

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Annual Scrutiny Report 2025-26



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Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report 2025-26, which provides an overview of the work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee.

The report summarises the scrutiny activity carried out by the Council's Scrutiny Committees during 2025/26.

Blaenau Gwent Council has 33 Elected Members. Of these, 5 Members make up the Council's Cabinet, which is the decision-making body, and 24 Elected Members form the membership of the four Scrutiny Committees. The remaining 4 Elected Members serve on other Regulatory Committees.

While Scrutiny Committees have no decision-making powers, they undertake an important role in providing a check and balance on the powers exercised and decisions taken by the Cabinet.

The Scrutiny Committees enable non-Cabinet Members to play a stronger role in Council business by:

- ◆ Supporting the Cabinet in developing and shaping policy;
- ◆ Monitoring the performance of the Council and its partners;
- ◆ Reviewing the impact and implementation of Cabinet decisions and policies;
- ◆ Holding the Leader, Cabinet and Senior Officers to account;
- ◆ Listening to the views of the public and ensuring the public voice is heard; and
- ◆ Scrutinising external organisations that provide services to our residents.

Scrutiny is most effective when it focuses on a limited number of priorities and examines them in depth. When selecting agenda items, Committees should consider the likely value and impact of any report or review, balanced carefully against the time and resources required to undertake the work.

Other topics of interest, or information needed to enhance Members' knowledge and skills in particular areas, can be provided through Member Briefing Sessions, Directorate Briefing Sessions, and Member Training and Development.

All democratic meetings are recorded and uploaded to the Blaenau Gwent website.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent

In January 2025, Full Council in both Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen agreed to federate. Work was then undertaken to align Cabinet portfolios and Scrutiny Committees with the Directorate structures introduced from 1st May 2025. Details of this are set below:

The four Scrutiny Committees are:

- ◆ Corporate, Governance and Resources (aligned to the Corporate Resources Cabinet Portfolio);
- ◆ Children, Young People and Families (aligned to the Children, Young People & Families Cabinet Portfolio);
- ◆ Adult, Communities and Wellbeing (aligned to the Adult and Communities Cabinet Portfolio); and
- ◆ Economic Development and Environmental Management (aligned to the Neighbourhood & Environment Cabinet Portfolio and Economy & Place Cabinet Portfolio).

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 helps Members to undertake in-depth challenge on each item under discussion. It is advised that each scrutiny agenda includes a maximum of two items, under the categories of 'Pre-Decision' and 'Performance Monitoring', to ensure agendas are focused and support effective decision-making. However, agendas can sometimes be larger to reflect scrutiny and decision-making requirements. Reducing the number of items for scrutiny has also helped to ensure that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is not overburdened with monitoring items. Monitoring items can, however, be included on the Forward Work Programme on an exception basis, e.g. things not going well or if a decision is required.

Expert witnesses and invitees have been invited and have contributed to scrutiny meetings, including the School Improvement Service and Aneurin Leisure Trust.

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

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

Chairs and Vice-Chairs Meetings

Meetings of Chairs and Vice-Chairs 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. At the June, September and December meetings, the agenda included the following standard items for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs **only**:

- Evaluation of the previous cycle;
- Consideration of items for the next cycle; and
- Peer learning across scrutiny committees.

Chair and Vice-Chairs can add additional items as required.

At the March meeting, the agenda will include the following standard items for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs, with an invite extended to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee and Democratic Services Committee:

- Any learning from the annual evaluation, for consideration by the Democratic Services Committee;
- Consideration of the draft forward work programmes for the forthcoming committee cycle;
- Training requirements; and
- Peer learning across the Scrutiny, Governance and Audit and Democratic Services Committee.

Forward Work Programmes

The 2025/26 scrutiny Forward Work Programmes were developed through a structured planning process to align committee activity with Council priorities, statutory requirements, planned Cabinet and Council business, and areas where scrutiny could add value through pre-decision challenge and performance monitoring.

The process included reviewing recurring and high-level items from previous programmes, identifying key reports for the scrutiny cycle, and developing draft programmes for consideration by officers and Directorate Management Teams.

