

**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Annual Scrutiny Report  
2017-18**

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## **Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent**

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report which outlines work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2017-2018. The report describes how Scrutiny Members have challenged the decisions of the Council which have been undertaken to deliver effective outcomes for the people who live and work in Blaenau Gwent.

As with all local authorities in Wales, Scrutiny has become an established part of the Council's decision making process. It plays an integral part in helping to shape local policy and making a substantial contribution towards the work of the Council by acting as a 'critical friend'.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent is made up of four Committees that collectively support the work of the Executive and the Council. The function of Scrutiny allows non-Executive Elected Members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve. The Committees give their views and recommend actions through reporting to the Executive which is the decision-making body of the Council.

Scrutiny Committees also monitor the decisions of the Executive. Scrutiny Members can 'call-in' a decision which has been made by the Executive but has not yet been implemented. This enables consideration to be given as to whether a decision is appropriate and if they feel the Executive needs to reconsider the decision.

Throughout 2017/18 the Council has been working towards implementing a number of new Acts, these include:

### **Welsh Language Requirements**

As part of the Welsh Language Standards there is a requirement under Standard 41 to translate all agendas and minutes from democratic meetings that are open to the public. This includes all Scrutiny Committees agendas and minutes. Since May 2017, the agendas and minutes have been produced bilingually. Members, Council Officers and / or members of the public will also be provided with simultaneous translation in meetings if requested. A minimum notice period of 3 working days is required in order to operate this procedure.

## Social Services and Well-being Act 2014

The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 has been described as providing the most fundamental change in delivery of Social Care Services since 1948 and replaces most of the legislation since that date (except specific legislation in respect of Children Services and Mental Health). The Act was a response to the Welsh Government review of Social Services in 2010 (Sustainable Social Services) which recognised that without radical change to the way we worked, services would become unaffordable in the near future as a result of demographic pressures and the changing expectations of the public at a time of financial austerity. The Act specifically focused on promoting well-being and the use of preventative services to reduce the need for more complex targeted services.

## Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

The Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 has been established to make public bodies think more about the long term; work better with people, communities and each other; look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. For the first time, public bodies listed in the Act, including the Local Authority, must work in a sustainable way. The Local Authority will need to make sure that when making decisions it takes into account the potential impact on future generations. The Act also establishes Public Services Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area in Wales. Each PSB must improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of its area by working to achieve the well-being goals.

### Linking the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme to the seven well-being goals:-

- The Corporate Overview, the Education and Learning, the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development & the Social Services Forward Work Programmes support **A globally responsible Wales**
- The Corporate Overview & the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Forward Work Programmes support **A prosperous Wales**
- The Education and Learning & the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Forward Work Programmes support **A resilient Wales**
- The Education and Learning & the Social Services Forward Work Programmes support **A healthier Wales**
- The Corporate Overview, Education and Learning & the Social Services Forward Work Programmes support **A more equal Wales**
- The Corporate Overview and the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Work Programmes support **A Wales of cohesive communities**
- The Corporate Overview, Education and Learning & the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Forward Work Programmes support **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language**

Sustainable Development Principles	Links to Forward Work Programme Items
<p><b>Thinking for the long term</b>  <i>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCTV – <b>Corporate Overview</b></li> <li>• Attendance Management Task and Finish Group – <b>Corporate Overview</b></li> <li>• Welsh in Education Strategic Plan Update – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools – Band B Programme 2019-2024 – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• Libraries Task and Finish Group – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> <li>• Adult Services Assisted Transport – <b>Social Services</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Taking an integrated approach</b>  <i>Considering how the Council's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Independently in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Strategy – Annual Progress Update – <b>Social Services</b></li> <li>• Draft Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy – <b>Social Services</b></li> <li>• Street Scene Survey Results – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Taking a preventative approach</b>  <i>How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help the Council to meet its objectives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance and Performance report – <b>Corporate Overview</b></li> <li>• Improving Schools Programme – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• Pest Control Contract – Performance Update to end November 2017 – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> <li>• Update on the Welsh Government Childcare Pilot Offer – <b>Social Services</b></li> <li>• Update on LAC Population in Blaenau Gwent and Implementation of the Safe Reduction of LAC Strategy – <b>Social Services</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Collaborating</b>  <i>Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the Council itself) that could help the Council to meet its well-being objectives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Spaces Protection Orders – <b>Corporate Overview</b></li> <li>• School Attendance and Exclusions – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• Aneurin Leisure Trust Performance 2017/18 – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> <li>• Public Protection Enforcement Policy – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> <li>• Proposal to Develop Fostering Services on a Regional Basis – <b>Social Services</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Involvement</b>  <i>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council serves</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• Draft Well-being in Education Strategy and Good Practice Guide for Schools – <b>Education and Learning</b></li> <li>• Waste and Recycling Task and Finish Group – <b>Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development</b></li> <li>• Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020 – Annual Report – <b>Corporate Overview</b></li> </ul>

