



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

CODE OF GOVERNANCE

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY

BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Version 9

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LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest edition of the Council's Local Code of Governance.

The Local Code of Governance has been developed from a framework document and guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), but the content is very much the Council's own. The framework sets out seven core principles of good governance designed to guide local authorities in ensuring their governance arrangements ultimately facilitate the transparent, efficient and accountable use of resources for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The Council illustrates how it complies with these principles in its Code of Governance. The seven core principles of good governance laid down are as follows:-

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

These principles are not to be read in isolation as they are all interconnected and overlap or merge with each other.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council operates through a Governance Framework which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes. This document aims to codify this framework and enable the Council to transparently demonstrate how it operates against the best standards of Governance and judge and measure any necessary improvements.

The Leader and Members of the Council along with the Managing Director and Corporate Leadership Team have endorsed and commended this Local Code as a framework to conduct business to deliver improvements for the people of Blaenau Gwent.

The Council has delegated the monitoring of compliance with the Code and monitoring its effectiveness to its Audit Committee. Following a review of the Code of Governance and how well or otherwise it is working, the resultant report – its Annual Governance Statement will be considered by

the Audit Committee to test the level of assurance received concerning the application of the Code.

The Code will be reviewed annually, the results of which will be included in future Annual Governance Statements.

Local Authorities continue to be monitored by inspectors and regulators. Progress has been made against the recommendations of Regulators' reports which are helping to shape the Governance Framework of the Authority. Work has been undertaken to review the number of 'open' proposals for improvement throughout the Council. An update has been provided against all proposals in order to establish what has been completed and where further work is required. The work has enabled the streamlining of activity and more focused monitoring as part of the Joint Finance and Performance Report.

In September 2018 the WAO published their Annual Improvement Report for 2017-18. The conclusion of the report was, based on and limited to the work carried out, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009, during 2018-19. All relevant Audit Compliance Certificates have been received.

2.0 ELEMENTS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

To achieve the principles of good Corporate Governance, the Council supports and will apply the seven Core Principles, and their related supporting principles, as follows:-

2.1 Core Principle A

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

The Council recognises that the openness, integrity and accountability of individuals within an organisation form the cornerstone of effective corporate governance. The Council's credibility and reputation depends upon high standards of behaviour from its staff, Members and representatives and aims to have shared values across all these groups. The Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22 contains a set of shared values, namely:

- Proud and Ambitious;
- Trust and Integrity;
- Working Together;
- Raising Aspirations; and
- Fair and Equal.

Therefore, the Council aims to operate within a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct and expects its senior members and management to exercise leadership in promoting these principles.

The Council will achieve this by holding, communicating and keeping under review:-

- A Member Code of Conduct
- An Officer Code of Conduct
- Council Constitution
- Frameworks for Scrutiny and Executive
- Informal protocols re: Complaints – Members and Officers
- Registers of Interest for Members and Officers
- Procedural rules for Members and Officers to declare an interest in the business under consideration at all Committees and Council
- Each Committee has an advisory officer to promote the appropriate conduct of meetings
- Contract Procedure Rules
- An Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy including a fraud hotline
- Defined Competency Framework for staff
- A Whistleblowing Policy
- The operation of a Standards Committee including independent external membership with defined terms of reference
- A delegated responsibility for key officers regarding fraud, codes of conduct, standards and whistleblowing
- An Internal Audit Service and an Audit Committee as part of the Council's assurance framework
- The maintenance of an Annual Schedule of Member Remuneration, the holding of a register to record payments and annual publication in the local press
- Induction training for Officers and Members including standards of behaviour expected and ongoing Member Development Programme
- Member Competency Framework and Personal Development Reviews to inform the Member Development Strategy and Training Programme
- A formal opportunity for all Members at the beginning of a meeting to declare their interests

The Council has set out minimum standards of behaviour and has provided guidelines to help maintain and improve standards. These include a Dignity at Work Policy in addition to its Codes of Conduct and Whistleblowing Policy. In 2018/19 one complaint against Members was made to the ombudsman that was investigated and found not to be a breach. For 2017/18 twelve complaints of maladministration were made of which five did not proceed, three were closed after initial consideration, one was voluntarily settled and one was upheld.

The Council has adopted a Constitution which:

- Clearly defines those functions which will be reserved to the full

Council for decision, those decisions which will be taken by the Executive or its individual members, and those which are delegated to senior officers. The full Council sets the strategic direction through the adoption of major policies and the budget, the Executive takes major decisions within the overall policy and budget framework, helping to develop new policies. Officers take day to day decisions within the policy and budget framework.

