

*"The committee can require any member of the board to give evidence, but only in respect of the exercise of joint functions conferred on them as a member of the board under this Act."*

## Gwent Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

The membership of the committee comprises of an equal number of elected members from each local authority area, excluding Cabinet Members and also nominated additional members from partner organisations:

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Caerphilly County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Monmouthshire County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Newport City Council – 2 Elected Members
- Torfaen County Borough Council – 2 Elected Members
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board – 1 Elected Member
- Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations – 1 Representative
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service – 2 Elected Members
- Natural Resources Wales to be involved but no representative on the Joint Scrutiny Committee

During 2024/25, the committee has met three times and has considered items that included:

- Gwent Well-Being Plan Annual Report
- Gwent Public Services Board Delivery Framework: Best Start in Life
- Everyone Lives in a Place they Feel Safe: Community Safety Review & Strategic Safe Communities Partnership Board
- Best Start in Life: PSB Progress Update

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme for the 2025/26 cycle of meetings, and it is intended to hold the first meeting of the 2025/26 cycle during June 2024, to consider:

- Report: Gwent PSB Delivery Framework Area of Focus: Everyone lives in a climate ready community where the environment is valued and protected
- Verbal Update: Gwent PSB Delivery Framework Area of Focus: Everyone has the same economic chances

## Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees

|                              | Agreed<br>Committee<br>Membership<br>Numbers | Number of<br>Meetings held<br><br><b>June 24 –<br/>Apr 25 (to<br/>date)</b> | Total Members<br>to Attend<br><br><b>June 24 –<br/>Apr 25 (to<br/>date)</b> | Actual<br>Attendance<br><br><b>June 24 -<br/>Apr 25 (to<br/>date)</b> | % of<br>Attendance<br><br><b>June 24 -<br/>Apr 25</b> | % of<br>Attendance<br><br>June 23 - Apr 24 | Number of<br>Meetings Held<br><br>June 23 - Apr<br>24 |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Corporate and<br>Performance | 9                                            | 8                                                                           | 72                                                                          | 62                                                                    | 86                                                    | 88                                         | 10                                                    |
| People                       | 10                                           | 6                                                                           | 60                                                                          | 51                                                                    | 85                                                    | 80                                         | 6                                                     |
| Place                        | 10                                           | 7                                                                           | 70                                                                          | 60                                                                    | 86                                                    | 90                                         | 6                                                     |
| Partnership                  | 9                                            | 3                                                                           | 27                                                                          | 25                                                                    | 93                                                    | 92                                         | 3                                                     |
|                              |                                              |                                                                             |                                                                             |                                                                       |                                                       |                                            |                                                       |
| <b>Overall Total</b>         | <b>38</b>                                    | <b>24</b>                                                                   | <b>229</b>                                                                  | <b>198</b>                                                            | <b>86</b>                                             | <b>69</b>                                  | <b>25</b>                                             |

## How the public can get involved in the Scrutiny Process

Members of the public are welcome to attend any Committee meeting to observe proceedings (unless there is an exempt item). Committee agendas and papers are published one week in advance of the meeting, on the Council's website. All meetings are recorded and uploaded to the Council website, normally by the following day, to enable members of the public to view the meetings online. Nevertheless, should a member of the public request to attend the General Offices or via Microsoft Teams to observe a meeting, provisions are be put in place to enable the committee meeting to be observed.

The Council has approved an Engagement and Participation Strategy which includes ways in which members of the public can engage in the democratic process. Some common themes received from the public during the consultation were:

- Optimise timing of committee meetings to ensure working people can participate.
- Providing more information about the decision-making process and decisions or outcomes from committee meetings via communications channels.
- Increased opportunities for people to engage directly with councillors, either face-to-face or via online MS Teams or Zoom meetings.
- Encourage people to participate in local democracy, with 80-90% of respondents wanting to see 'more' opportunities to find out how the Council works and attend, watch, speak or submit questions to Committee meetings.
- Some interest in learning more about the role of a County Borough Councillor and how to become one in future.