## How we scrutinise

The Council strives to ensure that the work of the Scrutiny Committees links effectively to the strategic work of the Council as outlined in the Council's Well-being Objectives 2017/18. The Council's Well-being Objectives include the Council's Improvement Objectives which focus on achieving improved outcomes for citizens.

Here are some examples of the contribution that Scrutiny makes towards the work of the Council:

- **Policy Development & Review** - A number of policies have been examined in detail by Scrutiny; either through policy review or by participation in the development of new policies.
- **Performance Management** - Scrutiny plays an important role in promoting continuous improvement in the way in which the Council delivers its services to the community. The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee challenges performance on a quarterly basis via the Finance and Performance Report. Members have the opportunity to request further information and make appropriate recommendations in order to help drive improvements.
- **Financial Monitoring** – A Joint Finance Scrutiny Committee is held quarterly whereby information for both revenue and capital budgets is considered. The budget setting process is also included as part of this remit.
- **Task and Finish Work** - Scrutiny Committees often establish Task and Finish Groups. These are usually a smaller group of Members who are tasked by their Committee to undertake a review or investigation and make recommendations back to the appropriate Committee for consideration prior to the recommendations being submitted to Executive for consideration.
- **Briefing Sessions** – When Scrutiny members require additional information on a subject that is not suitable for a formal Scrutiny Committee, they can request that a Member briefing session be held. This provides Elected Members with additional information that should support them in their roles as councillors.
- **Site Visits** – It is often important for Scrutiny Members to undertake site visits in order to gain an understanding of the places they are discussing. Often Members are required to consider the workings of a project or the closure of a facility, by undertaking a site visit they are able to gather evidence for their Scrutiny discussions.

## **Developments in Blaenau Gwent**

The Council has improved its arrangements for developing and reviewing the Scrutiny and Executive Forward Work Programmes to ensure that they are fit for purpose and appropriately align. The process for the 2017/18 Forward Work Programmes included:

- Topics identified from Agenda Management discussions and any common areas
- Initial draft items to be considered by lead officers including the identification of additional items following self-evaluation of their business plans
- Information provided to current Scrutiny Chairs to consider the previous year's work programmes
- Consideration of the self-evaluation information by Corporate Performance Team to be included in FWP
- Meeting with officers to discuss draft Forward Work Programmes
- Meeting with officers to discuss the potential topics for inclusion on the Council, Executive and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes
- Meeting with CLT, Leader & Deputy on draft Executive and Council FWP
- Meeting with individual Chair and Vice-Chairs on the draft Scrutiny FWP
- Final sign off by the full committees as part of the new cycle in the first scrutiny meetings of the new cycle.

The Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes remain fluid throughout the cycle so that any additional or urgent items can be considered.

Following each Scrutiny Committee meeting an Evaluation and Work Planning Session with all members of the committee is held. The purpose is to discuss the items for the next agenda and to consider if any amendments need to be made and what information should be included in the reports. At the Agenda Preparation Meeting which is held the week following the Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair lead discussions on the next agenda with relevant officers. All members of the Scrutiny Committee are able to attend this meeting.

As part of the scrutiny process, when a recommendation has been added to or amended by the Committee, the Chair of the Committee is invited to attend Executive to give an overview of discussions at the meeting and reasons for amendment to the recommendation. If then the scrutiny recommendation is accepted in part or rejected the relevant Executive Member is invited to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to explain the Executive Committee's decision. Executive Members are also invited to attend scrutiny committee meetings on specific topics.

