



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
County Borough Council



# **Blaenau Gwent Assessment of Performance 2019/20**

## Foreword

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys Blaenau Gwent provides a unique and vibrant environment to live, work and play. With a heritage that is firmly based on an industrial past, we are a place that is changing to respond to new economic opportunities. The Tech Valleys Vision, Valleys Regional Park and Cardiff Capital Regional Deal combined with new transport links including the soon to be completed Heads of the Valley Road and rail routes to Cardiff bring a bright future. Together with the amazing location and surrounding parkland our people and communities make Blaenau Gwent great. Our people have influenced on the local, national and international stage in art, sport and politics for many generations – putting Blaenau Gwent on the map for all the right reasons.

The role of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners is to maximise on the assets we have, doing more with less and doing it better. It is right that we recognise the challenges we face. The decline of heavy industry continues to impact on employment prospects and intergenerational opportunities. We face issues with health and wealth inequality, the rise of online shopping and the impact on our town centres and social issues affecting our families and young people.

As a Council we face increasing demand for some of our services with reductions to our budgets. But we are tackling these issues head on with our partners, businesses and the local community. We are looking at how we spend our money to achieve the best outcomes for our residents, we are supporting new and existing businesses, we are looking at our assets to achieve new income streams and we are removing barriers to enable residents to access what they need. All in all we are looking forward to a positive future.

## Blaenau Gwent Vision -

Proud Heritage

Strong Communities

Brighter Future



## **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council and Michelle Morris, Managing Director Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, A Year in Summary 2019/20**

This Assessment of Performance 2019/20 provides a self-reflection of the past year implementing the Council's Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives as well as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. We have started to adapt practices and case studies and examples have been provided throughout the document to showcase the positive work that we are starting to undertake as a Council.

The Council is embracing the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (known as the 'Act') and is starting to adapt the way that it works. As part of this, we are working collectively to adapt the culture of the organisation and embed the ethos of the Act into all that we do. It is recognised however that we are still in the early years of implementing the Act and there is still more to do over the coming years.

The Corporate Plan is a very important strategic document for the Council which clearly sets out our priorities for the next four years and how we will target our limited resources in order to support these objectives. The political leadership are keen that the priorities in the plan align with what local people have told us is important to them during public engagement events, in particular that they want strong and clean communities and they want to see our economy grow for the wellbeing of our future generations. Education and Social Services continue to be priorities as we work to improve standards in our schools so that all children and young people reach their full potential and we continue to look after the most vulnerable people in our communities against increasing demand for these services.

**Notable service activity from the year 2019/20 is identified throughout this document.**

### **COVID – 19 The Council's Response**

In March 2020, a decision was made by the UK Government to put the UK into lockdown in order to try and curb the spread of the global pandemic COVID 19. As part of this, the Council had to act quickly and had to consider alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the most vulnerable in society were supported. As part of this review, a brief will be provided on the notable activity undertaken throughout this period. This can be found on page 43.

## Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present the performance of the Council at the end of the reporting period 2019/20. This sets out the key activities and measures used to monitor our performance of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22.

In 2018, the Council prioritised five areas for focus over the period 2018/22:

- Social Services;
- Education;
- Environmentally Smart Communities;
- Economic Development and Regeneration; and
- Efficient Council.

In order to meet the statutory legislative requirements the Council has implemented the following:

- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** the report uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Well-being Objectives.
- **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009:** the report also uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Improvement Objectives.

All of these areas have supporting actions and measures which are monitored as part of the Council's business planning process. The Corporate Plan 2018/22 has been strategically aligned to the Public Service Boards Well-being Plan and also identifies how each area supports the progression of the Well-being Goals.

## Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is ground-breaking legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.

The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The sustainable development principle is made up of the five ways of working.



### **Working with the Public Service Board to improve the well-being of Future Generations**

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was established in April 2016 as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. It is a partnership of key public bodies that, by working together, have a huge responsibility to create a place we want to live in now and in the future. As a PSB we agreed our Well-being Plan in April 2018 and it was published on Friday 4 May 2018, in-line with statutory guidance.

Our plan was the result of a comprehensive programme of involvement and collaborative work to develop a coherent plan for delivering well-being. It prioritises five key well-being objectives to take forward, in order to bring about positive changes for local people and communities.

Further information on the development of the plan can be found in the plan itself and its supporting documents which are available on our website by following the link: <http://www.blaenaugwentpsb.org.uk/well-being-plan.aspx>

The PSB is working towards five well-being objectives as outlined in their Well-being Plan 2018/23:

- The best start in life for everyone
- Safe and friendly communities
- Look after and protect the natural environment
- Forge new pathways to prosperity
- Encourage healthy lifestyles

The PSB has developed a Strategic Work Programme which was signed off in January 2020. This Work Programme has identified five High Level Actions to be taken forward:

- First 1,000 days and Early Years Pathfinder;
- Building a healthier Gwent / Integrated Well-being Networks;
- Climate Change;
- Blaenau Gwent Sustainable Food Programme; and
- Foundational Economy.

Each of the high level actions has an identified PSB Sponsor.

## Social Services

### Why this is important

We want to encourage and support people to make healthy lifestyle choices to enable children, young people and families to thrive. Research has proven people demonstrating positive health behaviours from birth through their life will lead to greater independence, and people being free from complicated health conditions later in life and reducing costs to public services. This in turn could reduce demand on services and ensure the services that are provided are high quality, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. We must focus on those actions that will have the greatest impact. Safeguarding the most vulnerable adults and children in our communities continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do.

As a whole the aim of this Objective will be to support vulnerable people of all ages to maximise, maintain and sustain their independence.

### Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Social Services priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives. The Social Services function remains high on the Council agenda. The Council is looking to address the areas that will have a long term benefit, ensuring that the needs of people of all ages and future generations are at the centre of service design and delivery. Some key areas of activity include:

- An internal case audit was devised in 2019 and the theme was 'The Voice of the Child'. A total of 18 cases were randomly chosen and each case audit was completed by either a Team Manager and/or Senior Practitioner, and Independent Reviewing Officer.
- The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy has started to evidence how it is preventing problems faced by children and families escalating to a point which requires children becoming looked after or their names going onto the child protection register. Good evidence of this is the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team and a full evaluation, which involved consultation with children and families, showed evidence that the team is making a real difference to the children and families of Blaenau Gwent.
- The Safeguarding / Children Looked After (CLA) education team are developing a framework for CLA child friendly schools, which will include a good practice guide and self-evaluation tool for schools. A task and finish group has been established during which it was agreed the child's voice should help inform these documents.
- A Step Down procedure has been communicated with all staff and is working well, enabling staff from Children's Social Care, Early Help Services and a range of other partners to support child/family intervention and plan as they move from requiring statutory, safeguarding and specialist support to targeted and universal services and interventions.
- The Family Group Conference Service is now fully established. We have a clear procedure in place and are targeting families earlier at the point of Child Protection Registration in order to get the extended family on board and involved in the children's plans as early as possible.
- New All Wales Safeguarding Guidance and procedures for both children and adults have been launched and the app is available for practitioners.
- Integrated Care Fund (ICF) grant money has been allocated to support children at risk of becoming looked after, in care or, who are adopted. This includes a regional approach to a Family Group Conference service; Development of a Special Guardianship Team;

Enhancement of the Supporting Change Team to build on the work already being done to prevent children entering the care system; and Delivery of a Young Person's Mediation Service aimed at ages 14 years and above.

- The Infant Mental Health Pathway has been created which allows access to vulnerable families across Blaenau Gwent.
- All Legal time requirements are being met and the legal support and advice for vulnerable children and adults are being delivered in a professional and timely manner.
- As part of the Early Years Transformation Programme pilot a consultation has been undertaken with both families and professionals to consider the existing model and to understand what matters to them.
- The Childcare Offer is now fully rolled out and exploration of why some parents did not access the offer has commenced.
- Supporting families with high quality, flexible and affordable childcare continues, supporting economic regeneration, reducing pressures on family income and helping parents to participate in work reducing a family's risk of poverty. It also supports the well-being of children through positive and rich childhood experiences.
- A child sufficiency assessment has been carried out at which time we consulted with parents on period poverty.
- The Adoption Service has produced a Life Journey handbook/guide for Social Workers to ensure timely and good quality information is included to support the child.
- The Food and Fun Programme was delivered in participating schools this summer, led by school staff with support from the council for catering and cleaning. The school-based programme provided healthy meals, food and nutrition education and physical activity to children in a fun social environment. Around 160 pupils and families took part with the ethos being centred around activities based around fitness, healthy eating and appreciating the environment.
- As part of the Community Facility Grant integrated youth club provision has been in place, engaging young people in activities that improve their life skills, promote positive citizenship, promotes positive benefits of healthy eating and equip them appropriately with regards to socialisation / broadening horizons.
- Welsh Government Youth Grant will provide an additional £160,000 for mental well-being and homelessness support.
  
- The numbers of referrals managed by the Adults Services IAA Team continues to increase as the intake model approach continues to be embedded.
- The work of Compassionate Communities and the Integrated Well-being Network continues to evolve linking Placed Based Care, Prevention and well-being Principles together.
- The IAA outreach pilots at both Nevill Hall Hospital and Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan continues to work well, contributing to the very low numbers of delayed transfers of care being experienced by Blaenau Gwent residents.
- A preventative approach to the screening of referrals to both health and social care systems has been developed via a new Safeguarding Screening pilot project in the IAA team
- The General Practitioner (GP) Engagement Service continues to support all GP surgeries. The service reached the finals of the South Wales Argus Health and Care awards and, although they did not win, it is recognition of the excellent work being undertaken.
- The Floating Support Service offers housing-related support to people who are at risk of homelessness, where and when they need it.
  
- Partnership work continues with the Police under the Early Action Together programme and early indications are that this is having a positive impact on the timeliness of undertaking the Child Protection process and in ensuring that information is collated and considered in all decision making.

- We continue to work with colleagues across Health, Social care and Third sector to promote the importance of personal well-being and independence.
- The SPACE Well-being programme is working co productively with partners such as Health, Education, Police, Probation, Youth Offending Service and 3rd sector providers to ensure that the mental health needs of children and young people are assessed early with the right agency taking the lead on providing the most appropriate interventions.
- We have developed a (5 LA's) hospital discharge service (Home First) to be funded by the health board and are looking to further expand this to other parts of the Health and Social care system.
- Through co-productive working across the five Gwent local authorities and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, a regional adult advocacy commissioning strategy has been published and a new advocacy helpline has been launched. The commissioning strategy, titled 'Our Vision and Intentions for Adult Advocacy' sets out a clear direction of travel for the development of advocacy services in the region over the next five years.