- Sets out the responsibilities and procedures for decision making. Decisions which can be taken by the Executive and the other Committees and full Council are shown in sections 4-7 of the Constitution. In addition the Council's policies and protocols set out the processes that must be followed in decision making e.g. Organisation Development Policies, Licensing and Planning Applications, Appeals, tabling motions at Committees.
- Establishes through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees a robust overview and scrutiny role. These Committees between them have powers to review and scrutinise decisions relating to any of the Council's activities, including considering policy issues referred to them by the Council or the Executive.
- Sets out clearly the role of the Leader and Executive and in particular makes it clear that they are responsible for providing effective strategic leadership to ensure the Council successfully discharges its overall responsibilities for the activities of the organisation as a whole.
- Operates three Regulatory Committees – One Planning and two Licensing which have specific powers delegated to them by the Council.
- Makes clear the roles of all Councillors both in their formal decision making/policy development role and as local members.

The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

The Constitution contains comprehensive Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules in sections 16 and 17, governing the process to be adopted in conducting the Council's business.

The Constitution and other formal documents set out clear protocols and codes of conduct to ensure that the requirements and boundaries of decision making are clear to Members:

- Members' Code of Conduct
- Standards Procedures
- Code of Conduct on Planning Matters
- Roles and responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

- Local Member / Officer Protocol

In addition, there are a set of Employment Policies which clearly inform officers on expectations in the decision making process.

The Council actively recognises the limits of lawful activity placed upon them whilst also striving to utilise powers to the full benefit of their communities through:-

- Legal advice in the preparation of Council, Committee and Executive reports
- The availability of the legal advice at the meetings of the Council, the Executive and Statutory Committees
- Professional development and training (including multi-agency training for Adult and Children's Services' Social Care staff in particular)
- The Council's policies and protocols setting out the processes
- Impact Assessment processes

2.2 Core Principle B

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

The Council recognises its primary purpose in delivering services for the people of Blaenau Gwent and the specific need to engage with them and other stakeholders in planning services to be delivered and to be accountable to them for those services.

The Council aims to achieve this by:-

- Clear lines of communication with people and organisations to which the Council is accountable.
- Clear statements of the role of its members in their various offices.
- Clear statements of the roles and accountabilities of staff in their job descriptions.
- Terms of reference for the Council's committees and holding them open to the public.
- A clear statement of strategic priorities, activity and performance indicators as included within the Corporate Plan 2018/22. The Plan's priorities act as both Well-being and Improvement Objectives thus fulfilling the corporate duty under the Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) and Local Government (Wales) Measure.

- Operation of an effective complaints procedure.
- Staff consultation and engagement in decision making.
- Ensuring staff are clearly accessible to the public through meetings, telephone availability, email and where appropriate home visits.
- By ensuring partner arrangements and procurement arrangements are similarly clear about accountabilities.

The Public Service Board's Well-being Plan outlines the objectives for improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent and meeting the collective duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). It is the result of an extensive process of ongoing conversations and analysis of the evidence to build up a picture of what well-being looks like here and what we can do to improve it.

The Plan sets out five objectives which are considered have real power to bring about changes, that are the most urgent and that the evidence tells us need to combine forces of the Public Services Board partners to deliver and improve well-being. These are:

- Safe and friendly communities
- To look after and protect the environment
- To encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in places that they live, learn, work and play
- To forge new pathways to prosperity
- The best start in life for everyone

The Council's Customer Services Strategy sets out a commitment to deliver streamlined, user friendly and cost effective services. This includes:

- More choice and convenience in access to services
- More customer involvement in how services are planned, reviewed and evaluated;
- Expressions of dissatisfaction (complaints) being dealt with in a consistent way, and putting things right if they are not done well (redress). The complaints policy has been re-drafted in line with WG guidance and endorsed by Council.
- Development of more self service functions through a wide number of channels; and
- Making it easier for residents to find information about Council services using traditional and digital channels.

A Corporate Communications Strategy 2018/19 has been developed,

and approved by the Executive Committee in April 2018. The purpose of the report was to await the appointment of the new Chief Commercial Officer in order to develop a longer term strategy to support the Council's Strategic Direction. This officer is in post and will now undertake this task. The strategy aims to use proactive communications to engage with our residents, increase satisfaction levels, enhance our reputation and keep staff informed and motivated. It aims to build trust in the Council through effective communication.