Agenda items for the next meeting of a Scrutiny Committee has been added as a standing item on the agenda, in order for members and officers to discuss and consider the items proposed. This gives members the opportunity to request any information they would like to see in the reports or to request additional items.

## **Training and Development**

A Member training and development programme is in place and includes a number of mandatory sessions as part of the programme. These were introduced following feedback from Members as part of the training needs analysis survey. To support this, a sanctions protocol has also been developed should Members not attend the mandatory sessions.

A Member Training and Development Programme has been developed as part of the Council's commitment to the development of Members, for implementation during the 2018/19 year.

Development and support arrangements for the scrutiny function include:-

- An established scrutiny action plan monitored via Democratic Services Committee who recommend the plan to Council for approval;
- Chairs and Vice-Chairs of scrutiny meetings; and
- Internal evaluation opportunities in each cycle.

Blaenau Gwent is committed to championing the cause of Scrutiny both internally and externally to the Council. As part of the continued commitment to improving the Scrutiny function, Blaenau Gwent actively participates in various networks across Wales all of which provide very different views and aspects of Scrutiny.

## **WAO Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the future? (August 2017)**

In August 2017, the Council received a project brief from the WAO for them to explore with councils how 'fit for the future' their scrutiny functions are. This will include considering how they are responding to current challenges, including the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act), in relation to their scrutiny activity, as well as how councils are beginning to undertake scrutiny of public service boards. The WAO will examine how well placed councils are to respond to future challenges including continued pressure on public finances and the possible move towards more regional working between local authorities.

The field work, including interviews and document reviews, has been undertaken and the Council is awaiting feedback. Any proposals for improvement will be included within the Scrutiny Action Plan which is monitored by the Democratic Services Committee and Council.

## Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee



**Chair: Councillor Lyn Elias**  
**Ward: Brynmawr**



**Vice-Chair: Councillor Martin Cook**  
**Ward: Abertillery**

### Chair's Overview

“The first year of the new administration’s Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee has seen a mix of new and experienced Members coming together to understand the challenges faced by the Council, and with a desire to work together to achieve outcomes for the communities of Blaenau Gwent, regardless of political allegiances. We have enjoyed a good working relationship with officers whilst delivering suitable and robust challenge where required. Topics are debated where appropriate with all Members contributing their views. Presentations and reports submitted to the committee have been of a good standard and contain appropriate detail to allow Members to understand the various topics.

The Forward Work Programme provides the committee with a structured plan to allow us to meet our obligations, and a number of task and finish groups have been established to look at certain issues for the organisations. (e.g. Absence Management, Review of IT provision). The Welsh Audit Office has observed a number of committee meetings, and comments received suggest they are pleased with what they have seen to date.

As part of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs meetings we have collectively identified a need to show what outcomes the scrutiny process is having on Members of the public.

As Chair, I would to thank all Members of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee, along with all officers who have attended, for their support and advice.”

<b>Committee Membership</b>	
Councillors: Joanne Collins Malcolm Cross Gareth A. Davies Gareth L. Davies Malcolm Day Keith Hayden	John Hill Greg Paulsen Keith Pritchard Bob Summers Joanna Wilkins David Wilkshire Lisa Winnett

This Committee is responsible for scrutinising the areas of work under the remit of the Leader / Corporate Services Portfolio. These areas include: Financial Reporting, Organisational Development, Legal/ Registration, Policy and Performance, Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme, Communications and Marketing, Welsh Language and Equalities.

## **Key areas of work the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee undertook during 2017-2018**

### **Finance and Performance Report**

The Council's Finance and Performance Report details the high level Council performance and financial activity undertaken throughout the year. The report is developed quarterly and sets out the key activities and measures used to monitor the Council's performance reflecting the current Well-being Objectives and the priorities we are working towards. The report includes information in relation to finance, performance, priorities and risk.

### **Workplace Transformation**

The Workplace Transformation Programme is a key strategic objective of the Council in order to deliver and sustain cost savings and improved service benefits from agile working. As part of Workplace Transformation, the Council has looked at areas where efficiencies and financial savings can be achieved through the use of technology and moving towards a paperless environment which included a review of the ICT for Members' and working in a paperless environment. A Task and Finish Group was established with officers and members in 2015/16 in order to take forward the paperless environment. In February 2017 a report was presented to Committee detailing the outcome of the Task and Finish Group and listed a number of options for members to consider moving towards a paperless environment. Following the Committee recommendation to Council in March 2017 it was agreed that any decisions should be made by the New Council following the elections in May 2017.