Further discussions were held with service areas to refine proposed items, confirm reporting timescales and clarify whether reports were required for pre-decision scrutiny, performance monitoring or information and briefing purposes.

In summary, this included:

- reviewing recurring and high-level scrutiny items;
- identifying key reports for the scrutiny cycle;
- developing draft programmes with officer input;
- refining items with service areas and Directorate Management Teams;
- consulting Chairs and Vice-Chairs on committee priorities;
- seeking committee approval during the June and July cycle; and
- publishing and maintaining the programmes as live documents.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs were also consulted following the Annual General Meeting to review the draft programmes, consider committee priorities and agree any amendments before presentation to the relevant scrutiny committees for approval during the June and July cycle.

The approved programmes were translated, published and maintained as live documents, allowing them to be updated throughout the year in response to emerging issues, changing service priorities or revised reporting timescales.

Member briefing sessions were also included to support scrutiny outside the formal committee process and provide focused updates on key service areas, policy developments and operational matters.

Overall, the process strengthened the link between scrutiny, Cabinet and Council business and provided a clear framework for Members to scrutinise strategic decisions, monitor performance and support service improvement during the 2025/26 municipal year.

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

New for 2025/26 ...

Blaenau Gwent Deal – Council Deal with the Community

The Blaenau Gwent Deal was developed during 2025/26 as part of the Council's wider transformation work and its commitment to working differently with communities. It sets out a proposed contract between the Council and the community, with a focus on tackling inequalities, strengthening engagement and supporting shared responsibility for improving outcomes across Blaenau Gwent.

The Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee has been involved in the development of the Council's Deal with the Community.

The Committee received a report in September 2025, giving Members the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge and influence the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Approach for the development of the Council's Deal with the Community.

A second report, *Setting the Principles for the Blaenau Gwent Deal*, was also presented to Committee on 19th February 2026. Members of the Blaenau Gwent Assembly attended the meeting to inform Members of the Assembly's role in creating a set of principles that will be used to drive the Blaenau Gwent Deal.

The Scrutiny Committee will play a critical oversight and advisory role to ensure the communication and engagement plan is robust, inclusive and aligned with the Council's transformation goals.

Monitoring of External Audit Reports

Scrutiny Committees now have a strengthened role in monitoring progress against external audit reports and associated recommendations. This supports the Council's wider assurance arrangements and helps ensure that agreed actions are followed through to completion.

In February 2025, the Joint Executive Team agreed that Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Councils would align their processes for monitoring and reporting against external audit recommendations. The Council is subject to a number of external audits throughout the year, which help to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, support effective management of public funds, and identify opportunities for service improvement.

To support this work, an internal Risk and Assurance Progress Tracker has been put in place to monitor external audit activity from inception through to completion.

Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker

At the start of a new cycle each Scrutiny Committee now receives a monitoring report setting out all the recommendations made by the Committee and the progress made against them. The process has been developed as part of the wider alignment with Torfaen County Borough Council and supports a more consistent approach to tracking scrutiny outcomes.

The tracker records each recommendation from the point it is made through to completion. It shows whether recommendations have been accepted, rejected or accepted in part by Cabinet, or another relevant decision-making body. Where a recommendation has been rejected or accepted in part, commentary in the report is provided to explain the position.

The tracker also records other actions requested by the Committee and provides an update on their status. This helps ensure that accepted recommendations and agreed actions are followed up, progressed and monitored until they are completed.

Scrutiny Committees have welcomed the new process, as it provides Members with a clearer overview of the recommendations made, the responses received, and the progress being made.