The Council continues to develop the way in which it engages with the community. We have refreshed the Citizens Panel's membership and integrated it with other engagement activity. Engagement activities during 2018/19 include

- The Budget Challenge – A public engagement around the Council's draft budget proposals for 2019-20
- Side Waste Engagement – Engaging over 3,200 local people in 20 events, facilitating over 1,500 requests to improve recycling.
- Street Scene – Engaging over 850 local people and gathering feedback via over 500 questionnaires.
- Active Travel – Over 250 residents engaged and 70 representative organisations such as local community groups and businesses.
- Home to School Transport – Over 1,200 people taking part in the formal consultation process, including over 400 face-to-face interactions.

By adopting a set of customer care standards supported by a complaints procedure the Council aims to:-

- Have a robust community planning process with its Public Service Board (PSB) partners.
- Understand the priorities of the local area through engagement mechanisms, consultation on specific projects and other public engagement mechanisms (as detailed above).
- Publish an Annual Scrutiny Report incorporating progress against the year's work programme.
- Set out the priorities for the Council in the Corporate Plan, and provide a balanced view of performance against them on an annual basis.

The Council continues to develop its use of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

The Council will ensure its users have the opportunity to influence, and receive high quality of service and make the best use of resources to deliver excellent value for money.

2.3 Core Principle C

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

The purpose of the Public Services Boards (PSBs) is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area by strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory PSBs which replaced the voluntary Local Service Boards in each local authority area.

Each PSB must prepare and publish a plan setting out its objectives and the steps it will take to meet them. This is called a Local Well-being Plan. It must say:

- Why the PSB feels their objectives will contribute within their local area to achieving the well-being goals
- How it has had regard to the assessment of Local Well-being in setting the objectives and steps to take.

Each PSB will carry out an annual review of their plan showing their progress. When producing their assessments of local well-being and Local Well-being Plan, PSBs must consult widely.

The Statutory Members of each PSB are:

- The Local Authority
- The Local Health Authority
- The Local Health Board
- The Fire and Rescue Authority
- Natural Resources Wales

In addition to the statutory members each PSB will invite the following people to participate:

- Welsh Ministers
- Chief Constables
- The Police and Crime Commissioner
- Certain Probation Services
- At least one body representing relevant voluntary organisations

PSBs will also be able to invite other public service organisations to participate.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on each public body to carry out sustainable development. Sustainable Development is defined as a process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. This needs to be done by taking action in accordance with the sustainable development

principles so that the well-being goals are achieved.

The application of the five ways of working identified in the act is how public bodies are able to maximise their contribution to the National Well-being Goals.

In addition to the Codes of Conduct and protocols referred to under Core Principle A, the Council seeks to maintain high standards in the conduct of its business and avoid prejudice, bias and conflicts of interest. This is to be achieved through the development of a Strategic Equality Plan, a Welsh Language Promotion strategy, in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, and various engagement forums such as; Youth Forum, 50+ Forum and Access for All Forum.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act from here on in) came into operation on the 6th April 2011. The Act replaced the existing 116 different pieces of law relating to equality, and put them all together in one piece of legislation. The Act strengthens the law in important ways, and in some respects extends current law to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan (2016-2020), which came into effect from 1st April 2016, has four objectives to be delivered over a four year period. These objectives are:

1. Make equality vital in decision making and service provision.
2. Be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that is aware of, and understands the equality agenda.
3. Do our best to protect and support those people in our community that need it most.
4. Promoting understanding and acceptance of diversity within our communities.

The plan can be viewed on the Council's equality page at <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/equalities-welsh-language/equality-information-advice/>

2.4 Core Principle D

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Leadership is exercised by clearly communicating the Council's purpose and vision for Blaenau Gwent and its intended outcomes for its citizens and service users. The Council continues to take some difficult decisions such as looking at alternative forms of service delivery. The challenges for service redesign and delivery alongside significant financial constraints have necessitated an enhanced approach to the delivery of critical transformation work across all Council service areas.

The Council exerts a wider influence within the community and also delivers services through a mixture of procurement, in-house provision

and partnerships to help achieve these outcomes.

The Council's business planning is more robust and has enhanced its self-evaluation processes, by further developing the guidance documentation and forms. The business planning process has also become more streamlined with the incorporation of Performance Indicators, Risk, Business Continuity, EQIA, and proposals for improvement from auditors into one monitoring form on a central system. The self-evaluation process directly links to the business planning process. The plan for 2019/20 is to further enhance this monitoring system with the inclusion of the Environment Act and its statutory responsibilities.

The Council prepares an Annual Budget to resource its service priorities. A Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated at least annually with the most recent version, endorsed by Council in February 2019, and includes projections up to 2022 to aid improved service planning. The MTFS is next due for review in Spring 2019.