### **Sustainable Development**

<b>Long Term</b>	<i>The Children Looked After reduction strategy is 2 years into its 3-year lifespan. An independent evaluation is underway which will serve to shape a new 10 year children looked after reduction strategy from 2020.</i>
<b>Prevention</b>	The IAA Team and Community Resource Team continue to work together to provide an enhanced 'Front Door' for Blaenau Gwent citizens, utilising an intake approach to preventative services.
<b>Integration</b>	The Education Directorate and Social Services are key partners in the Gwent Early Action Together Programme and continue to work collectively to strengthen safeguarding arrangements which has included the embedding of the Operation Encompass initiative which provides an early alert to schools before the start of the school day of any child that is subject to, or witness to, police-attended incidents of domestic abuse.
<b>Collaboration</b>	The 'hosting' arrangements that have been developed along with Torfaen CBC in respect of the childcare offer show true collaborative working. Blaenau Gwent Early Years Childcare and Play Team have also assisted Newport, Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff in the setup of their Childcare Offer Projects.
<b>Involvement</b>	The Blaenau Gwent Corporate Parenting Board is made up of elected members, Local Authority officers and representation from partner agencies to ensure that the best possible advice, care and safeguarding of our children is ensured across the 7 areas. Attendance and contributions of all members of the board is monitored to ensure involvement.

### **Performance Indicators**

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)



Performance Indicator	National / Local	2018/19 Outturn	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - Children	Local (available)	43%	25.4%	44.6%	7.7%	15%	↑
Percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support - adults	Local (available)	64.3%	30.3%	9.5%	4.6%	7.7%	↑
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (adults)	Local (available)	7.1%	13.0%	16.2%	12.8%	23.8%	↑
Proportion of adult services cases supported by preventative services	Local (available)	29.6%	32.2%	33.9%	34.1%	33.9%	↓
Percentage of referrals signposted to preventative services (children)	Local (available)	Tbc	12.8%	13.7%	25%	16.8%	↓
Proportion of children's services cases supported by preventative services	Local (available)	57%	61.0%	54.9%	56.5%	54.6%	↓
Rate of Delayed Transfers of Care	National	1.16	0.33	0.33	0.16	0.16	↔
Number of Looked After Children	Local (available)	222	220	225	213	208	↑
Percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales	National	93.3%	100%	97.9%	97.3%	96.6%	↓
Number on Child Protection Register	Local (available)	56	70	61	71	61	↑

## Social Services

### Case Study - Supporting Change Team

Social services have been involved extensively with Mum, Dad and their children over the past 15 years. Concerns have historically been in respect of domestic abuse, use of physical chastisement, substance and alcohol misuse and poor home conditions. During this time period the parents separated and the eldest children lived with their father. Mum retained care of the younger children.

The youngest children were placed on the Child Protection Register. Mum initially engaged with her GP and a substance misuse agency. Some improvements were noticed, however, this was short lived and referrals continued to be made regarding substance and alcohol misuse and reports that mum was verbally abusing the children. Mum started to disengage with professionals. The family was discussed at a legal threshold meeting and the Public Law Outline process was implemented. A referral was made to the Supporting Change Team owing to a lack of progress within the Child Protection Plan.

Intensive support was provided to Mum over a five-month period. This work focussed on identifying her children's needs, their attachment to mum and her

responses to them; Mum's mental health and the impact bereavement had upon her capacity to parent her children effectively and with warmth; the impact of substance and alcohol misuse on mum's mental and physical health; and the impact on her children. Some work was also completed with the family as a whole in order to support the family to identify their strengths and involve the children in planning how rules, rewards and consequences were going to be used by them all. This was very effective as the family decided these for themselves and adhered to them.

Mum engaged well with the Supporting Change Team and demonstrated good insight into the impact grief and loss had on her and the way she parented. She acknowledged that she had become distant from the children as she tried to cope with her grief.

Mum recognised that she needed additional support to help her manage her dependency issues and self-referred to support agencies. Mum is substance free and her alcohol use has significantly reduced. There is a safety plan in place that supports the children and Mum, should she feel relapse is likely. Mum also fully engaged with health and education

professionals who acknowledged that the children had, and continue to make significant progress in school. Mum is also fully engaging with health services in respect of the children's health needs.

Mum recognises that she needs support to manage anxiety and depression and continues to engage with relevant services. The children present as happy and the children's names were removed from the Child Protection Register and the Local Authority are no longer seeking legal advice.

The exit strategy was carefully coordinated and intervention was slowly reduced as mum became more confident.

An 'open door policy' was discussed with Mum before closure, encouraging her to contact the Supporting Change Team for advice should she feel that things are taking a backwards step. Mum felt more at ease knowing that she could get in touch if things became difficult again in the future.



### Case Study - Direct Payment, 48 hours per week

Mrs X is a 55 year old woman who has been diagnosed with early onset dementia and epilepsy. Mrs X lives with her husband, grown up daughter, four dogs and a cat. Mrs X's cognitive ability is impaired which results in her having difficulties undertaking daily tasks such as dressing, personal care, taking medication correctly and going out alone. Mrs X finds it difficult to accept support from her daughter as she feels that she should care for her daughter, not the other way around. Mrs X relies on her husband to support her and becomes very anxious when Mr X is not at home. Mrs X's condition is progressively getting worse and it is no longer safe for her to be left alone.

What matters to Mrs X is that she remains in her own home, with her family and pets around her. She wants support to remain independent and to carry out the tasks she used to do before being diagnosed, she likes going out shopping and walking, and she takes pride in her appearance which is important to her.



What matters to Mr X is that Mrs X is happy, safe and can stay at home for as long as possible and that his wife is supported so that he is able to continue to work full time. When Mr X is not in work he is his wife's main carer.

Mr and Mrs X decided that a direct payment was the best option for them in order to meet Mrs X's care and support needs and is flexible so that it meets Mr X's working pattern. They have employed 3 personal assistants who get together with Mr X on a weekly basis to agree a rota which fits into Mr X's shift pattern and to decide how best to support Mrs X during that week.

Mrs X is happy that she is able to meet her outcomes and she remains as independent as possible in her own home.

Mr X is happy that his wife is supported, she's safe and remains with him and their daughter, dogs and cat in the family home and he is able to remain in work which also gives him a break from his caring role.



## Education

### Why this is important

Improving the quality and provision of Education is vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all our learners. We will continue to invest in our education services in order to support economic development, regeneration and provide opportunities to improve the life chances for our children and young people.

### Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20, there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Education's priorities, but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement our objectives. Education remains high on the Council's agenda. The Council is looking to support the well-being agenda of pupils and school based staff, particularly to raise educational standards. Some key areas of activity include:

- Overall education outcomes for 2018/19 academic year were:
  - GCSE L2 English and Capped 9 improved;
  - GCSE A\*/A grades improved in English and Maths;
  - Post 16 A-level A\*-C and A\*-E grades were greater than all-Wales means;
  - Value-added progress in English and Maths, reading and numeracy for our 7 and 11 year olds have improved;
  - Primary persistent absenteeism reduced to below that of the all-Wales means; and
  - Permanent exclusions reduced.
- Education outcomes for children looked after are continually reviewed and the following outcomes were determined at the end of 2018/19 academic year:
  - 153 children of statutory school age were looked after by Blaenau Gwent Local Authority;
  - Key stage 2 results were considerably higher when compared with the previous year but lower at the end of key stage 3;
  - A total of 16 children looked after completed their statutory studies with 9 achieving recognised qualifications; and
  - There has been a decrease in the incidents of exclusions, however, an increase in the number of days lost to exclusions.
- Much improved school inspection and significant improvement in school categorisation profile with the majority of primary schools now categorised as either yellow or green with a greater proportion categorised as green than in 2017/18. During the past three years, the proportion of schools in the green category has remained stable.
- It is evident from the range of work being undertaken that schools in Blaenau Gwent are increasingly working in a school-led, school-to-school way. They are planning their time effectively, planning the activities well so that outcomes feed directly into improved practice.
- School categorisation has improved year on year over the last 3 years, school inspections are generally positive.
- Specific plans to address persistent absenteeism and Elective Home Educated learners have been effective although plans will run into the next academic year to ensure a focus remains on these areas.
- The 2019/20 Safeguarding in Education policy has also been reviewed.
- Collaborative work continues in respect of the Children Looked After Friendly Schools initiative. The protocol has been developed in draft and will be piloted in one cluster group, where feedback will then be obtained and the protocol revised accordingly.
- We continue to support effective parental engagement activities to promote bilingualism and assess demand. Current focus is on website review and development and 'Benefits of Being Bi-lingual' booklets have been produced.



- Lead and regional ALNCO approach is proving effective in the County Borough, ensuring an ownership of the agenda by schools as well as the Local Authority supporting them to develop their practices, particularly in preparation for the ALN reform.
- Welsh Government has decided that in order to ensure the ALN reforms achieve what they were established to achieve, it is necessary to delay implementation by one year. Therefore, implementation will be from September 2021 with the changes taking three years. This delay will not impact on the regional approach in place in SEWC.
- Views have been sought through consultation with parents and stakeholders on existing sensory and communication services. The feedback will support a review exploring a more sustainable way to deliver the regional model.
- The process for the appointment of LA Governors is now well established and there is evidence of improved governance in a majority of schools.
- The Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy 2020/21 has been published and Brynmawr Foundation School Governing Body has taken the decision to adopt the Council's policy as from September 2020, with the Council taking responsibility for transport in line with the specified distance criteria with immediate effect.
- The Youth Service continues to improve and perform well as demonstrated by a National Youth Work Award.
- All targets have been met in respect of the Inspire projects which support young people to establish and maintain a placement in further learning, training or employment. This support includes 1:1 support sessions, structured group activities and open access clubs/groups. Confirmation has now been received that this funding has been extended to 2023.
- The number of young people not in education, employment or Training (NEETs) has stabilised at 1.69%.
- The Information, Communications, Technology (ICT) Infrastructure project is now well in to the implementation stages. This investment will be complemented through a £2m investment via the WG Hwb initiative for schools.
- Blaenau Gwent's EdTech proposal for 2019-20 was approved by Welsh Government and will realise circa £900,000 funding in the first year of the project.
- The investment into the school estate continues to be a Council priority. The £20.25m 21st Century Schools Band A programme is now fully delivered. The 21st Century Schools Band B programme will result in an additional investment of circa £25m with priorities determined and planning arrangements secure. 21st Century Schools programme management arrangements were independently recognised as being 'impressive' in the Welsh Government facilitated Gateway Review findings.
- Following a successful partnership delivery approach between Education and Community Services the new Six Bells Primary Campus, part of the Abertillery Learning Community, opened its doors on time and within budget.
- The Managing School Places and the School Estate report demonstrates improving performance with the adoption of the admissions policy, reducing surplus places and improved suitability/condition data.
- 100% of maintenance and repair requests for Educational buildings were acknowledged and assessed within the required time frames and 100% of school projects were completed within the programmed timeframe.
- All Education Transformation Projects involve the Council's Environment Department with the aim of enhancing the ecological environment, achieving BREEAM excellence on new build projects, carbon reduction and energy efficiency targets. We continue to work towards the finalisation of the school's engagement strategy ensuring alignment to the environment agenda.
- A Welsh Government business case bid will be submitted in the spring term for a 360 place new build which will replace the existing Glyncoed Primary School building by 2022-23.
- The Council's total gross budgeted expenditure per pupil for 2019/20 was £6,372 per pupil, which is the 4th highest in Wales and £515 above the Welsh average of £5,857.

