Priorities for the year ahead and beyond

From Plans to Outcomes

The year ahead represents an important transition point for Blaenau Gwent. We must continue to deliver high-quality day-to-day services and the commitments set out within our Corporate Plan, whilst also accelerating the changes needed to respond to rising demand, increasing inequality and continuing financial pressures.

Our direction of travel is clear. The Corporate Plan, our Marmot ambitions, the Blaenau Gwent Deal, our five Missions and the developing federation with Torfaen are not separate programmes. Together, they form a single approach to improving outcomes, reducing inequalities and strengthening communities. At their heart is a simple belief: lasting change happens when public services, communities, businesses and partners work together around the outcomes that matter most.

The challenge for 2026/27 is therefore not to create more strategies. The challenge is to ensure that our ambitions increasingly influence the decisions we take, the resources we invest and the way we work, so that residents see a tangible difference in their daily lives.

Delivering Our Priorities for 2026/27

The Corporate Plan sets out our key priorities for the year ahead and, for the first time, more directly embeds the principles of the Blaenau Gwent Deal.

- **Learning and Opportunity –** Improving outcomes for children and young people, with a particular emphasis on educational attainment, school attendance and financial recovery; supporting vulnerable learners; maintain youth, skills and employability pathways; and move regeneration, property and business-space plans into delivery
- **Reducing Inequality** - Strengthening prevention and early help, ensuring people receive support at the earliest opportunity and can remain independent for longer.
- **Building stronger, more resilient communities** - Increasing participation, volunteering and community leadership.
- **Supporting a thriving local economy and vibrant places** - Regeneration, investment, skills development and business growth.
- **Delivering our climate and nature commitments** - Improving recycling performance and supporting the transition to a greener, more sustainable future.
- **Improving access to Council services** - Combining high-quality digital services with accessible face-to-face and community-based support.
- **Maintaining strong governance, financial resilience and effective stewardship of public resources**.

These priorities reflect both the opportunities and the challenges identified through our annual self-assessment. They will remain the focus of our performance arrangements throughout the year ahead.

Making Prevention Everyone's Business

Prevention remains central to our long-term approach.

Too often, public services are required to respond when problems have already become complex and costly. Our ambition is to increasingly shift effort, resources and decision-making towards earlier intervention and prevention, helping people live healthier, more independent and fulfilling lives.

This means understanding and influencing the factors that shape people's life chances, including education, employment, housing, health, community connections and environmental conditions. It requires us to look beyond symptoms and address underlying causes.

During 2026/27 we will continue to strengthen the connection between prevention, service planning, commissioning, budgeting and performance management. We will increasingly ask whether our decisions are reducing future demand, tackling inequality and improving long-term outcomes.

This will not always be easy. Financial pressures and rising demand create understandable pressure to focus on immediate needs. However, if we are to create sustainable public services and improve outcomes over time, prevention must remain at the heart of how we think, plan and act.

Working With Communities, Not Simply Delivering to Them

The Blaenau Gwent Deal represents a long-term shift in the relationship between the Council, residents, community organisations, businesses and partners.
It recognises that communities are not simply recipients of services. They possess experience, knowledge, relationships, leadership and assets that are essential to improving outcomes and creating stronger places.

Over the next year we will continue to move beyond consultation and towards genuine collaboration and shared responsibility. This means supporting community leadership, expanding volunteering opportunities, strengthening local partnerships and involving residents earlier in shaping decisions, services and investment. Success will not simply be measured by how many people we engage with. Success will be measured by whether communities have a greater influence over decisions, whether local capacity is strengthened and whether collective action is helping to improve local outcomes.

Strengthening the Federation

Our partnership with Torfaen continues to develop and mature.

The federated model represents an innovative response to many of the challenges facing local government, including financial pressures, workforce shortages, increasing service demand and the need for greater organisational resilience.

During 2026/27 we will continue to strengthen shared leadership arrangements, align systems and processes where appropriate, and explore opportunities for closer collaboration where this delivers clear benefits for residents.

The purpose of the federation is not structural change for its own sake. Rather, it is to create the capacity, capability and resilience needed to address complex challenges, accelerate learning, reduce duplication and invest more energy in prevention and long-term improvement.

As the federation evolves, we will remain focused on ensuring that local democratic accountability and local identity continue to be protected and strengthened.

Building the Organisation We Need

Achieving our ambitions depends on our people.

Throughout 2026/27 we will continue investing in leadership development, workforce capability, digital skills, organisational learning and innovation. We will also complete work with Torfaen to establish a shared set of Values and Behaviours that reflect the culture we want to build across the federation.
These values will focus on:

- Working with people.
- Working openly.
- Working together to deliver.

Our ambition is not simply to describe the culture we want. It is to ensure that our behaviours are visible in the way we lead, collaborate, make decisions and serve our communities every day.

Alongside this, we will continue to invest in digital technologies, data and artificial intelligence where they can improve services, strengthen decision-making, increase productivity and release capacity for frontline delivery.

At all times, our use of technology will remain focused on improving outcomes for people, whilst ensuring services remain accessible and inclusive for all residents.

Measuring What Matters

As our approach develops, we must increasingly focus on the outcomes we achieve rather than the activity we undertake. Success will not be measured by the number of strategies, programmes or initiatives we introduce. It will be measured by whether people's lives improve.

Over the coming years we want to see evidence that we are:

- Reducing inequalities.
- Improving healthy life expectancy.
- Strengthening communities.
- Increasing participation and community leadership.
- Improving educational outcomes.
- Supporting more people into good employment.
- Reducing avoidable demand on public services.
- Increasing investment in prevention.

Through our Marmot approach, working with the Torfaen Health Determinants Research Collaboration and wider evidence framework, we will continue to strengthen our understanding of what works, where outcomes are improving and where further action is needed.

We will also place greater emphasis on learning, ensuring that evidence, insight and experience are used to continually refine and improve our approach.

Beyond 2026/27

The current Corporate Plan runs until 2027. Following the local government elections in May 2027, a new Council will establish its priorities for the next planning period.

Whilst future administrations will rightly determine their own priorities, the long-term challenges facing our communities are unlikely to change significantly. Inequality, demographic change, financial pressures, health outcomes, economic resilience, environmental sustainability and community wellbeing will continue to shape the decisions of public services for many years to come.

Our responsibility is therefore not simply to deliver the current plan. It is to leave behind stronger foundations for the future.

We want the next Council to inherit an organisation that is financially resilient, evidence-led, community-focused and capable of responding effectively to the challenges ahead. We want to leave behind stronger communities, stronger partnerships and a stronger operating model for public service delivery.

Ultimately, our ambition remains simple: to create healthier, fairer and more resilient communities where people can thrive.

The year ahead is another important step on that journey. The task now is not simply to describe the future we want to see, but to continue building it together through the decisions we make, the relationships we develop and the outcomes we deliver.

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