Blaenau Gwent Scrutiny Committees at a Glance 2025/26



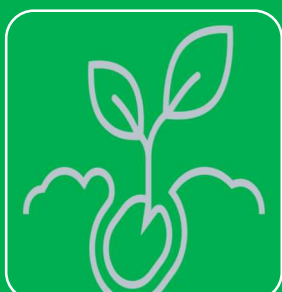
Corporate, Governance & Resources

- 9 Meetings during 25/26
- 10 pre-decision items
- 68 unique views of committee meetings
- Most viewed committee meeting **25th September 2025**
- 4 expert witnesses attended meetings (Members of the BG Citizens Assembly)
- 79% of members attended scrutiny meetings



Children, Young People & Families

- 9 Meetings during 25/26
- 8 pre-decision items
- 68 unique views of committee meetings
- Most viewed committee meeting **20th January 2026**
- 2 expert witnesses attended meetings (Officers from the School Improvement Service)
- 83% of members attended scrutiny meetings



Economic Development & Environmental Management

- 12 Meetings during 25/26
- 9 pre-decision items
- 119 unique views of committee meetings
- Most viewed committee meeting **9th September 2025**
- 82% of members attended scrutiny meetings



Adult, Communities & Wellbeing

- 6 Meetings during 25/26
- 3 pre-decision items
- 26 unique views of committee meetings
- Most viewed committee meeting **30th October 2025**
- 1 expert witnesses attended meetings (Managing Director Aneurin Leisure Trust)
- 78% of members attended scrutiny meetings

Corporate, Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee has met nine 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 everyone 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.



Cllr Joanna Wilkins
Chair, Corporate Governance and
Resources Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance

Role	Member	Attendance
Chair	Councillor Joanna Wilkins	9 of 9
Vice-Chair	Councillor Dean Woods	8 of 9
Member	Councillor Keith Chaplin	5 of 9
Member	Councillor Gareth A Davies	7 of 9
Member	Councillor Ross Leadbeater	8 of 9
Member	Councillor John P Morgan	7 of 9
Member	Councillor Chris Smith	9 of 9
Member	Councillor David Wilkshire	4 of 9
Member	Councillor Lisa Winnett	9 of 9

Remit of the Committee

The main areas of responsibility of the **Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee** are to develop and review strategies, plans and policies, and to monitor the Council's overall performance, including:

- Organisational Development
- Resources
- Performance
- Corporate Governance
- Corporate Policy
- Welsh Language
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Corporate Safeguarding
- Revenues
- Financial management of the Council

Overview of a key piece of work undertaken by the Committee:

Topic: Safeguarding Monitoring for Corporate Services	
Activity	This was the first report presented to the Committee in response to the Audit Wales report on Safeguarding in Blaenau Gwent. This report was presented to the Committee on 19 th June 2025. The report was provided to enable members to identify safeguarding trends and areas within the Council that required further development to improve the safeguarding practice across all Council services.
Outcome	The Committee agreed that this was a critical area of work for the Council and that Audit Wales recommendations needed to be regularly monitored. Therefore, it was recommended that the Committee received regular updates against the Action Plan. The Committee then received a further report on 6th November 2025. This report included an appendix that detailed the actions the Council had identified, as well as a progress update and a current and past BRAGG rating. One of the identified actions was that the Corporate Safeguarding Policy be reviewed. This was presented to the Committee in November 2025. The Committee supported the reviewed Policy, which was subsequently approved by Cabinet in January 2026. As requested by the Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee, and to ensure regular monitoring of the action plan, the Committee is to receive annual performance monitoring reports. This report will be presented to Committee in July 2026.

Summary of Recommendation made by the Committee

The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet following consideration of reports, strategies and performance monitoring items during the municipal year.

Total number of recommendations made by the Committee during the reporting period, set out below:

Summary of Recommendations	
2024/25 • Total recommendations made: 20 • Recommendations accepted: 19 • Recommendations accepted in part: 0 • Recommendations rejected: 1	2025/26 • Total recommendations made: 16 • Recommendations accepted: 15 • Recommendations accepted in part: 0 • Recommendations rejected: 1

Full detail on the Scrutiny Recommendations can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Recommendations Trackers:

- [2024-2025 Tracker](#)
- [Scrutiny Committee Agenda - 18th June 2026](#) – Included on Pages 19 - 28