- For 2019/20 the funding delegated to schools was 85.7% which is above the all Wales average and ranked 1st when compared to the family of schools, (Local Authority Budgeted Expenditure on Schools 2019/20).

### Sustainable Development

<b>Long Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for European Social Fund programmes, Inspire 2 Achieve and Inspire 2 Work has been approved until 2023 giving some stability to the provision and support available for young people. The support provided is expected to better prepare young people for their future and beyond the lifetime of the programmes, preventing young people from becoming NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training).</li> <li>• The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation and the Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Transformation projects are focusing on re-designing the ALN and CAMHS landscape to make them fit for purpose going forward. The ALN programme is considered by Welsh Government as a once in a generation change and therefore has a significant profile nationally as well as regionally and locally. Involving multiple services working with schools and the region to ensure the projects keep a clear pupil focus and results in appropriate change for schools and pupils.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are to be given earlier in-school mental health support as part of an innovative programme aimed at preventing more serious problems from occurring later in life. The In-reach to Schools Programme has dedicated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) practitioners who are working closely with schools to develop a whole school approach to management of mental health.</li> <li>• The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Service has been re-designed to ensure that going forward the service has a preventative focus, with earlier intervention. A Service Level Agreement is now in place to support the building of ALN capacity in mainstream schools, tapping into the expertise of the special schools, and working to build capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.</li> </ul>
<b>Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of designated Environmental Champions within the local authority who work together to deliver the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan (2019-2022). The Education representative continues to support directorate, schools and office based staff. This has included engagement with initiatives, sharing school-based practice and identifying issues and ideas in order to support future engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Corporate Parenting plan has a clear Education focus and is driving better connectivity with the Education Achievement Service in terms of information sharing as well as with schools in terms of their day to day management of Children Looked After pupils. Close working is in place with Social Services Children's Services officers.</li> <li>• Good knowledge of schools, partnership and close working between the EAS and Directorate/Council services.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Inclusion Service continues to contribute to the Welsh Government Anti-Bullying Guidance, Elected Home Education Guidance, and Additional Learning Needs Code of Practice (which is including working with parents) as well as the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) agenda for Inclusion and School Improvement.</li> </ul>

## Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

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Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline (last academic year)	Annual (2019/20)
Pupil outcomes and progress for our 7, 11, 14 and 16 year old pupils in English and Maths, particularly our more able and our most vulnerable learners	National	Key Stage (KS)4 Level 1 92.8% Level 2 59.2% Level 2+ 41.1%	We have had no aggregated figures for this year in relation to KS4, which includes the Capped Points figures, and the suggestion is that WG will not be publishing them for this academic year.
School inspection and school categorisation Judgements (Proportion of schools in Yellow and Green)	Local (available)	70%	Annual - 84%
The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent (<80%) - Secondary	National	4.1%	Attendance figures are not being collected this year
The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent (<80%) - Primary	National	1.6%	
Percentage of pupil attendance in primary schools	National	94.5	
Percentage of pupil attendance in secondary schools	National	92.9	
Average Capped 9 score for pupils in Year 11	National	-	334.1
Percentage of Year 11 leavers known not be in education, training or employment (NEET)	National	-	Annual Figure 1.69%

### Education

#### Case Study

##### St. Mary's RC Primary School, Brynmawr

At St Mary's we believe that working and learning together with the support from our families, parish and the wider community enhances the learning and well-being of our pupils.

Our shared vision has been developed through successful collaboration and communication with our school community. Our aim is to embed the four purposes whilst nurturing our pupils to be happy, healthy and safe at St Mary's.

We aim to develop empathy and sensitivity within our pupils so that they grow to be proud of themselves. Our families and community partners have contributed to workshops which have supported our more vulnerable in the school community. The musical theatre workshops helped develop literacy skills, pupil confidence and independence.

The workshops were led by Peter Karrie who starred in the West End as the 'Phantom of the Opera' and they

reflected his passion of the musicals. Throughout the workshops the pupils developed performance skills as well as an understanding of empathy through drama.

The progression of the workshops successfully established parent, school, parish and community partnerships as the project concluded with a whole school concert at St Mary's Parish church.

Our Key stage 2 learners have developed relationships with community members living in local care homes. Groups of children have termly visits there to perform for the staff and residents.

The school has established a positive partnership with the Metropole Theatre which is a part of Aneurin Leisure Trust. An organisation with a shared vision to improve community life through Leisure, Learning and culture.

The pupils plan, develop and implement their own concerts and musicals which

are then performed for the wider community at the Metropole Theatre in Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent. The pupils assume a variety of roles during the production and the knowledge and skills developed are incalculable.





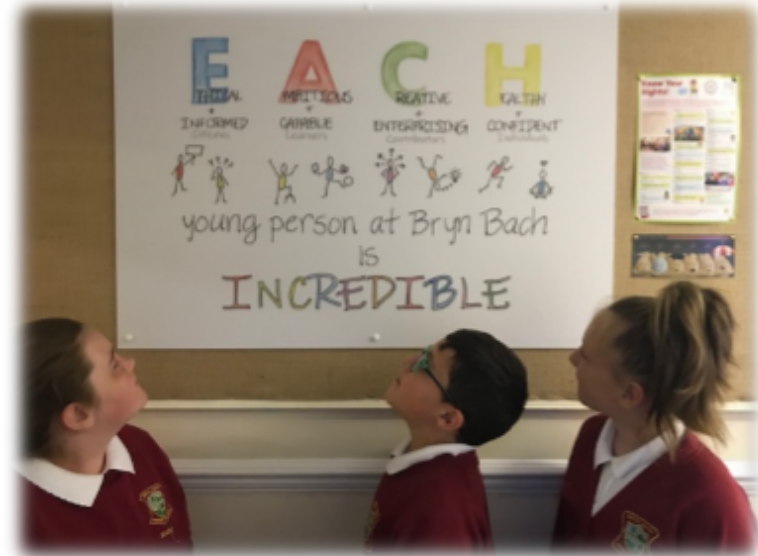
## Case Study - Bryn Bach Primary School

At Bryn Bach Primary we believe that everything we do as a school community should align with our school vision. Our vision is to empower all members of our school and wider community to be the best they can be, a vision that is underpinned by our 3 core values – kindness, happiness and hard work, and our school motto 'We come to school to be incredible!'.

Over the summer term our young people, staff, families and community partners worked together to review all policies, systems, learning opportunities and the learning environment in order to assess how closely they supported us to achieve our vision. This included bringing together representatives from each of our pupil voice groups for a day of activities and debate, where pupils were able to both review current practices and to meaningfully input into school development planning.

Three key principles supported our review: wellbeing, keeping things simple and the pupil voice. We believe that the well-being of all of our school community is of paramount importance. One way that this transpired into school development, was to simplify the systems we use for planning, in order to reduce the work load of our staff. We have developed three learning communities: Amazing Acorns (Nursery and Reception), Brilliant Buds (Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3), and Mighty Oaks (Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6), with staff working together to share ideas and share planning. We have developed all of our learning spaces so that the learning communities can now work across different environments, both inside and outside, providing our young people with a range of experiences, and enabling the sharing of themes in order to reduce the individual planning of teachers. When reviewing planning arrangements, we focused on two key factors – coverage and progression. Focusing on these has enabled us to create systems that are simple, based on what is most important whilst at the same time reducing workload.

We feel we are at the start of an exciting journey for our school and the role we can play in the wider community, this will enable us to flourish as a learning organisation where our vision shines through in everything we do.



## Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities

### Why this is important

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.

### Overview 2019/20

Through focusing on delivering against the main priorities set out in the Corporate Plan we can begin to transform Blaenau Gwent into a more prosperous and welcoming area that celebrates its heritage and plays its part on the regional and national stage. We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. The environment remains as a high priority for the community. The Council is looking to improve the area so that it is somewhere to be proud to live. Some key areas of activity include:

- Side waste enforcement has been completed throughout Blaenau Gwent. There has been a positive impact from the implementation of the side waste enforcement whereby residual waste collected during Quarters 1 & 2 has decreased by 895.26 tonnes (13.08%) when compared to the same period the previous year.
- The production of a Waste Management and Recycling Strategy has been undertaken and approved in order to ensure the Council achieves the 70% recycling target set for 2024/2025.
- Blaenau Gwent has made great improvements in its recycling rate and when compared with both English and Welsh Local Authorities for 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent currently lies 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 114 authorities.
- An ongoing challenge is the public buy-in to the recycling and side waste policy. In order to alleviate this, media and public engagement sessions are ongoing and include a new initiative being launched 'Keeping Up with the Jones' which is aimed at improving awareness around recycling.
- Capital funding of £2.8m has successfully been secured to develop the new Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). HWRCs will be open six days a week which will allow at least one HWRC to be open to residents seven days a week.
- Following the award of £150k from Welsh Government, two bespoke kerbside trade waste recycling vehicles will support the new multi-stream collection service that maximises material separation (and quality) whilst minimising vehicle passes.
- The Trade Waste Review has been completed and approved ready for new service roll out
- The service has continued to invest in cleansing activity across the area with particular focus around grass cutting and seasonal related activities. There will be continued engagement with the public to encourage waste recycling and to discourage fly tipping.
- Throughout the year the WAO undertook two reviews within the Community Services Directorate:
  - Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of 'Improving access to, and the quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, business and visitors'; and
  - Environmental Health follow-up Review

Action plans to implement any areas for improvement identified have been developed and will be implemented throughout the coming year.