2.5 Core Principle E

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

The Council strives to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of its services through its improvement planning process and its Performance Management Framework, and has strengthened these arrangements to align them with risk management and project management as well as identifying levels of accountability.

The remit of the Wider Corporate Leadership Team (WCLT) has been reviewed. Its broad purpose is to effectively support the Corporate Leadership Team in its role in providing strategic direction to the organisation. The WCLT is also a forum that takes a distributed leadership approach to disseminate information and communication messages, network with colleagues and peers and provide personal development opportunities.

Ensuring that Members and Officers have the necessary skills to operate a multi-million pound business that provides a range of different services is one of the most important aspects of Governance. The training needs of Members is undertaken as part of the development of the Committee Forward Work Programmes as well as through the Member Competency Framework and Personal Development Reviews. The Council was awarded the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development (Level 1) in August 2018.

The Council will ensure those responsible for Governance of the Council will have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience they

need to perform well.

The Council will achieve this by:

- Continuing with its Member Training Programme and mandatory training programme.
- Member briefings on issues of importance to the Council.
- Induction training and professional advice for Members.
- Introduction of skills and experience requirements for special responsibility posts.
- Continuing to develop Information Communication Technology (ICT) support for Members to give a better understanding of modern administration and to improve communication.
- Operating a competence framework for Officers and Members.
- Mentoring programme for Elected Members.
- Arrangements for Members sitting on Outside Bodies to report their progress to Council.
- A Recruitment Charter ensuring the Council employ staff with necessary qualifications and experience to carry out the role expected of them.
- Performance coaching in place for all staff and departmental monitoring.
- The Head of Paid Service is responsible for ensuring that the Council's officer establishment is appropriately staffed to deliver the service priorities of the Council. In practice much of this responsibility is delegated to Directors, Chief Officers and Heads of Service.
- The Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services will determine the requirements to discharge their statutory roles.
- This aspect of Governance (resourcing the staff requirements of the Council) is expected to be particularly challenging over the medium term because of ongoing financial challenges. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) includes financial savings plans which have resulted in staff downsizing.
- The MTFS looks forward over the next three years (2019/20 to 2021/22) to assess the spending pressures the Council is likely to face and the level of savings that will need to be made.

- The Council benefits from its membership of the Welsh Local Government Association which provides support and assistance over a range of Council functions and responsibilities. Similar support is available to members of different professional bodies across the Council.
- The Council remains committed to promoting health and well-being to its employees through periodic staff surveys, a staff panel and staff engagement.
- The Council will expect similar values of staff development and empowerment of its partners and agents in service delivery.

The Council recognises the need to have effective political and management structures and processes to govern decision making and the exercise of authority within the organisation. It believes it is important that all those involved in planning and delivering a service understand each other's roles and responsibilities and how together they can deliver the best possible outcomes.

To help achieve this, the Council's constitution clearly lays out its service portfolios and the role of and responsibility of all Members, along with those decisions retained by Council.

It specifically lays out the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee and its Executive Members, Scrutiny Committees and their Chairs, Scrutiny Members and Regulatory Committee Chairs and Members.

It identifies the Leader and Deputy Leader as having a specific role in providing leadership and also in undertaking an ambassadorial role.

Membership of all political posts is determined each year at the Council's Annual General Meeting (including representational roles). The Democratic Services Committee keeps the roles and responsibilities under review. Additionally the Council provides induction training for all new Members along with professional advice and a training programme available for all Members' participation.

Minutes are kept for all formal Committee meetings recording decisions made.

Briefing sessions are provided to Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees in advance of Committee meetings and wider briefings are organised on specific issues.

Similarly on the Officer side, the Constitution lays out the Scheme of Delegation to Directors, Chief Officers and Senior Officers.

In particular four statutory appointments of Head of Paid Service (Managing Director), Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal and Corporate

Compliance) Section 151 Officer (Chief Officer - Resources) and Head of Democratic Services (Head of Governance and Partnerships) are included along with their specific roles and responsibilities. This helps ensure Members receive appropriate professional financial, legal and other advice.

Similarly the Council has the statutory roles of the Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Director of Social Services.

The Managing Director is responsible for all aspects of operational management and in practice operates this through a scheme of delegation.

The Chief Officer – Resources is responsible to the Council for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal control.

The Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring Officer) is responsible for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations and other relevant statements of good practice are complied with.

The Council has agreed a revised Corporate Leadership Structure from April 2018 which is intended to put in place the strategic capacity and capability needed within the Council to address future challenges, with clear role definition and job descriptions for all posts.

To help clarify their respective roles the Council follows a Member/Officer protocol which is included in the Constitution.