The **Corporate Governance and Resources 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	◆ Persimmon Overage Agreement ◆ Corporate Plan - Annual Implementation Plan	◆ Corporate Emergency Management Plan ◆ Workforce Strategy Review and Year 5 Action Plan
High Level Performance Monitoring	◆ Welsh Language Annual Report ◆ Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker – Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee ◆ Audit Tracker Annual Progress	◆ Treasury Management ◆ Annual Self-Assessment of Council Performance 2024/25 ◆ Employee Well-being and Sickness Absence Performance
Member Briefing Sessions	◆ BRAG Rating and Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker ◆ Capital Programme ◆ So What's the Deal ◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 ◆ Elected Members role in supporting refugee and asylum resettlement within the local authority ◆ Armed Forces Covenant	◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Quarter 2 ◆ Social Model of Disability ◆ Medium Term Financial Strategy & Budget 26/27 ◆ An Introduction to AI in Local Government ◆ An Introduction To 'Thinqi' Learning Management System ◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring – Quarter 3 ◆ Food Resilience

Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The committee met nine times throughout 2025/26 and considered and made recommendations on a number of reports to Cabinet, such as:

- Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy;
- Catchment Area Review; and
- Increase of Blaenau Gwent foster carers' fees.

The Committee 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 challenging questions to ensure a full understanding of the reports presented.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their attendance over the year, and also thanks to my Vice-Chair, Cllr Derrick Bevan for his support throughout the year.



Cllr Wayne Hodgins

Chair, Children, Young People & Families Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance

Role	Member	Attendance
Chair	Councillor Wayne Hodgins	9 of 9
Vice-Chair	Councillor Derrick Bevan	8 of 9
Member	Councillor Sonia Behr (ended 21.01.26)	6 of 7
Member	Councillor Helen Cunningham (appointed 22.01.26)	2 of 2
Member	Councillor Gareth A Davies (appointed 20.11.25)	5 of 5
Member	Councillor Jules Gardner (ended 21.01.26)	4 of 7
Member	Councillor John Hill	9 of 9
Member	Councillor Jen Morgan	3 of 9
Member	Councillor Lee Parsons (ended 19.11.25)	3 of 7
Member	Councillor Chris Smith (appointed 22.01.26)	2 of 2
Member	Councillor Jackie Thomas	8 of 9
Member	Councillor Haydn Trollope	8 of 9

Remit of the Committee

The main areas of responsibility of the **Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee** are to develop and review strategies, plans and policies, and to monitor the Council's overall performance, including:

- Children's Services (including Children's safeguarding and children's complaints and children 18+ within the care system)
- Education Services (including Education safeguarding)
- Education Achievement Service
- Family support
- Youth Service

Overview of a key piece of work undertaken by the Committee:

Topic: Catchment Area Review	
Activity	Following Scrutiny's recommendation, which was agreed by Cabinet in April 2025, a consultation on the Catchment Area Review was undertaken. The outcome of the consultation and the agreed proposals were reported to Scrutiny on 20th January 2026. The Committee was asked to consider the proposals and make recommendations to Cabinet for inclusion in the Admissions Policy for 2027/28. There were two proposals to consider: Proposal 1: To establish a defined catchment area for Brynmawr Foundation School, which is the only secondary school in Blaenau Gwent without a catchment area. <u>Option 1:</u> To introduce a catchment area for Brynmawr Foundation School to include the catchment areas for Beaufort Hill, Blaen y Cwm, Coed y Garn and Ystruth Primary Schools, and amend the catchment areas for Ebbw Fawr Learning Community and Abertillery Learning Community. <u>Option 2:</u> To introduce a catchment area for Brynmawr Foundation School to include the catchment areas for Blaen y Cwm, Coed y Garn and Ystruth Primary Schools, and amend the catchment area for Abertillery Learning Community. Proposal 2: To establish a designated catchment area for Ysgol Gymraeg Tredegar and amend the current catchment area for Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg.
Outcome	The Committee recommended that Cabinet agree Proposal 1, Option 1, and fully supported and recommended that Proposal 2 be agreed. On 23rd February 2026, Cabinet considered the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and agreed Proposal 2. However, in relation to Proposal 1, Cabinet decided to reject the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation and instead agreed that Option 2 should be implemented. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families attended the meeting of the Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee on 17th March 2026 to provide a detailed explanation of Cabinet's decision to adopt Option 2 and clarify points raised by Members of the Committee.