- In Quarter 1, 50 natural resource management activities were delivered within schools, reaching 1,941 children

- Under The Welsh Governments 'Enabling Natural Resources and Wellbeing Funding' Blaenau Gwent have taken the lead role in securing £1.3M of funding over 3 years for the Resilient Greater Gwent project. By 2022 the project aims to:
  - Enhance biodiversity and resilient ecology networks in Greater Gwent;
  - Put biodiversity at the heart of decision making and clearly evidenced in our strategic plans;
  - Ensure that our communities are connected with nature and encourage sustainable lifestyles which in term supports health and well-being; and
  - Take action against the drivers of biodiversity loss; climate change, pollution, habitat change and loss, invasive non native species and exploitation.
- A complementary project for the Gwent Green Grid (£2.4M), also working collaboratively across Greater Gwent, is also being developed to tackle broader landscape and access issues
- The Cleanliness Indicator increased this year, the second highest figure recorded to date in Blaenau Gwent.
- There has been a positive increase in performance in street cleaning with 100% of streets inspected showing a B+ standard, meaning there is no more than 3 small items of litter found.
- Engagement is ongoing with community groups around collective litter picking and other activities to manage the environment.
- We continue to engage young people with the environment through the Youth Service. The summer programme included a weekly project linked to the Wildlife Trust, litter and river bank clearance and a beach litter pick.
- Collaborative work continues to deliver effective environmental services. This includes a Service Level Agreement with Powys to manage Animal Health; Homelessness Stand-by with Torfaen and Monmouthshire; Care and Repair with ENABLE; Contracting Out - Rentokil/Local Authority Support (Kingdom); other government and support partners; and internal partners.
- The Annual Air Quality Review has been completed and approved by Welsh Government.
- We continue to work across the area with our community groups, internal and external partners to improve the quality of and access to green space. Funding has been secured to develop our Integrated Network Maps Active Travel Plans further over the next 12 months.
- We continue to explore and develop the Active Travel Routes and the Public Rights of Way Network for walking and cycling within the area. Active Travel funding of £585k has been secured to implement a wider range of projects
- Work is ongoing with Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme Local Action Group to develop walking / cycling trails that link to the train.
- Progress on key projects continues with the completion of Granny's Wood, Blaenau Gwent on the Move and this year's Invasive Weeds programme.
- It is recognised that Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are important for both people and nature. Blaenau Gwent has seven existing LNR's and are proposing to designate and declare the establishment of an additional five.
- The Council has been actively involved in two important projects to consider how public services across Gwent can collaboratively work together to reduce the regions carbon footprint. The first of these projects involved a review of the fleet of vehicles each public service has across the area. The second project looked at the opportunities across Gwent to set up electric charging points, including identifying appropriate sites and where funding is available nationally to take the project forward. Moving forward, the Council will look to work with partners to consider the findings of the carbon reduction projects and consider the individual and collective action that can be taken forward to help mitigate our carbon emissions as a public service provider.

- As part of the Community Asset Transfer programme, the majority of non-operational buildings have now been disposed of or demolished. The service continues to work with the community groups who have leased buildings and grounds from the Council by offering technical advice and assistance.
- Delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan is ongoing with the programme of disposals progressing and on target.
- The Council have invested in energy saving measures across all buildings using the ReFit programme, which provides guaranteed energy saving with a payback period of 8 years or less.
- We continue to maintain the Highway network in line with the Highway Maintenance Plan.
- Phase 2 Improvement works are now fully completed with improvements to A, B C & residential roads being undertaken.
- Other related works have included new safety barriers, bus stops and works related to the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement.
- We continue to move forward on the development of the Highways Asset Management Plan in conjunction with County Surveyor's Society Wales CSS[w].
- Over the past few years the service has seen significant increases in energy costs relating to street lighting, this, along with budget cuts to the service resulted in street lights being switched off on main roads and Industrial areas. Recently we have invested £400,000 to the street lighting budget which has meant we have restored this lighting.
- Upgrading our street lighting to LED is key to us providing a more energy efficient, low carbon lighting network.
- We have seen an improvement in the number of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards. The Food Standards Agency grant funding allocation received has enabled us to facilitate coaching visits to the lowest performing businesses as an additional supportive intervention.
- The Public Space Protection Order aims to prevent occurrences of dog fouling at specific sensitive locations such as schools, playgrounds and sports pitches. It also prevents exposure to sensitive receptors such as young children who are more likely to be at these types of locations.
- We work to ensure delivery of fit for purpose Licencing Services and engagement with alcohol licensed premises takes place to advise and educate them regarding their responsibilities when selling alcohol.

### Sustainable Development

<b>Long Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Declaring a Local Nature Reserve protects it for the long-term in the Local Development Plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trading Standards activity contributes to crime reduction and protection of vulnerable people from scams and rogue traders. Intervention visits were made to 100% of identified vulnerable potential scam victims during the period.</li> </ul>
<b>Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council works together to improve school buildings to assist in enhancing the quality of educational achievement. Community Services has worked closely with Education to ensure that the new Six Bells school was completed within time &amp; budget. September term commenced with teachers &amp; children into new school. Support also continues through proactive maintenance of buildings and Service Level Agreement's across a range of key operational areas - catering, cleaning, energy and moving forward on Band B programme of 21 Century Schools programme.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaenau Gwent is working in collaboration with Welsh Government and WRAP Cymru to implement a sustainable, effective and recycling led improved Trade Waste service.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) renewal process a public consultation was carried out.</li> </ul>



## Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

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Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of streets that are clean	National	95.52	93%	93%	100%	100%	↑
Percentage of people living within 400m of their nearest area of Greenspace in Blaenau Gwent	Local	85% (LDP target)**	Annual Figure – 87%				↑
Average number of working days taken to clear fly-tipping incidents	National (new)	6.2	3.99	3.46	4.22	4.17	↑
Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted	National	56.77%	56.6%	62.7%	69.69%	63.66%	↓
Kilograms of residual waste generated per person	National (new)	TBC	40.33	39.50	37.60	38.82	↓
Number of Community Asset Transfers that are actively operating within Blaenau Gwent	Local	TBC	39	40	40	40	↔
Percentage of active Community Asset Transfer's within Blaenau Gwent that have been successfully operating for 6 months or more	Local	20	51	52.5	97.5	100	↑
Number of Community Asset Transfers implemented during the period	Local	TBC	19	1	0	0	↔
Average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	National	293.2	Annual Figure (Cumulative) - 312.4				↓
Number of visits to local authority sport and leisure facilities during the year per 1,000 population	National	9,082.7	*1,952	*1,997	*1,844	*2,045	↓

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/19	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Percentage of principal A roads that are in overall poor condition	National	2.6	Annual Figure – 2%				↑
Percentage of principal B roads that are in overall poor condition	National	5.6	Annual Figure – 5%				↑
Percentage of principal C roads that are in overall poor condition	National	5.5	Annual Figure – 5.4%				↑
Percentage of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards	National	92.3	92.4	90.1	92.3	89.8	↓

\* Unverified Figures

Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities

Case Study –  
School Workshops, Keep Wales Tidy Marine Clean Cymru Campaign

As part of Keep Wales Tidy Marine Clean Cymru Campaign a number of school workshops have been delivered.

- One of these workshops was at Bryn Bach Park on 25<sup>th</sup> September (which was also Recycling Week) where 4 pupils from St Mary CIW, Blaenycwm, Deighton, Georgetown, Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Helyg, Willowtown, Rhos Y Fedwen and All Saint RC Primary Schools attended. The workshop involved a litter pick (whereby 15 bags of litter were collected. We then examined different items of rubbish and sorted them into what could and could not be recycled and into their relevant categories. To highlight the importance of recycling and the impacts it can have on the local environment and biodiversity the children made 'junk monsters'.



## Case Study - Over half-a-million for Active Travel routes

Blaenau Gwent Council has welcomed the announcement of over £0.5 million in funding from the Welsh Government to improve Active Travel routes.

Active Travel is walking, running or cycling on everyday journeys such as to work, school or to the shops. More than £1.2million is being handed out to schemes across Gwent as part of a £14.5million boost from the Welsh Government.



In Blaenau Gwent a shared use active travel road from Garnlydan to Brynmawr will receive £295,000 and another leading from Ebbw Vale Hospital will get £185,000, with £55,000 available for associated works. The routes will be completely resurfaced and signage improved to help encourage greater use of the trails by residents.

As part of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, local authorities are required to map their existing routes and show where improvements can be made and new routes added as part of its Integrated Network Map (INM). Blaenau Gwent consulted with local people over this through an online survey and several roadshows, giving them the opportunity to help shape the area's future active travel provision. This feedback was used to develop the funding bid.

Richard Crook, the Council's Corporate Director for Regeneration & Community Services, said:

"We're delighted at the success of our bid to improve Active Travel Routes in Blaenau Gwent and can't wait to get started on the work! As a Council we are passionate about working with our partners to improve the health and well-being of our residents and look after the environment and this funding gives us a fantastic opportunity to carry on with this important work. Hopefully we will be seeing more people ditch the car in the future and walk or cycle where they need to be."



## Economic Development and Regeneration

### Why this is important

We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth, job related skills and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty. Working with new and existing businesses to help them grow and develop in Blaenau Gwent is key to help provide the employment opportunities.

### Overview 2019/20

At the beginning of 2019/20 progress against the Economic Development and Regeneration priorities were maintained, however, with the appointment of a new Head of Service, renewed plans are in place to progress priorities over the remainder of the Corporate Plan. Regeneration and Development also supports a number of regional programmes that are taking place within the area including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (including the Metro scheme), Tech Valleys and the Valleys Task Force. Some key activity includes:

- The Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Strategy has been drafted in partnership with the Enterprise Board (private sector). Support provided for start-ups and businesses is being increased through partnership working with business support agencies and specialists.
- The Thales National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) project is now up and running – supporting local businesses, schools and colleges with digital training, research and access to state of the art technologies in Ebbw Vale.
- The Regeneration Opportunities team continue to bring forward development on the Works site, working on plans for an extension for the Thales building to grow their presence, hybrid business units on Lime Avenue and The Box Worxs start-up units which will be completed in early 2021.
- 11.6% more business start-ups during the first 11 months of this year compared with the corresponding period of last year, according to latest data from BankSearch data.
- The first Women's Business Network was held during Global Enterprise Week at the General Offices and received positive support. Plans to continue and strengthen this networking opportunity will continue
- 3 business units lets have been achieved resulting in 2 new businesses trading from Blaenau Gwent Council owned units. This has helped to create 6 jobs and will add a further income to the portfolio.
- A Business Improvement District BID serving the Rassau Industrial Estate and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate will start in April 2020, running for a five-year term following a successful ballot of businesses. The BID will represent businesses on both estates, delivering projects that improve the environment in which to do business. Through its operational activity and representative function, the BID will play a part in creating a safe, clean and supportive environment for businesses on the two privately owned estates.
- Phase 1a of the ReFit project continues with lighting schemes being completed in almost all of the buildings within this phase which includes Corporate Buildings, Schools and Leisure Trust Buildings. Phase 1b focusses on schools with engagement ongoing with Headteachers and Governing Bodies.
- Phase 2 of The Smart Living Demonstrator Energy Catalyst Project is now concluded. Opportunities explored in this phase through engagement with businesses across Blaenau Gwent include energy brokering and materials brokering (inc. solar panels and LED lighting).