In response a members engagement and participation task group has been established and work will be undertaken throughout the 2025/26 cycle to embed some of the consultation themes more effectively into the democratic process.

Agendas, reports and minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's Website: [Councillors and Committees | Blaenau Gwent CBC](#)

Members of the public can suggest items for the Scrutiny Committees either by writing, emailing or phoning the Democratic Team. Information can also be found on the Council's Website: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Get Involved with Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

All contact information can be found at the end of this document.

## Legislation

### Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains a number of provisions to promote diversity, involvement and participation in council democratic arrangements. Some of these provisions include:

- Encouraging local people to participate in decision making;
- Development of a Participation Strategy;
- The electronic broadcasting of meetings and multi-location meetings;
- Develop a multi-location meeting policy;
- A review of the council's petition scheme; and
- Opportunities for job sharing for members of the Cabinet.

## Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG) Act

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development - the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, ensuring that all our service areas are giving it due consideration so that the services we provide meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a designated public body under the WBFG Act, therefore, has a duty to ensure it is giving due consideration to the act.

The Council's corporate reporting template requires officers to consider how the report topic supports the WBFG Act.

Should this be in the section below? This led to a new Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process being developed which incorporated wider policy considerations beyond equality and socio-economics such as:

- ◆ Well-being of Future Generation Act Goals;
- ◆ New Corporate Objectives;
- ◆ Armed forces (new national duties); and
- ◆ Community Safety considerations.

The Policy Team continues to provide on-going support, advice and guidance to those completing the IIA process.

## Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

As a defined public body in Wales, the Council must fulfil a specific duty for the assessment of impact. This relates to the likely impact of any new or existing (when reviewed) policies or practices. There is a key focus when assessing impact on the ability to meet the Council's three general duties under the Act, including assessing any positive or negative impact on groups covered by the nine protected characteristics.

Where it has been deemed there is a substantial (or likely) negative impact the Council must report this, accordingly, outlining any decisions taken with any mitigations considered/actioned.

The process was also strengthened to ensure all equality and socio-economic factors were fully considered when making decisions, reviewing existing or developing new policies. The requirement to carry out and report on impact assessing continued to be expected in corporate reporting templates for decision making.

## Future Planned Developments

- Following the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive for Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, the Chief Executive has aligned the Directorates in Blaenau Gwent with those in Torfaen, therefore, the Scrutiny Committee will change in order to align to the new Cabinet Member portfolios.
- Implementation via a member working group of the democratic aspects of the Participation and Engagement Strategy to support how members of the public can engage in the democratic process.
- Consideration of meeting accommodation and the live broadcasting of full Council meetings

## Contact Information

If you would like to find out more about the work we have undertaken or how to become involved in future Scrutiny activity please contact:

### Service Manager Performance and Democratic (Deputy Head of Democratic Services)

Gemma Wasley

Tel: 07977158983

Email: [Gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

### Scrutiny and Democratic Officer (Committee Adviser)

Elizabeth Thomas

Tel:

Email: [Liz.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Liz.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

**You can contact your local Councillor** and talk to them about Scrutiny.

Contact details for Councillors can be found on our website at [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

#### Address:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
General Offices  
Steelworks Road  
Tyllwyn  
Ebbw Vale  
NP23 6AA

**Web:** [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Blaenau Gwent \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Blaenau Gwent (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

**Additional documents which may be of interest to you** can be found on our website.

Council Minutes, Agendas and Reports

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Council Minutes, Agendas & Reports \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Council Minutes, Agendas & Reports (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

Council's Constitution [Blaenau Gwent CBC: The Council Constitution](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: The Council Constitution)

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 [Local Government and Election \(Wales\) Act 2021](http://Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021)

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 [Well-being of Future Generations Wales](http://Well-being of Future Generations Wales)



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.