Summary of Recommendation made by the Committee

The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet following consideration of reports, strategies and performance monitoring items during the municipal year.

Total number of recommendations made by the Committee during the reporting period, set out below:

Summary of Recommendations	
2024/25 - Total recommendations made: 16 - Recommendations accepted: 16 - Recommendations accepted in part: 0 - Recommendations rejected: 0	2025/26 - Total recommendations made: 6 - Recommendations accepted: 5 - Recommendations accepted in part: 0 - Recommendations rejected: 0

Full detail on the Scrutiny Recommendations can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Recommendations Trackers:

- [2024-2025 Tracker](#)
- [Agenda Scrutiny Committee Meeting - 29th June 2026](#) – Included at Pages 19-34

The **Children, Young People and Families 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 ◆ Corporate Parenting Strategy ◆ Local Authority Guidance to be shared with all school governing bodies in respect of the use of mobile phone/smart devices in school	◆ Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy ◆ Increase of Blaenau Gwent foster carers' fees ◆ School Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education
High Level Performance Monitoring	◆ Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker (for the former People Scrutiny Committee) ◆ Audit Tracker Annual Progress ◆ Annual Safeguarding Performance Monitoring for Education ◆ Annual Safeguarding Performance Monitoring for Children's Services	◆ Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2024/25 ◆ Education Directorate Improvement Plan ◆ Improving Schools Programme ◆ Attendance, Exclusions and Elective Home Education ◆ Key Stage 4 Results ◆ South East Wales Adoption Service – Children in Wales Inspection and Action Plan
Member Briefing Sessions	◆ South-East Wales Adoption ◆ School Improvement Support in Reducing Inequalities ◆ Flying Start Phase 3 ◆ The Work of the Youth Offending Service	◆ Catchment Area Review ◆ School Estate

Economic Development and Environmental Management Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

This year has been a particularly busy and challenging one for the Economic Development and Environmental Management Scrutiny Committee, due to the wide range of economic and environmental matters brought before us has required careful consideration and thoughtful discussion, often against a backdrop of wider pressures and changing circumstances.

Despite these challenges, the Committee has approached its work with a positive and cooperative spirit. Members have shown a real commitment to their scrutiny role, engaging openly and constructively while always keeping the interests of residents at the forefront of discussions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers who have supported the Committee throughout the year. Their professionalism, patience, and willingness to support members have been greatly appreciated. In addition to formal meetings, members also took part in wider briefing sessions, which provided valuable opportunities to develop knowledge, explore complex issues to support more informed and effective scrutiny.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Cllr Chris Smith, my Vice Chair, for his continued support and encouragement. His contribution, insight, and collaborative approach.

My thanks also extend to Democratic Services, whose support behind the scenes in ensuring the smooth running of meetings and the effective operation of the Committee.

Overall, while the scale of the Committee's remit has undoubtedly presented its challenges, it has been encouraging to see the strong teamwork, shared commitment, and positive working relationships that have helped us navigate the year together.



Cllr Jacqueline Thomas
Chair, Economic Development &
Environmental Management Scrutiny
Committee

Member Attendance

Role	Member	Attendance
Chair	Councillor Jackie Thomas	12 of 12
Vice-Chair	Councillor Chris Smith	10 of 12
Member	Councillor Sonia Behr (ended 21.01.26)	6 of 8
Member	Councillor Keith Chaplin	5 of 12
Member	Councillor Malcolm Cross	7 of 12
Member	Councillor Gareth A Davies	11 of 12
Member	Councillor Wayne Hodgins	12 of 12
Member	Councillor Julie Holt	11 of 12
Member	Councillor George Humphries (appointed 22.01.26)	4 of 5
Member	Councillor Ross Leadbeater	11 of 12
Member	Councillor Jonathan Millard (ended 21.01.26)	5 of 8
Member	Councillor Lisa Winnett (appointed 22.01.26)	4 of 5

Remit of the Committee

The main areas of responsibility of the **Economic Development & Environmental Management Scrutiny Committee** are to develop and review strategies, plans and policies, and to monitor the Council's overall performance, including:

- Regeneration
- Economic Development
- Business, skills, apprenticeships
- Towns Centres
- Estates / Property
- Technical Services
- Building Control
- Highways
- Streetscene
- Biodiversity / Climate Change
- Energy
- Waste and Recycling
- Public Protection
- Enforcement
- Community Safety
- Flood Management

Overview of a key piece of work undertaken by the Committee:

Topic: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024–2030	
Activity	The Committee was presented with a progress report on updating the Local Flood Strategy, first published in 2013, which set out the overarching approach to managing local flood risk. The Flood Risk Management Plan was also published in 2015. The new Local Strategy integrates the two documents into one.
Outcome	The Committee scrutinised the action plan and ensured that high-risk flood areas in Blaenau Gwent were prominently featured. Members were advised that, following the Committee’s support for the action plan, further public consultation would take place before the Strategy is fully adopted. The Committee noted that an annual review of the Flood Plan would be presented to the Economic Development and Environmental Management Scrutiny Committee. The Committee accepted the flood measures and flood action plan for the delivery of the strategic objectives outlined within the Local Strategy. The Committee will be presented with the final Strategy in autumn 2026 and, following its recommendations, the Strategy will then be presented to Cabinet for adoption.

Summary of Recommendation made by the Committee

The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet following consideration of reports, strategies and performance monitoring items during the municipal year.

Total number of recommendations made by the Committee during the reporting period, set out below.

Summary of Recommendations	
2024/25 • Total recommendations made: 8 • Recommendations accepted: 8 • Recommendations accepted in part: 0 • Recommendations rejected: 0	2025/26 • Total recommendations made: 9 • Recommendations accepted: 9 • Recommendations accepted in part: 0 • Recommendations rejected: 0

Full detail on the Scrutiny Recommendations can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Recommendations Trackers:

- [2024-2025 Tracker](#)
- [Scrutiny Committee Agenda 7th July 2026](#) included at Pages 31-51

The **Economic Development and Environmental Management 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	• Flood Management Plan • Public Spaces Protection Orders • Blueprint for Growth • Town Centre Placemaking Plans	• Fly Tipping Awareness • Pride in Place Fund • Future of Travel in Blaenau Gwent Citizens Forum
High Level Performance Monitoring	• Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker (former Place Scrutiny Committee) 2024/25 • Audit Tracker Annual Progress • Climate Change – Net Zero Annual report 2024/25 • Waste and Recycling Annual Performance	• Annual CCTV Monitoring report • External Regulatory Report – Planning Service
Member Briefing Sessions	• Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) • Destination Management • Litter Campaign • The Mining Remediation Authority (formerly the Coal Authority) • Section 19 Flood Investigation Reports	• The Future Direction for the Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan • Strategic Employment Sites • Cartrefi Hydrogen Homes Update • Community Safety Wardens • Blaenau Gwent Shared Prosperity Fund/Growth Fund

Adult, Communities and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

It has been an eventful year, and a lot of changes with portfolio's changing along with members responsibilities, but I can say with all honesty there has been little or no disruption and this is due mainly to the professional and dedication of the staff.

The collaboration with Torfaen means there are exciting times ahead, but we must not take our eyes off the ball and we need to do what's best for the residents of Blaenau Gwent and the Council as a whole.

Lastly, I would like to give my thanks to Cllr Ellen Jones my Vice-Chair who supported me throughout the year and put up with my ways.



Cllr Haydn Trollope

Chair, Adult Communities & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance

Role	Member	Attendance
Chair	Councillor Haydn Trollope	6 of 6
Vice-Chair	Councillor Ellen Jones	4 of 6
Member	Councillor Peter Baldwin	4 of 6
Member	Councillor Dai Davies	6 of 6
Member	Councillor Malcom Day	5 of 6
Member	Councillor Jules Gardner (ended 21.01.26)	3 of 5
Member	Councillor Julie Holt	6 of 6
Member	Councillor George Humphries	6 of 6
Member	Councillor Diane Rowberry	5 of 6
Member	Councillor David Wilkshire (appointed 22.01.26)	1 of 1
Member	Councillor Dean Woods (appointed 22.01.26)	1 of 1