- The Energy Prospectus has been approved by Council. Work has commenced to launch the prospectus and bring forward the projects to potential stakeholders and/or collaborators.
- The PENTAGON Project, which took advantage of a wide range of renewable energy generation sources, is coming to a close
- Work commenced on a town plan linked to the Metro plus scheme in which Blaenau Gwent will receive £3m to implement a programme of enabling infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and regeneration by supporting the mobility of people and skills.
- As part of Valleys Task Force we continue to explore the roll out of projects including a Town Centre 'Meanwhile' Project', with potential funding from Valleys Task Force to progress. Whilst providing extensive support for budding entrepreneurs, its 'Meanwhile' programme offers an opportunity for new and existing businesses to test-trade their goods and services in vacant premises for up to six months. Blaenau Gwent have expressed an interest in being a potential partner in the project and await further information.
- The Discover Blaenau Gwent Housing Prospectus was successfully launched in May 2019 by the Executive Member for Regeneration. The event was attended by over 20 representatives from the housing sector including Registered Social Landlords, Private Limited Companies, Small Medium Enterprises and planning consultants. The launch has generated land enquiries from perspective developers.
- Options on the housing review are currently being considered including a regional approach in collaboration with Gwent partners, (akin to the regional Homelessness Strategy).
- Lovell build at Golwg Y Bryn is a £16.8 million housing development providing 70 homes for sale alongside 30 affordable homes, comprising social rent and low-cost home ownership. This development is progressing well and the marketing suite now open with good progress on sales to date.
- Planning permission has been secured (subject to the 106) for United Welsh and Persimmon build at the Old School/College site representing an overall investment of £32.6M development costs providing 277 Homes of that figure 55 homes will be affordable. The scheme is being supported by Welsh Government Social Housing Grant with an allocation of £1.3M. We are in the final stages of a lengthy legal process to ensure the scheme is brought forward. This is especially significant at a time where major PLC's have reviewed their cash flow and many have withdrawn from schemes. This is a positive outcome for Blaenau Gwent.
- The £2.8m United Welsh housing association development of 23 affordable homes on the old Sirhowy School Site is nearing completion.
- As part of the Arbed Welsh Government Warm Home Scheme, 449 properties have been identified as being in areas of severe fuel poverty and energy efficiency measures have been installed aiming to eradicate this (£2.7 million / average of £6,013 per property).
- The ECO/LAFlex scheme aims to reduce fuel poverty and to date 100+ properties that were energy inefficient have had energy efficiency measures installed which in turn will reduce household fuel bills. Further promotion is currently taking place to encourage take up of this scheme.
- The employment and skills stakeholder event was held as part of the development of the Skills Plan and proved to be a successful and interactive session which involved over 70 attendees. There was representation from Education, Further Education, Business, Employment and the Public Service Board. The findings are currently being collated in order to complete the plan and prepare next steps.
- Recruitment and induction of Aspire apprentices was successful, including a team building event at Glyn Neath Waterfall for all current Aspire Apprentices. 13 have commenced the programme and their joint employment with host companies. 3 new host companies are also engaged on the programme, 2 of which are Small Medium Enterprises.
- The employment liaison work includes 8 companies engaged and the project continues to receive new referrals. Training opportunities are being promoted in areas such as health and safety, first aid, CSCS and ICT, delivered through a range of partners.

- Work to identify and deliver community benefits continues, an example of which being Sirhowy Nursery Site:
  - The Star Centre applied for funding to pay for internet access for 2 years so they can provide support with Homework clubs, Job search clubs, and Universal Credit support.
  - Provided a new Fridge Freezer so that local business can supply the general public free food which is near to the use by dates.
  - School engagement - artist worked with children 6 weeks to design mosaics one for school and one for site.
- Plans for a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Inspiration Event are progressing, with 3 schools engaged and close to 50 businesses. The links between STEM subjects and industry will clearly be seen throughout the event, which also highlight the benefits of an apprenticeship as an alternative to University.
- Aspire Apprenticeship Scheme won the Large Employer of the Year category in the Apprenticeship Awards Cymru 2019. At the Aspire annual award ceremony, the Deputy Minister, Lee Waters presented 6 awards to apprentices & employers from the Local Authority.
- The Corporate Traineeship programme has seen an increase of young people on placement within the authority. Two more children looked after have joined the programme and are being supported on placement and via ACT training.
- Morganstone and Linc housing have continued to deliver Community benefits on the Llys Glyncoed development with Morganstone offering work experience opportunities on site for painting and decorating.
- GovTech Catalyst Project has completed Phase one and progression into Phase two has commenced. This project looks at how we can use our assets to collect information to help us deliver our services more efficiently. Options tested in phase one included:
  - detection of potholes using camera technology mounted on refuse, recycling fleet - no driver intervention required; and
  - recycling participation levels identifying properties where recycling is out for collection or recycling containers being emptied.

## Sustainable Development

<b>Long Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2033, Blaenau Gwent's Local Development Plan will support delivery of a network of connected sustainable, vibrant valley communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention of homelessness is still running at a high level during the third quarter. Early intervention and new initiatives have had an impact despite a very large number of clients losing private rented accommodation.</li> </ul>
<b>Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is ongoing to engage with potential town centre properties across Blaenau Gwent to participate in the town centre loans and grants scheme. Due diligence into potential applications is being carried out by the Regeneration Opportunities team alongside a Quantity Surveyor from Technical Services and the property solicitor from Development and Estates.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blaenau Gwent together with four neighbouring authorities have secured up to £450,000 of funding for Low Emission Vehicles for the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points across 30 sites within the five Local Authority areas.</li> <li>• The Employment Liaison Team work with key partners such as Jobcentre Plus, Working Links, local colleges and training providers to co-ordinate and complete recruitment and skills packages to match local people with local jobs.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contractors and Registered Social Landlords continue to engage with local schools and business, such as engagement with Rassau Resource Centre (Buds to Blossoms Nursery) and Glyncoed Primary School to purchase resources through their community benefit fund; A community event, organised and delivered by Linc and Morganstone with refreshments funded by the contractor; and Glyncoed Primary School pupils attending Llys Glyncoed to sing Christmas Carols with the staff and residents.</li> </ul>

## Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

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Performance Indicator	National / Local	Baseline 18/20	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
House building completions	Local	TBC	5	22	0	33	↑
Number of affordable housing units delivered per 10,000 households	National (new)	N/A	Annual Figure – 2				New Indicator
Number of Business start-ups supported (directly created as a result of targeted support from the council)	Local (available)	14	9	2	2	2	↔
Percentage of occupied floor space of available council business units	Local (available)	85%	83%	84%	86%	82%	↓
Percentage of empty private properties brought back into use during the year through direct action by the LA	National	3.3	Annual Figure – 6.44%				↑
Percentage of all planning applications determined within required time periods	National	97.3	100%	99%	100%	100%	↔
Percentage of appeals against planning application decisions dismissed	National	63.6	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔



## Case Study - Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Businesses Join

Businesses from Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent along with members from successful business networking clubs Torfaen Business Voice and the Blaenau Gwent Effect Network, are forging closer trading partnerships following an event earlier this month.

The recent event was the first of its kind, created and hosted by Torfaen Economy & Enterprise and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Economic Development Unit and was held at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale.

Over 65 businesses from across a wide range of sectors took advantage of the free opportunity to introduce their businesses to each other over both informal and facilitated networking, and a buffet.



**Councillor Richard Clark, Deputy Leader & Executive Member for Economy, Skills and Regeneration at Torfaen Council said**

"It was a real pleasure to attend and speak at this event. Forging business relationships across county boundaries is a really positive step towards strengthening our local economy. I hope this is just the beginning of a number of successful joint initiatives that will help build and capitalise on the fantastic energy and commitment local businesses in this part of south east Wales have."

**Blaenau Gwent Councillor David Davies, Executive Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, said:**

*"The 'meet your business neighbour' event for businesses in Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen, which was hosted in the General Offices Ebbw Vale, provided local business with the chance to interact with new contacts and suppliers. It was also an opportunity to share best practice and keep up to date with political, legislative and economic developments.*

*This is such a good example of how businesses from neighbouring boroughs can engage and work together, which is not only beneficial for the local economy but also strengthens business networks in the region".*

### Case Study – Bringing New Homes and Prospects to Blaenau Gwent.

The construction of new homes at Golwg y Bryn, Ebbw Vale is well underway. This is the result of Blaenau Gwent CBC's positive partnership working relationship with one of the country's leading house developers – Lovell and Melin Homes an experienced social landlord, to bring much needed quality homes to Blaenau Gwent. The collaboration has ensured the exciting venture being brought to fruition backed with the support of Welsh Government funding.



**Golwg Y Bryn, Ebbw Vale**  
£17m Mix Tenure Development comprising 100 units  
Commencing Spring 2019

**LOVELL**  
A MORGAN SINDALL GROUP COMPANY

With the aim of creating opportunities for local suppliers and skilled craftsman to engage with a major house builder, an extremely successful "Meet The Buyer" event was facilitated by Blaenau Gwent's CBC Regeneration Team. A & M Brick Laying and Taylor Lane are two Local Companies that are already on site as a direct result from the event. Local employment, apprenticeships and wider community benefits are all future opportunities we hope to secure from this exciting development.



The development, which will see 70 open market homes and 30 affordable, including shared equity, has recently been launched from a neighbouring site with a hugely positive response, from residents looking to secure their choice of home. Several plots have already being reserved and plans are underway to officially open the exquisite show home on site later this year.

## Efficient Council

### Why this is important

Our Corporate Plan provides the focus for delivering lasting change for the area. It also provides the platform for transforming Blaenau Gwent into a more confident and capable Council. Our ambition is to deliver better outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent and that ambition is underpinned by solid and sustainable plans, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. Maximising the impact of our resources to deliver those outcomes sits at the heart of this priority. This includes understanding our costs, controlling expenditure, maximising our income and aligning our resources to the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors to build a Blaenau Gwent for the future.