Following a report being presented to Committee in July 2017 and recommendations made; in January 2018 Council agreed that a new policy be adopted whereby each Member would be provided with a laptop with access to the Council's Wi-Fi, to use for their Council business.

### **Welsh Language Standards**

The Council received the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice in September 2015. The Standards impact every Directorate's internal and external facing processes. A Welsh Language Standards mandatory training session was arranged for all Members. A report was presented to the Committee in November 2016, in order to establish a Task and Finish Group to assist in the development of a draft Welsh Language Promotion Strategy. The draft five-year Welsh Language Promotion Strategy was presented to Committee for consideration prior to recommending approval to the Executive Committee before final endorsement by Council in March 2017. The Committee received an annual progress report in June 2017.

### **Staff Attendance Management Policy Review Task and Finish Group**

Following a presentation of the Finance and Performance report, Members highlighted the need for the Council to work towards improving staff absence; Members' requested that a Task and Finish Group be established in order to consider the issues being faced by the Council. The group was established in January 2018 and since that time work has progressed and Members of the Task and Finish Group have visited other Councils to view their policies and procedures. A report on the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group will be presented to Committee early in 2018/19 cycle of meetings.

### **Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports**

The following WAO reports were presented and accepted by the Committee and where appropriate the Chair invited a representative from the WAO to present the report:

- Summary of Local Reviews BGCBC;
- Savings Planning; and
- Good Governance when Determining Significant Change.

### **Policies, Plans and Strategies**

The Committee scrutinised and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents for Blaenau Gwent:

- Risk Management Strategy; and
- Collective Grievance Procedure.

### **Monitoring and Progress Updates**

As part of their monitoring role, the Committee received an update against:

- SRS Partnership Working – Half Yearly;
- Corporate Improvement Plan (Stage 2) 2016/17 – Assessment of Performance;
- Treasury Management Mid-Year Review;
- Strategic Equality Plan; and
- Contracts Over £500,000.

## **Other Committee Work**

In addition to the formal Scrutiny meeting, a number of Member briefing sessions were held to ensure that Members are kept informed of key work areas. These briefing sessions enabled Members to identify further specific areas of work for Scrutiny. These areas include:

- Well-being of Future Generations Act;
- Equalities and Diversity; and
- Social Media and Communications.

## Social Services Scrutiny Committee



**Chair: Councillor Stephen Thomas**  
**Ward: Tredegar Central & West**



**Vice-Chair: Councillor Julie Holt**  
**Ward: Abertillery**

### Chair's Overview

"Despite a wholesale change in membership of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee following the local government elections last year, the new Committee has adjusted to their roles making steady progress to carry out a thorough programme of robust scrutiny and challenge.

During the year the Committee has worked on a diverse and wide-ranging work programme; notable examples include *Annual and Quarterly Director reports, Living Independently in the 21st Century Updates, Supporting People and Community Care Contracts, Commissioning Updates and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards*. The committee has also scrutinised, monitored and made recommendations on a host of collaborative ventures including *A Regional Approach to providing Fostering Services under the National Fostering Framework, National Adoption Service and Regional Partnership Board reports*.

In July, we scrutinised the *Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy/Development of Edge of Care Team* report, which was brought forward to deal with the single most significant cost pressure to the Authority in recent years. After exhaustive questioning and deliberations, the Committee made key recommendations that were subsequently agreed by the Executive, a decision was also taken to receive a series of monitoring reports to examine the effectiveness of this crucial strategy going forward.

I would like to thank all Members of the Committee and Officers from the Department for their hard work and commitment during another challenging year for Social Services."

<b>Committee Membership</b>	
Councillors: Derrick Bevan Gareth A. Davies Keith Hayden Stewart Healy Jonathan Millard Mandy Moore	John P. Morgan Keith Pritchard Keri Rowson Tim Sharrem Tommy Smith Bob Summers Joanna Wilkins

This Committee is responsible for scrutinising the areas of work under the remit of the Social Services Portfolio. This area includes: Children's Services (including Families First, Flying Start, Play and Early Years), Adult Services, Older People Services, Contracts and Commissioning.