Remit of the Committee

The main areas of responsibility of the **Adult Communities and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee** are to develop and review strategies, plans and policies, and to monitor the Council's overall performance, including:

- Adult Social Services (including Adult Safeguarding and Adult Services complaints)
- Communities and Wellbeing (including Customer Care, Housing and Aneurin Leisure Trust)

Overview of a key piece of work undertaken by the Committee:

Topic: Leisure Review	
Activity	The Committee was presented with the findings of the independent review of the leisure, library and community learning offer in Blaenau Gwent. The Committee discussed energy costs, partnership working and accessibility for outlying areas. The Trust's efforts to reduce energy consumption were highlighted, alongside the importance of partnership working and the need to explore ways to improve accessibility for all communities. The Committee considered the options within the report and recommended that a monitoring report be presented at a future date to monitor the implementation and impact of the review recommendations.
Outcome	The Committee recommended that Council agree the review recommendations detailed within the report and receive a monitoring report at a future date to monitor their implementation and impact. Council agreed the Scrutiny recommendation.

Summary of Recommendation made by the Committee

The Committee made recommendations to Cabinet following consideration of reports, strategies and performance monitoring items during the municipal year.

Total number of recommendations made by the Committee during the reporting period, set out below.

Summary of Recommendations	
2024/25 • Total recommendations made: 7 • Recommendations accepted: 6 • Recommendations accepted in part: 1 • Recommendations rejected: 0	2025/26 • Total recommendations made: 5 • Recommendations accepted: 5 • Recommendations accepted in part: 0 • Recommendations rejected: 0

Full detail on the Scrutiny Recommendations can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Recommendations Trackers:

- [2024-2025 Tracker](#)
- [Agenda Scrutiny Committee Meeting 25th June 2026](#) included from Page 37-51

The **Adult, Communities and Wellbeing 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	• Housing Strategy • Public Sector Housing Renewal Policy	♦ Early Intervention and Prevention Review
High Level Performance Monitoring	• Annual Safeguarding Performance Monitoring for Adult Services • Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker (from the former People Scrutiny Committee) • Audit Tracker Annual Progress	• Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2024/25 • External Regulatory Reports • Grant Funded Posts • Welsh Public Library Standards • Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance and Monitoring
Member Briefing Sessions	• My Council Services & Contact Centre • Welfare Reform Green Paper Consultation	

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 2025/26, the committee has met four times and has considered items that included:

- Gwent Well-being Plan Annual Report;
- Gwent Well-Being Assessment;
- Gwent PSB Delivery Framework Area of Focus: Give every child the best start in life; and
- Gwent PSB Delivery Framework Area of Focus: Everyone lives in a climate ready community where the environment is valued and protected.

Any recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee are reported to the Gwent Public Services for consideration and approval.

Overall Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees

As detailed earlier in this report at the Annual General Meeting of Council in May 2025, a new set of Scrutiny Committees were agreed.

The table below compares overall attendance for the scrutiny committees between 2024/25 and 2025/26. Most committee areas are broadly comparable, except Partnership, which is no longer in place, and Adult, Communities and Wellbeing, which is a combination of People and Place

:

Committee	Membership No.	No. of Meetings Held 2025/26	Expected Attendances 2025/26	Actual Attendance 2025/26	Attendance 2025/26 %	Attendance 2024/25 %
Corporate, Governance & Resources	9	9	81	64	79%	86%
Children, Young People & Families Previously People	9	9	81	67	83%	85%
Economic Development & Environmental Management Previously Place	10	12	120	98	82%	86%
Adult, Communities & Wellbeing Combination of People & Place	10	6	60	47	78%	Not directly comparable
Partnership No longer in place	-	-	-	-	-	93%
Overall Total	38	36	342	276	81%	86%

Annual Member Evaluation Questionnaire

As part of the annual review of scrutiny arrangements, Elected Members were invited to complete an evaluation questionnaire to provide feedback on their experience of democratic and scrutiny processes during the year. The questionnaire was circulated to all 33 Elected Members, with 15 responses received, representing a 45% response rate.