### Overview 2019/20

Throughout 2019/20 there has been progress in the implementation of the Efficient Council priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives. At the centre of the Efficient Council priority is looking at an approach to working in a cost effective and efficient way across the Council. This ambitious project is called 'Bridging the Gap' and is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan. This programme of activity is looking at delivering a council that is more commercially minded in the way it delivers services. Progress of this project will be seen over the remainder of the Corporate Plan. Some key activity includes:

- Fundamental review of all our third party expenditure identifying savings and opportunities to be more commercial in our relationships with suppliers
- Refreshed the Communications Strategy to strengthen our approach, taking advantage of modern channels of communication to build the reputation of the council locally and nationally.
- Developed a 'one council' that expresses the Council's ambitions to be more commercially minded and to act with increased commercial acumen whilst delivering social value. Included in this is the creation of a Strategic Commercial Board, chaired by the Managing Director, to provide a 'check and challenge' to commercial activities, high value commissioned services and procurement activities.
- Delivered an Energy Prospectus identifying opportunities to increase revenue streams through energy generation.
- Maximising the impact of the Energy Prospectus is dependent on continued strong collaboration and partnership working with communities, public, private sector and businesses along with effective partnership working across the Council.
- Continued to invest in staff training with a particular focus on Mental Health First Aid, supporting upskilling through access to National Vocational Qualifications and increasing awareness on issues such as Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. These are examples of how staff training is supporting national initiatives.
- Building our leadership capabilities through the delivery of two Manager Conferences in October 2019. With the key focus on being a more commercially minded organisation, managers contributed to the development of the strategy and gave input on how we create the right conditions to be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Local Authority
- Designed a whole organisation approach to digital transformation. Through a fundamental review of our ICT landscape, systems and architecture the Council now has a clear roadmap for the future. We are clear about the needs of our infrastructure, we understand the extent of our ICT investment and we are clear about future investments and opportunities for change.



- Built a roadmap for resident experience transformation. Working closely with customer service agents to design new and improved routes for residents to access services through face to face contact, telephone contact and improved online services
- A number of service re-structures have taken place, supporting resilience and succession planning, ensuring capability to deliver on corporate priorities.
- Modernising and strengthening our workforce practices through a review of key policies and procedure including staff attendance, disciplinary/grievance and capability policies.
- Before the end of March 2020, it was agreed that, owing to the national lockdown, the Annual General Meeting of Council would need to be held earlier in the year. The meeting was held in April 2020 and was held remotely using teleconferencing facilities. This was a massive step forward for Blaenau Gwent, where virtual meetings had not been utilised before. Work will progress to support all members to use ICT in order to remotely participate in meetings moving forward.
- Throughout the 2019/20 year members have engaged in a number of training and learning sessions as part of the Member Development Programme, which is linked to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan and Committee Forward Work Programmes. All Senior Salary Holders also undertook a PDR which was externally facilitated. From each of these sessions a personal action plan was developed, to be implemented throughout the coming year.
- Scrutiny Committee meetings have been promoted on Social Media via Facebook, offering members of the public an opportunity to either attend scrutiny committee meetings or to pose questions on social media which could potentially be raised at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair
- The Member Equalities Task and Finish Group has now completed its work and the Strategic Equalities Plan and it was scheduled for approval at Council, following its presentation to Scrutiny and Executive, this however has been postponed linked to the suspension of Council meetings owing to the COVID 19 pandemic.
- A review of the Corporate Engagement Strategy & Action Plan has been completed and steps taken to progress key actions.
- Communication and engagement campaigns have included: street scene roadshows to involve the public in street cleanliness; highlighting the new food waste bags; discussing the delivery requirements of the Highway Capital Works Programme, winning an Aspire Award for being Large Employer of the Year; and informing the public of the general election.
- Work continues with residents, contractors, community groups and the third sector to increase the range of materials able to be recycled, maximise recycling and value, and increase the opportunity for re-use.
- Internal and external engagement activity continued including youth forum and 50 plus network supporting the age friendly community planning.
- Discussions are ongoing with the Youth Forum to identify how best young people can engage in the democratic process.
- The Education Inclusion Service is contributing to the WG Anti-Bullying Guidance, WG EHE Guidance, WG ALN Code of Practice (which is including working with parents) as well as the national ADEW agenda for Inclusion and School Improvement.
- Engagement with staff regarding the process for staff supervision has been undertaken which has led to amendments to the process in order to encourage discussion in identified areas.
- The Council recognises the challenges that it faces in the short, medium and long term and has developed a programme of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. Based



on strategic themes our 'Bridging the Gap' programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved by Council in December 2019. As part of this, work has progressed on nine areas of improvement against the Medium Term Financial Strategy in order to secure cost reductions for the Council, however the work on outcomes based, prioritisation has been delayed. This work will be picked up during 2020/21 at a time when the COVID 19 response is relaxed.
- Greater collaboration has been achieved through working with the Centre for Digital Public Services. Digital Transformation opportunities are being exploited with Torfaen and Neath Port Talbot Councils to improve resident experiences when accessing Adult Social Care or paying for services.
- To support improvements to the governance, programme and performance management of the Public Service Board (PSB) a new performance management framework was developed. This created clear inception reports for emerging programmes of work to assist with decision making moving forward. During this period. The PSB also agreed their work programme for 2020.
- The Gwent Strategic Well-being Assessment Group (GSWAG) continues to meet to deliver partnership projects such as Gwent Futures.

### Sustainable Development

<b>Long Term</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decisions made as part of the Bridging the Gap programme are designed to support the long term financial resilience of the Council and to influence the design of services for the future.</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible the impact of the Strategic Business Reviews will reflect our aspiration to invest in preventative services and to identify where we can strengthen our approach.</li> </ul>
<b>Integration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In order to meet the needs of both internal and external funding streams the Youth Service integrates its work with a range of partners.</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative relationships are thriving with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils through SRS working arrangements. Wider opportunities for collaboration with the Centre for Digital Public Services are now coming to fruition.</li> </ul>
<b>Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nine Streetscene engagement events have been held in markets, supermarkets and town centres across the area. A corresponding web survey was published with 159 people taking part in the survey at the events and 120 completing via the web. Many more engaged with us at roadshows.</li> </ul>

### Performance Indicators

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)

Performance Indicator	National / Local	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Quarterly Performance Trend
Number of working days lost to sickness absence per employee	National	11	3.05	5.96	9.77	13.91	↓
Percentage of Service Reports / Requests via digital means (self-service) (waste and recycling, street cleansing, roads and lighting and switchboard)	Local	-	23.6%	25.8%	23.6%	22.5%	↓
Level of General Reserve as a proportion of net revenue expenditure as at 31 March 2019	Local	4.00%	-	4.58%	4.04%	4.69%	↑
Net expenditure compared to agreed budget – Revenue	Local	0	(150,000) (0.01%)	(7,000) (0.004%)	(66,000) (0.04%)	£568,000 (0.39%)	↑
Net expenditure compared to agreed budget – Capital	Local	0	(3,000) (0.02%)	0	0	£1,000 (0.007%)	↑
External fees and charges as a percentage of Gross Expenditure * Estimated Figure	Local	5.98%	-	5.59% * Estimated Figure	5.59% * Estimated Figure	5.81%	↓

Efficient Council

### Committed to delivering Biodiversity and Resilient Ecosystems



The Council recognises that resilient ecosystems underpinned by a biodiverse landscape deliver multiple benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent. Carrying out the requirements under the new biodiversity duty will help to contribute to physical and mental health and well-being of people who live and work in the borough; offer opportunities for community engagement and volunteering; take action to intercept and help break down air, water and soil pollution; take action to reduce flood peaks; and play an important role in tackling global climate change and take action to regulate local climate.



We are committed to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and working in partnership with others to ensure the sustainability of the subsequent benefits and their contribution to the well-being goals. We ensure that biodiversity is considered at the decision making level, and the new reporting duty ensures the Local Authority takes responsibility for showing how our actions have helped to enhance our natural resources and ecosystems.



The PSB Well-being Annual Report demonstrates good links with the environment and nature theme, to include lived experience case studies on climate change, case studies on community volunteers from Gwent Wildlife Trust, the Get out in Nature well-being roadshow, and successful BG on the Move project

Alignment with the Blaenau Gwent on the Move project from the Public Service Board has been positive with successful wildlife mural in Ebbw Vale and the completion and launch of the trail, including the installation of interpretation boards and art pieces along the trail.



LLWYBR EBWY FAWR  
EBBW FAWR TRAIL





### Case Study – How we are ‘Bridging the Gap’... financial planning for the future

Financial planning is a year round task!

Our exciting new approach – Bridging the Gap - isn't just about making it from budget to budget it's a much wider plan to become a more financially resilient and commercial minded organisation which maximises and creates income, reduces demand for services and provides a great customer experience.



We are currently working on the assumption that our revenue funding settlement from the Welsh Government will again be cash flat. This means we will need to find £2 - £3 million in savings for 2020/21 to continue to provide public services and invest in the future of Blaenau Gwent, without using our council reserves which we need to build up. The 12 Strategic Business Reviews that make up 'Bridging the Gap' will help us to do this.

Going forward, we will be:

- Maximising income and potential income generation - taking a clearly commercial approach where appropriate.
- Maximising our resources by making sure we are getting best value for money through procurement and contracts.
- Exploiting the opportunities of digital transformation.
- Making best use of our assets and property.
- Influencing and reducing demand from our customers and supporting residents to do more for themselves.

This important work involves all of Corporate Leadership Team and is being led by our Chief Officer Commercial, Anne Louise Clark, who says:

*"It's clear that if we want to provide the best services for the people of Blaenau Gwent then we need to think differently, become more business minded and redesign services so that they are more commercial and fit for the 21st Century.*

*Bridging the Gap offers some quick gains such as looking at our third party spend to get the most for our money where we spend it, and looking at new ways of bringing in money, as well as some longer term projects like reducing our carbon footprint which will be great for the environment, too!"*

*"This really is an exciting time as we continue to work together to transform services."*

The Strategic Business Reviews are each led by a member of the Corporate Leadership Team and supported by the Strategic Transformation Team and officers from across the Council.



### **How we keep track of what we are doing**

The application of the Sustainable Development Principle and the reach of the Well-being Objectives mean changing the ways in which we work. The Council has focused on seven key corporate areas as part of implementing the Act. Below provides an update against the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies, recognising that there is still more to do in these areas over the coming years.