## **Key areas of work the Social Services Scrutiny Committee undertook during 2017-2018**

### **Performance and Regulatory Information**

It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services. The Council undertakes this role by developing a report on both a quarterly and annual basis. As part of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 there are new requirements for the annual report and these have been reflected as part of the quarterly reporting.

### **Eligibility Criteria for Assisted Transport Provision**

The Committee received a report in March 2016 to consider an eligibility assessment policy, members requested additional information to support them in their consideration of the options, namely:

- An Options Appraisal of the Authority's Transport Fleet;
- Charges to service users; and
- Impact on services provision/attendance.

An amended report was presented to the Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016, members were asked to consider a number of options on the assessment of eligibility for transport for service users. The committee, however, felt that definitive figures were required on the amount of savings that could be achieved and the number of service users that could be affected. They requested the department undertake a review of all service users over the next year and submit a report detailing the outcome of the review, at which time members would have a full picture of the effects of any recommendation made to the Executive Committee.

In September 2017 Members recommended that the Department should proceed with a consultation on the Draft Assisted Transport policy to include charging for the service or continuing with a free service, for approval by the Executive. Following conclusion of the consultation exercise a further report will be presented to the Committee during the 2018/19 committee cycle.

### **Alternative Methods of Service Delivery Task and Finish Group**

The Task and Finish Group was established in July 2013 to explore alternative methods of service delivery. The first meeting was held in December 2013 and the group has continued to meet periodically. The Task and Finish Group has been instrumental in determining the future direction of some of the Social Services Department's Provider Services including:

- The remaining Home Care service being retained within the Council.

- Developing a new Reablement model of service between “in house” Home Care and the Community Resource Team (Gwent Frailty Team).
- Developing a sustainable business plan for the Community Options Café/ catering enterprise linked to our Community Options provision, following social business principles.
- Undertaking a pilot project at one of our Extra Care schemes (Llys Nant Y Mynydd) adopting a relationship based approach to providing care and support.

In June 2017, a report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee to update on progress made, and to seek nominations for Membership of the group, following the May 2017 elections. The Committee agreed the new membership with a view to a meeting being arranged. Owing to changes within the Directorate the Task and Finish Group has not met during the 2017/18 but progression of the group has been scheduled into the 2018/19 committee cycle.

### **Policies, Plans and Strategies**

The Committee scrutinised and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents for Blaenau Gwent:

- Safe Reduction of Looked After Children (LAC) Strategy;
- Assisted Transport Policy;
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy; and
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy.

### **Monitoring and Progress Updates**

As part of their monitoring role, the Committee received updates against:

- Annual Report of the Director of Social Services;
- Review of Supporting People and Community Care Contracts and Commissioning;
- Childcare Pilot Progress;
- Living Independently in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards;
- Looked After Children;
- National Adoption Service; and
- Corporate Parenting.

## **Other Committee Work**

In addition to the formal Scrutiny meeting, a number of member briefing sessions were held to ensure that Members are kept informed of key work areas. These briefing sessions enabled Members to identify further specific areas of work for Scrutiny. These areas include:

- Overview of Key Legislation and Corporate Responsibilities – Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding;
- Flying Start;
- Families First; and
- Fostering and Adoption.

## Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee



**Chair: Councillor Haydn Trollope**  
**Ward: Tredegar Central & West**



**Vice-Chair: Joanne Collins**  
**Ward: Llanhilleth**

### **Chair's Overview**

“As Chair of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee I feel privileged to have had the support of the whole committee during this challenging year, and was proud to be informed that the Committee had the highest Member attendance throughout 2017/18.

I can honestly say there was fair and challenging questions from all members, we truly acted as a critical friend. It has also got to be said that the committee was fully supported by all officers of the Council and other agencies.

It was pleasing for me to see that we have continued on the improvement journey that previous committees had started and I believe that without the support I had from the previous chairman I would not have been able to do the job I have done.

It is also pleasing to see the categorisation of Blaenau Gwent schools has risen over the past year and as previously stated, we are on a journey there is still work to do.”