The Council ensures effective management arrangements are in place and operates a Corporate Leadership Team of Managing Director, Corporate Directors and Chief Officers, supported by a Wider Leadership Team of Heads of Service; together these ensure effective communication across all of the services of the Council.

2.6 Core Principle F

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

The Council will consider regularly its performance in achieving its key objectives through:-

- Development of Business Plans at all levels.
- The setting of performance targets against all measures both national and local.
- The understanding and analysis of comparative and trend data to develop targets.
- Development, at all service and directorate levels, of both

national and local data of priorities linked to the strategic outcomes.

- Keeping value for money under review.
- Reviews of service provision and priorities.
- Preparation of externally audited accounts.
- Annual approval of budgets and regular consideration of budget reports.
- An effective member scrutiny function for all services to include performance and finance as part of their terms of reference.
- Arrangements to deal with service failure.
- Monitoring of partnership arrangements.
- Testing customer satisfaction.
- Operating effective internal controls.
- Monitoring complaints.
- Ensuring competition in relevant service provision and proper contract management.
- Service and Directorate Risk Registers which will be effective and proactively used and reported.
- External audit scrutiny by WAO and other regulators, through their regulatory plan.
- Maintaining an effective Internal Audit Service and Audit Committee.

The Council has an Audit Committee which is politically balanced. It meets on a regular basis and is advised by the Council's Head of Internal Audit, and is normally attended by representatives of the Council's External Auditors. Members receive training on the special role of the Audit Committee.

Under the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011 the role and purpose of Audit Committee and its membership have been reviewed to ensure that it is set up to improve strategic planning and facilitate both scrutiny and challenge within the structures of the Council. The Audit Committee has the following functions:

- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations in relation to the Authority's financial affairs.
- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on the appropriateness of the Authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements.
- Oversee the Authority's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements.
- Oversee the Authority's audit arrangements and review its financial statements.

The Council has adopted a Risk Management Strategy with the ultimate aim of embedding a consistent and effective approach to Risk Management throughout the whole Council. The strategy is supported by a Risk Management Handbook (guidance)

The Risk Management Framework identifies the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers, guidance on how to describe risk, and guidance on how to evaluate and assess risk. The framework requires that risk registers be maintained at Service / Department / Project levels and that these will support and feed the Corporate Risk Register which holds the most significant risks faced by the Council.

Regulatory Committees will take decisions based upon detailed reports with any late information being referred to in the minutes. Overview and Scrutiny Committees when undertaking work requested by Council or the Executive, or when undertaking their own investigations, will agree reports containing the evidence which was considered to be material.

2.7 Core Principle G

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

The Council has an effective Internal Audit Service that works to an approved, risk assessed audit plan. The results of the audit work undertaken inform the annual opinion of the Head of Internal Audit with regard to level of assurance provided by the Council's internal control environment.

The Executive and Council reports will contain all the information, evidence and comments needed to take decisions. The decisions of the Committees are formally recorded in minutes and within the decision sheet for Executive Committee decisions.

The Corporate Report Template has been reviewed so that it captures the required information in order to support discussion and decision making.

The Monitoring Officer is available to give advice to Members and staff on conflicts of interest and determine the public interest on Council agendas.

The performance management function in Corporate Services, Education, Social Services and Waste Services was consolidated into one central team. This team works under the Head of Governance and Partnerships in the Corporate Services Directorate. The Council's Corporate Performance Management Framework includes the quarterly reporting of the Joint Performance and Finance Report to Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee. Reporting includes progress updates against strategic priorities, the Council's most significant risks, regulatory update, financial position and core performance indicators.

The Council recognises the importance of partnership working and takes a lead role in the development of governance arrangements of the key strategic partnerships. When working in partnership the Council aims to have clear governance arrangements in place providing clarity about legal status, roles and responsibilities of partners.

3.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Council has recognised that it needs to clearly evidence its governance arrangements.

This is the latest version of a formal Code of Governance for Blaenau Gwent and the Council is committed to keeping the Code under review and importantly to learn from its adoption to improve Governance arrangements “on the ground” for the benefit of the people of Blaenau Gwent.

The product of this review and other work will be included in the publication of the Annual Governance Statement.

It is intended that the review will provide an evidence base for the conclusions reached and importantly an action plan to be followed to ensure continuous improvement in the Council’s Governance arrangements.

The Annual Governance Statement is to be considered by the Council’s Audit Committee, to whom Council will delegate the role of seeking assurance of the effectiveness of the various arrangements described in this Code.

This will include a review of the evidence framework prepared to support the Governance Statement including the policy documents, standard operating procedures and guidance used along with consideration of their effectiveness.