**Performance management** - The Council has a well established performance management framework in place which supports all aspects of service planning, delivery and improvement. As part of this, the Council's Well-being Objectives, as identified within the Corporate Plan, have been used to shape all service planning throughout the Council. A 'golden thread' has been developed from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation.

As part of our business planning arrangements, progression of the sustainable development principles has been included and is reported on against each Well-being Objective.

On a quarterly basis, the Council receives performance monitoring of the Corporate Plan as part of the Finance and Performance Report. Alongside this reporting, there are a number of other performance reports that are reported internally and through the democratic process.

**Financial planning** - The Well-being Objectives have been produced at a time of significant financial constraints and radical change within the public sector. The Council is reviewing its financial management and planning to enable it to develop a new approach to effectively demonstrate how we use resources to deliver sustainable long term outcomes to both current and future generations. This is especially difficult against a backdrop of annual resource allocations from central Government. Consequently, there will be a need to adapt to ongoing changes during the lifetime of these Objectives and further review them accordingly.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a key element within the Council's strategic planning framework. It is this financial framework which will support the Council's financial resilience and ensure it operates sustainably. The MTFS brings together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and forms the basis for decision making. The MTFS includes a forward look over the next five years to assess the spending requirements the Council is likely to face when delivering the priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan, and highlights the funding requirement that will need to be made to ensure the Council can set a balanced budget each year.

**Financial Management** For the period 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

Revenue Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 19/20	Provisional Outturn 2019/2020 £'000	Variance Favourable / (Adverse) £'000
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	14,725	14,709	16
Economy	1,516	1,516	0
Education	55,477	55,348	129
Environment	29,523	29,535	-12
Licensing	65	74	-9
Planning	1,056	1,024	32
Social Services	44,915	44,526	389
* February Floods	0	64	-64
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>147,277</b>	<b>146,796</b>	<b>481</b>
* February Floods			
Social Services	0	2	-2
Education	0	2	-2
Environment	0	61	-61
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>-64</b>

**Current Revenue Budget Position:**

The provisional outturn is showing an overall favourable variance of £481,000 against the 2019/2020 budget. This is a significantly improved financial position when compared to the quarter 3 forecast budget position which showed a projected overspend of £64,000.

**Current Capital Budget Position:**

The overall provisional outturn shows an overall favourable variance of £1,456 this is a slightly improved financial position compared with quarter 3 forecast budget position which was break even. The improved position can be attributed to a slight underspend on Flying Start approval.

Capital Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 19/20	Provisional Outturn 19/20	Variance Favourable / (Adverse)
Corporate Services & Strategy	246,601	246,601	0
Social Services	836,216	834,760	1,456
Education	5,134,917	5,134,917	0
Environment (including Leisure)	8,418,736	8,418,736	0
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>14,636,470</b>	<b>14,635,014</b>	<b>1,456</b>

**Risk management** – the Council's Risk Management Mission Statement is *'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks to ensure that they are eliminated or managed to an acceptable level.'*

To ensure that the Council meets the risk management requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, our risk management approach ensures that long term risks and challenges to both service delivery and our community are considered.

The Council believes that risk management is a vital component to ensuring that it becomes a high performance organisation. We are committed to ensuring that risk management is embedded throughout the Council as managing risks will lead to more effective use of resources, direct improvements to services, customers and stakeholders, as well as improving corporate governance and performance. As part of these arrangements, the Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly and reported to Members as part of the Finance and Performance Report.

**Procurement** – procurement activities are facilitated in compliance within existing legal obligations; predominately defined within the Public Contract Regulations (PCR's) 2015. The Council has adopted the Welsh Procurement Policy 2012 (amended 2015) and applies these principles to all commissioning and procurement requirements.

To support the implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including Community Benefits, at the outset of each procurement, the client and procurement officer determine project scope and considers opportunities for the inclusion of the Act and Community Benefits.

**Corporate planning** – the Council has fully aligned all of its planning to the Corporate Plan which includes the Well-being Objectives. These are central to the organisation and future work planning and strategies are aligned to these areas. The Sustainable Development Principles have been included within the business planning template used across all service areas. The five ways of working are also captured within the Corporate Reporting Template, this is supported by guidance which is reviewed and shared periodically.

**Workforce** - Staff Engagement is about developing productive working relationships and a working environment where employees are willing and able to make the best use of their skills and abilities for the benefit of their employer and themselves. Since 2014 the Council has undertaken a staff survey every two years as a means of gauging its levels of staff engagement. Employees remain anonymous in completing the survey and are only asked to provide high level details e.g. their work area, and information related to equalities and diversity.

The most recent survey was undertaken between 18th January and 3rd March 2019 and was open to all employees (excluding school based teaching staff). Results of the survey were considered in the 2019/20 year. The data from the survey was analysed and the following activities undertaken:

- High level findings presented to CLT and Wider CLT in May 2019.
- Directorate specific analysis provided to support service area action planning, supported by Organisational Development.
- Action plans discussed with members of WCLT through the performance coaching sessions with particular attention to any specific hot spots.

- A high level overview of the results and findings provided to all staff via the Managing Directors Message.
- Relaunch of a bi monthly revised staff newsletter to share the vision of the organisation and create a shared sense of purpose.
- The introduction of the Manager's Brief to facilitate two way communication. This is published on a bi monthly basis.
- Launch of the Managers Conference in October 2019.
- Commitment to ongoing engagement with managers to encourage participation in decision making.
- The second round of staff engagement events for all staff with political and professional leadership are being planned, following the events held in autumn 2018.
- Commitment to a Leadership Development Programme to include empowering leadership as a topic.
- CLT meetings to take place at various locations across the borough to increase visibility of senior leaders.

On an annual basis Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is provided with the annual staff absence figures, these are supplemented throughout the year with directorate specific absence reporting and reporting within the Joint Finance and Performance Report. Staff attendance is critical in delivering services. Improving attendance remains a key priority for the Council and is linked to the need to create efficiencies and improve service delivery. Sickness absence within the Authority is identified as a key risk and it is acknowledged that high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively. Therefore, the need to reduce the impact and cost of sickness absence has been identified as a corporate priority.

**Assets** – Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is a statutory document which sets out the Council's strategic approach to its land and property assets identifying the key drivers which impact on how property is managed and maintained.

We recognise that Property represents a major asset and cost for the Authority but is also a major risk. It provides the primary spaces from which the Council's services are delivered and as such needs to be fit for purpose. The SAMP identifies the state of the portfolio and provides a clear way forward for the Council's approach to its strategy for property. This provides a balanced and clear approach to whether property should be retained or released and therefore guides Council decisions on investments in property. As part of the Bridging the Gap programme this approach will be reviewed and challenged to ensure the Council is operating efficiently.

As part of the Council's Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme, an extensive programme of engagement took place to ensure that the CAT process was fully understood when being implemented. All applications are consulted upon with Elected Members, the relevant Executive Member as well as Town and Community Councils – where that applies. The public are also able to make representation. This extensive programme has been put into operation to benefit the community in the longer term, ensuring sporting facilities are available locally which are community run and support the longevity of the area. The CAT process has been very successful and supports community groups to become self sufficient and sustainable when supporting the management of local assets.

### **The Strategic Equalities Plan**

The Council is committed to implementing the Equality Act 2010 and this is evidenced by the Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan 2020/24. The Plan was developed using research and engagement as well as developing a Member's Task and Finish Group. The plan contains the Council's Equality Objectives:



- We will be an organisation who ensures fairness and equality is in everything that we do;
- We will be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that values equality and diversity;
- We will support children and young people, particularly those with protected characteristics, to achieve their learning ambitions;
- We will promote and support safe, friendly and cohesive communities;
- We will ensure there is meaningful involvement with people who have protected characteristics and key stakeholders that represent their interests; and
- We will strive to tackle inequality caused by poverty for people who have protected characteristics.

The plan and supporting documents can be found at <http://cc-mgov-01/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1134&MId=2172&Ver=4&LLL=0>

### **The Welsh Language Annual Report**

In September 2019, the Welsh Language Annual Report for 2018/19 was provided to Members and set out detail of how the Council has complied with the service delivery standards, policy-making standards and the operational standards over the past year. Noted findings included:

- Two Welsh Language Commissioner's Office Investigations opened, which were closed with no further action against the Authority.
- The number of employees who have Welsh language speaking skills as at 31 March 2019 amounts to 610 (21%) staff; they can speak 'fluently', 'quite well', 'moderately', or 'a little', which is a positive starting point when we are looking to build resilience and capacity.
- Education has the most fluent Welsh Speakers (36) though it is noted that there are no staff who declare fluency within Corporate Services, although 22 of their staff have some ability.

The plan and supporting documents can be found at <https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/equalities-welsh-language/the-welsh-language-in-blaenau-gwent/>

### **Elected Members**

Before the end of March 2020, it was agreed that, owing to the national lockdown, the Annual General Meeting of Council would need to be held earlier in the year. The meeting was held in April 2020 and was held remotely using teleconferencing facilities. Work is progressing to support all members to use ICT in order to remotely participate in meetings moving forward.

Throughout the 2019/20 year members have engaged in a number of training and learning sessions as part of the Member Development Programme, which is linked to the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan and Committee Forward Work Programmes. All Senior Salary Holders also undertook a PDR which was externally facilitated. From each of these sessions a personal action plan was developed, to be implemented throughout the coming year.

Scrutiny Committee meetings have been promoted on Social Media via Facebook, offering members of the public an opportunity to either attend scrutiny committee meetings or to pose questions on social media which could potentially be raised at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair

## **External and Internal Regulation**

The Council is monitored by a number of regulatory bodies, the main of which are:

- Wales Audit Office (WAO);
- Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW); and
- Estyn.

The Council monitors all proposals for improvement it receives from both internal and external auditors on a quarterly basis through the Finance and Performance Report. Each of the proposals is monitored through the relevant business plan. Periodically, a review of the open proposals is undertaken and presented to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to consider which proposals can close as they have been completed or have moved to business as usual.

A number of audits were undertaken throughout 2019/20. Final reports were received and reported to the relevant Scrutiny committee and Audit Committee throughout 2019/20:

Audit Wales:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 – Ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan
- Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 – Improve the access to and quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, businesses and visitors
- Service User Perspective – Community Engagement
- Corporate Safeguarding
- Delivering with less - Environmental Health Services follow-up review
- Annual Improvement Report 2018-19
- Certificate of Compliance - Audit of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's 2019-20 Improvement Plan

In order to action the proposals within these final reports, the relevant business plans include activity that should address the areas for improvement identified by the Auditor.