Overall, the feedback was positive and highlighted the value Members place on democratic and scrutiny support, including the Members' Missive and the support provided by the Democratic Team. The responses also identified a number of themes to inform the continued development of scrutiny arrangements, including consistency of chairing, use of pre-meetings, Forward Work Programme planning, training and development, Cabinet engagement, and opportunities for greater public involvement.

A recurring theme was the value Members place on face-to-face or hybrid meetings, particularly in supporting participation, discussion and member development. Feedback also highlighted opportunities to strengthen public awareness and involvement in the scrutiny process.

The feedback has informed a draft action plan, which will be updated with timelines and responsible officers following committee agreement. In response to a recommendation from the 2024/25 evaluation, a "Don't Know / N/A" option was added to this year's questionnaire to improve the quality of feedback received.

The findings from the Annual Evaluation Questionnaire and the proposed actions will be reported to the Democratic Services Committee in the new cycle for 2026/27 for consideration.

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 Engagement and Participation Strategy supports the Council's commitment to improving communication and involvement with residents and stakeholders. It also provides opportunities to strengthen public understanding of the scrutiny process and encourage wider input into matters considered by Scrutiny. Actions within the Strategy to support engagement in democratic activity are now being progressed jointly with Torfaen Council.

The Council's [Engagement Platform](#) enables residents and stakeholders to take part in consultations and share their views on issues affecting Blaenau Gwent. This may also help identify opportunities for community views to inform relevant scrutiny topics.

In summary, the Council uses a range of methods to make scrutiny more accessible, helping residents understand how decisions are reviewed and how they can contribute their views on matters affecting Blaenau Gwent.

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

This section summarises the key legislative duties and policy requirements that support effective scrutiny, democratic participation and transparent decision-making, including consideration of equality, involvement, long-term well-being and wider community impacts.

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 includes several provisions designed to strengthen diversity, involvement and participation in local democratic arrangements. These include:

- Encouraging local people to participate in decision-making;
- Developing a Participation Strategy;
- Electronic broadcasting of meetings and multi-location meetings;
- Developing a multi-location meeting policy;
- Reviewing the Council's petition scheme; and
- Providing opportunities for job sharing for members of the Cabinet.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development by considering the long-term impact of decisions on the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. As a designated public body under the Act, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council must give due consideration to these requirements.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

As a defined public body in Wales, the Council must assess the likely impact of new and reviewed policies and practices, including statutory duties and any positive or negative impacts on groups covered by the nine protected characteristics.

Where a substantial, or likely, negative impact is identified, the Council must report this and set out any decisions taken, including mitigation considered or implemented.

The process has been strengthened to ensure equality and socio-economic factors are considered when decisions are made and when policies are developed or reviewed. This requirement is reflected in corporate reporting templates.

A new Integrated Impact Assessment process has been developed and now incorporates wider policy considerations beyond equality and socio-economic duties, including:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act goals;
- Corporate objectives;
- Armed Forces duties; and
- Community safety considerations.

The Policy Team continues to provide support, advice and guidance to officers completing the Integrated Impact Assessment process.

Further work will review and align impact assessment arrangements with Torfaen Council as part of future planned developments.

Future Planned Developments

The following developments will support the continued improvement of scrutiny arrangements during 2026/27, with a focus on collaboration, accessibility, democratic engagement and effective committee support.

- Develop arrangements to support joint scrutiny committees with Torfaen Council;
- Establish live broadcasting arrangements for relevant democratic meetings;
- Progress the establishment of a new meeting room at the General Offices for Council and Committee meetings;
- Implement actions arising from the Annual Member Evaluation Questionnaire;
- Support the review and refinement of the Council's Participation and Engagement Strategy in relation to the democratic process, with a focus on increasing engagement and aligning this work with activity linked to the Deal.

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:

Head of Governance and Assurance (Head of Democratic Services)

Gemma Wasley

Email: Gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Scrutiny and Democratic Officer (Committee Adviser)

Elizabeth Thomas

Email: 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

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



Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