## **Well-being Statement**

As part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 all Public Bodies have a duty, under section 7 of the legislation, to publish a Well-being Statement at the same time that they publish their Well-being Objectives. As part of the review of the Corporate Plan in July 2020, each Well-being Objective has been written to contribute to the Well-being Goals and observe the requirements as outlines by the Sustainable Development Principles. Both of which is also observed through our Council Business Planning process. This Assessment of Performance 2019/20 provides detail of activity undertaken by the Council in meeting the Well-being Objectives.

## **Council Governance**

As part of our ongoing governance arrangements, we monitor the implementation of the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives using a well-structured performance management framework which includes business planning, reporting and self-evaluation. The Council operates a

single performance management system which includes the majority of Council planning and holds information in one place in order to avoid duplication.

Everything we do should contribute to the Council's priorities (the 'golden thread') so that all our effort and resources are linked into the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Council's business planning framework is strategically aligned from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation so that all staff can understand their contribution to implementation.

The corporate requirement is for all business plans to be updated at least quarterly. Achievements, challenges, PIs and progress against any internal or external regulatory proposals for improvement are then included within our Finance and Performance Report which is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.

### **How the Council has reviewed the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives**

A lot of the programmes listed in the Plan are ambitious and some are in the early stages of development. Over the course of the four years of the Plan (2018/22) and as part of the requirements of the Act, the Council may look to amend some of the measures and priorities within the Corporate Plan.

In July 2020, Council approved a refreshed Corporate Plan 2020/22. The Plan was reviewed as part of the response and learning to date from COVID 19 and what the Council is aiming to achieve by the end of the Plan in 2022. This has resulted in some amendments being made to the Well-being Objectives in order to better demonstrate the contribution different areas across the Council will contribute to achieving them, enhancing our one Council approach. The overall emphasis of each Well-being Objective has not changed and this includes the supporting activity beneath the Objectives still being aligned to our business planning, monitoring and reporting processes.

The global pandemic has also provided the opportunity to consider if everything previously prioritised was still important and if any areas of importance needed to be highlighted e.g. climate change. It was agreed that a refresh of our corporate priorities should be undertaken to reflect the impact of the pandemic and ensure the focus of business planning up to 2022 delivers on the outcomes needed to support the community and local economy.

From these considerations, the Corporate Plan 2020/22 Outcome Statements are:

- **Protect and enhance our environment and infrastructure to benefit our communities**
- **Support a fairer sustainable economy and community**
- **To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities**
- **An ambitious and innovative council delivering the quality services we know matter to our communities**

There are new areas of activity identified in this refresh including our ambition to become a low carbon Council and Borough; the opportunity to accelerate agile working and the successful deployment of technology to improve how we work and the impact we have, as an organisation, on the environment. The Plan can be found at <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/documents/s5443/CO2007D9%20Appendix%20Refresh%20of%20Corporate%20Priorities.pdf?LLL=0>

## **COVID 19 and Moving Forward**

On 23 March 2020, the UK Government announced an unprecedented UK-wide 'lockdown' in order to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This resulted in the Council moving to the delivery of Critical Services only (as defined in the Emergency Management Plan), redeploying staff into these services, and ceasing all democratic meetings with immediate effect.

The declaration of a national health emergency led to the establishment of Emergency Planning arrangements in the region, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2005. The Gwent Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) was convened for its first meeting on 14th March 2020. The SCG is chaired by Gwent Police and includes the Local Health Board, all five local authorities and Category One Responders.

In accordance with our Emergency Planning arrangements the GOLD Group was established in Blaenau Gwent and commenced meetings on 19th March 2020. This comprises of all members of the Corporate Leadership Team, supported by the Civil Contingency Manager and Communications Manager. The strategic aim of GOLD remains to delay and mitigate as far as practicable the spread and impact of Coronavirus within our community.

Heads of Service and Service Managers were convened as the Emergency Response Team, to support GOLD, with the Aneurin Leisure Trust, Tai Calon and Joint Trade Unions also members of the Team. These Groups continue to meet to ensure the proper management of the emergency response in Blaenau Gwent.

## **Blaenau Gwent's Response to Covid-19**

Since lockdown began the Council has shifted its sole focus to the emergency response. This has resulted in delivery of only critical services with other available resources being redeployed to support the response. There has been a particular focus on Adult Social Services, supporting some of the most vulnerable in our community, refuse collection and recycling and public protection, with Councils taking on significant new enforcement responsibilities under the Coronavirus legislation.

The response involved:

- School closures and the creation of School Hubs to support key workers, by providing childcare for their children, and vulnerable learners.
- Supporting families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) with over 2,000 supported.
- The creation of the locality response teams was created to provide an offer of support the 3,521 shielding residents and 1,353 vulnerable residents (over 70 or living alone). This work included support to the delivery of weekly food boxes, arranging shopping, collection of prescriptions and befriending calls etc.
- Unprecedented support provided to local businesses, enabling them to access Government financial support schemes, with the aim of protecting our local economy from the worse impact of the Pandemic.
- Staff working from home with very low attendance in the office. This has been supported by the rapid deployment of Microsoft TEAMS which is enabling the Council to work in a totally different way based on running virtual teams and meetings.
- Suspending formal council and committee meetings at the end of March. The AGM was held, virtually, on 2nd April 2020 and Emergency Governance arrangements were agreed including establishing an Emergency Committee.
- Elected Members undertaking their roles whilst working remotely. There has been a particular focus on community leadership and Members have worked with Officers to provide links into the community and to ensure that those in need of support were properly identified.



The Welsh Government and local government have had a shared commitment to work in partnership. This shared leadership has been demonstrated and strengthened during this crisis and there has been an unprecedented level of dialogue and engagement and openness, with regular bilateral meetings between Ministers and WLGA spokespersons and weekly meetings between all 22 leaders and Ministers. The Leader of the Council has participated in these weekly Leaders meetings with the WLGA and Ministers, as well as continuing to participate in the Cardiff City Deal and other regional forums.

The financial consequences of the pandemic for local business and the public sector is not yet fully known. Certainly the impact on the Council's financial position alone is significant with the additional costs of dealing with the emergency and the loss of income presenting a severe financial risk.

In an emergency the Council would normally deal with the response and then move into recovery phase to support the community back to normal. What is clear is that dealing with Covid-19 is very different as the pandemic is not yet over. As a Council we will need to continue to respond to the pandemic, whilst moving to the next phase and at the same time supporting some elements of recovery. It has been agreed that a Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) should now be established to lead the Recovery work in Gwent. The nature of this emergency means we expect to run both response and recovery side by side. This will place a further demand on resources.

It is also the case that so much about the way we live our lives has changed and we will not simply return to normal once Covid-19 is under control. There is the opportunity for the Council to build on the positive work of the past three months with the expectation being that we do not seek to return to the way things were before but harness the positive aspects of the response to strengthen and modernise the Council, adopting new working practices and challenging how we did things before, in order to map out an ambitious future, create a stronger organisation and to sustain the strong relationships forged with our communities and partners.

The Council will continue to respond to the emergency but is now re-starting some services in line with the relaxation of lockdown. It will not be a case of delivering services as we have done before, service delivery will have to change to take into account the national framework which will for the foreseeable future involve mandatory social distancing alongside a clear direction to work from home, where possible; the phased 'restart' of wide range of public services and of the economy; and continued proactive work to prevent the further spread of the virus whilst also planning for potential future 'peaks.'

The Council has set out the conditions that will need to be in place for service delivery to re-start:

- Services will only be brought back when Government Legislation/Guidance supports this;
- Critical Services need to be prioritised and re-starting services cannot undermine critical service delivery – this will include the new services stood up to respond to the virus e.g. locality and contact tracing teams;
- Risk assessments, in conjunction with the trade unions, will need to be completed to ensure that it is safe for staff and service users; and
- Where new ways of working have proved effective these should be built into new ways of delivering services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating globally and will have a significant detrimental impact on the economy and the way we live, work, learn and socialise for the foreseeable future. The Council has had to respond to this unprecedented situation and has done so at pace,

bringing an innovative approach to problem solving and changes in service delivery, ensuring that the health and well-being of our residents and communities has been the driver for our decision making and actions.

Despite the impact that the pandemic has had, it is possible to identify positive experience and good practice from the way the Council and community has responded in Blaenau Gwent. It is clear there is a real opportunity to hold onto these positives and to not simply return to normal but to build on our work to create a stronger and more resilient organisation and community.

The areas where this can be demonstrated include the way the Council has adopted new technology and modern working practices at pace, enabling it to continue operating with staff and Elected Members almost entirely working from home. The targeted support provided to the more vulnerable in our communities with services coming together into multi-functional teams and working very effectively with partners and community and voluntary groups. The strong use of data and information to build our business intelligence about our community and the increase in digital service delivery and contact to ensure we can continue to deliver services in a way that is safe for staff and residents. There has been strong support for local businesses – which will need to continue – and a step change in how we communicate with our residents about service changes and the decisions being made by the Council, resulting in a real sense of a better connection with the community and an appreciation of the work of key front-line staff.

The next steps will be really important now to ensure we use this experience to build that stronger organisation and Place in Blaenau Gwent, rather than simply reverting to normal.

The Council also needs to take a community leadership role in identifying the impact of the pandemic on the community and the interventions that need to be put in place to support recovery – this includes recovery for the local economy. Recognising that this is a task that will be delivered in partnership with other organisations across the Region. In support of this a Community Impact Assessment is being prepared to inform the work of the Council and wider Public Service Board.

Blaenau Gwent also needs to continue to be part of the wider regional and national work to recover and create a stronger future. This work should lead into the wider G10 discussions (bringing together public sector leaders from across the region) and the work of the Cardiff City Deal. This will be supported by work undertaken by the regional partners on Horizon Scanning which will inform the recovery work across Gwent.

### **Contact Information**

This document is available electronically at <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/performance/> and in hard copy by request.

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### **Providing Feedback**

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Council's Assessment of Performance 2019/20. Your views are important to us and we want to know what information you would like to see and how you would like to see it reported. Please contact the team on the details above if you would like to give feedback on the Assessment, if there is any information you think could be considered for inclusion in the future, or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.



### **Fersiwn Gymraeg**

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o'r Cynllun Gwella ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

This document acts as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Well-being Statement, prepared under section 7 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and related guidance issued by the Welsh Government.

This Assessment of Performance outlines the Council's responsibility to publish an assessment of performance for the financial year 2019/20 as outlined in section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Council is satisfied that the information given in this plan is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This Council's Assessment of Performance 2019/20 has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.