<b>Committee Membership</b>	
Councillors: Peter Baldwin Martyn Cook Malcolm Day Phillip Edwards Lyn Elias Stewart Healy	John Hill Julie Holt Hedley McCarthy John C. Morgan John P. Morgan Lee Parsons Tommy Smith

**Co-opted Members:**

Mr. Tim Baxter (Diocesan Education Body - R.C. Church)

Mr. Alun Williams (Church in Wales)

This Committee is responsible for scrutinising the areas of work under the remit of the Education Portfolio. This area of work includes policies, strategies, provision, planning and management of Education, Schools, Youth Services and services for Young People (including Employment & Skills and NEETS).

## **Key areas of work the Education, Active Living and Learning Scrutiny Committee undertook during 2017-2018:**

### **Education Achievement Service (EAS)**

The EAS was established in 2012 to provide a regional school improvement service focused on challenge and support to schools. It provides front line services, such as, literacy, numeracy, Welsh, 14-19, foundation phase, leadership, governor support. The Welsh Government sees the service as a vehicle to drive new national strategies and policies, providing additional support services for science, welsh bacalaureate, GCSE PISA, literacy / numeracy framework, modern languages, etc.

The EAS has a three year business plan and the Committee receives an annual report on the Draft EAS Business Plan for the coming year to be approved by the Executive Committee. Progress has been made towards the Business Plan and LA Annexe during 2017/18 and performance has improved in the Foundation Phase; Key Stage 2 (88.4%) and Key Stage 3 (83.4%) of pupils achieving the core subject indicator and this information is reported regularly to the Scrutiny Committee via a range of performance reports, such as progress toward targets information and progress of schools causing concern. The EAS Business Plan and LA Annexe support the Directorate Business Plans.

### **Well-being in Education Strategy and Good Practice Guide for Schools**

During 2017/18 nationally, regionally and locally there were a combination of legislative and key policy changes which required the Education Directorate and schools to change and improve how they work in order to enhance the well-being of children and young people. With this in mind in October 2017 a report was presented to Committee to consider a Draft Strategy for Well-being in Education and also the accompanying guidance for schools to develop good practice for improving well-being outcomes for learners. The strategy and guide was piloted at Brynmawr Foundation School and pupils of the school were invited to the scrutiny committee meeting to present their findings and the impact the strategy had on pupils at the school. The committee was pleased to hear the positive impact the strategy and guide had on the school and its pupils and recommended the report for approval by the Executive Committee.

### **Performance Information**

Throughout the year, the Committee has also scrutinised regular performance information on:

- Pupil attainment;
- Pupil attendance; and
- School performance.

## **Education Policies, Plans and Strategies**

The Committee scrutinised and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents for Blaenau Gwent:

- Pregnancy of School Age Children;
- Home to School and College Transport Policy;
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- Corporate Safeguarding Policy;
- Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education 2019-2020;
- Review of School Organisation Policy; and
- EAS Business Plan.

## **Monitoring and Progress Updates**

As part of their monitoring role, the Committee received updates against:

- Summary of School Inspections;
- Inspire to Achieve / Work Project Update;
- 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Programme Progress against Band A programme; and
- Improving Schools Programme.

## **Other Committee Work**

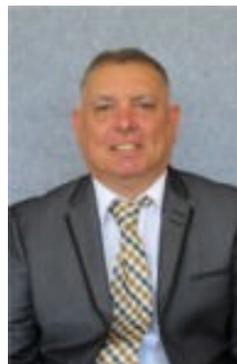
In addition to the formal Scrutiny meeting, a number of briefing sessions were held to ensure that Members are kept informed of key work areas. These briefing sessions enabled Members to identify further specific areas of work for Scrutiny. These areas include:

- Post 16 Learning Zone – Learner Outcomes;
- Results of Bullying Survey;
- Work of the School Well-being Task and Finish Group;
- School Finance – How a Budget is made up;
- The Journey – Coming out of Special Measures; and
- Elective Home Education.

## Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee



**Chair: Councillor Phillip Edwards**  
**Ward: Ebbw Vale North**



**Vice-Chair: Councillor Lee Parsons**  
**Ward: Llanhilleth**

### **Chair's Overview**

"The Environment, Regeneration & Economic Development Scrutiny Committee has one of the largest portfolios, in spite of this what was expected to be challenging, turned out to be an extremely productive year.

Due to the diverse background and professionalism of the Scrutiny Committee members, questions put to officers have been in-depth and comprehensive, enabling them to fully scrutinise reports and hold officers to account.

Throughout the year a number of Task and Finish Groups were set up to look into various council services. The groups, working with officers, have made a number of recommendations that will result in improving these services, which will ultimately benefit our community.

The year ahead will no doubt be even more challenging; however I am convinced that this committee will face that challenge with vigour.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the support staff for their help and guidance through the year."

<b>Committee Membership</b>	
Councillors: Peter Baldwin Gareth L. Davies Denzil Hancock Wayne Hodgins Mark Holland Hedley McCarthy	Jonathan Millard Mandy Moore John C. Morgan Greg Paulsen Keri Rowson Tim Sharrem Godfrey Thomas

The Committee is responsible for scrutinising areas of work under the remit of the Deputy Leader /Environment Portfolio and the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio. The areas include policies, strategy, provision, planning and management of Regeneration; Industrial Development, Housing, Highways, Street Cleansing, Waste Management, Sustainable Development, Recycling, Environmental Health, Asset Management, Leisure, Libraries, Arts and Culture and the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

## **Key areas of work the Environment, Economy & Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee undertook during 2017-2018**

### **Aneurin Leisure Trust**

As part of the Management Agreement between the Council and Aneurin Leisure Trust the Committee has a role to consider and monitor certain elements of the Trust's Work Programme. In January 2018 the Trust presented its Six Monthly (April-September 2017) Performance report, which detailed that overall performance during the period was good across a number of service areas, including that the numbers of visitors to Parc Bryn Bach had risen, these improvements were acknowledged by Members and they also made number of suggestions to promote the park to further raise the number of visitors to Parc Bryn Bach.

### **Task and Finish Groups:**

- **Libraries Service:** The task and finish group was initially established in April 2016 to undertake review of the Library Service. This work was completed in January 2017. In September 2017 a report was presented to committee to establish if the Task and Finish Group was still required. Members agreed that Libraries were important to the community and agreed that the task and finish group should continue to look at areas to improve and promote the libraries services, including: explore co-location of services (creative use of space and multi-agency use) based on community need; review opportunities for alternative models of delivery; explore opportunities to develop schools' library service. A recommendation report from the task and finish group is expected early in the 2018/19 cycle of meetings.
- **Waste Policies:** The task and finish group was established in October 2016 to revise and amend the existing policies of Domestic Kerbside Collection, Household Waste and Recycling and Enforcement policies. A report was presented to Committee in September 2017 and the Committee recommended the policies for approval by Council with the addition that an implementation date of April 2018 be set with a six month period of marketing and engagement with the public. Council approved the policies in September 2017. The task and finish group continued to work with the Waste Services Team in preparation for the introduction of the policies. In March 2018 the task and finish group recommendations were presented and endorsed by the Committee, namely, the introduction of side waste enforcement and increasing the number of waste streams collected at the HWRC. The options will be presented to Executive for approval on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018.
- **Cemetery Rules and Policies:** In June 2017 the task and finish group was established to review the Rules and policies for Cemeteries in Blaenau Gwent. In March 2018 recommendations from the task and finish group were presented to Committee who recommended approval by Council. A further report is to be presented to Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018. The recommendations from the Scrutiny committee will be presented to full Council for approval.
- **Town Centre's Strategy:** In February 2018 the Committee agreed to establish a task and finish group to review the Blaenau Gwent Town Centre Strategy. A report detailing the task and finish group recommendations is expected early in the 2018/19 cycle of meetings.

## **Policies, Plans and Strategies**

The Committee scrutinised and provided their views and recommendations on the following Plans and Policy documents for Blaenau Gwent:

- Local Development Plan Annual Review;
- Public Protection Collaboration – Joint Enforcement Policy;
- Review of Strategic Asset Management Plan and Development of new Five year Plan; and
- Introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices for Flying Tipping.

## **Monitoring and Progress Updates**

As part of their monitoring role, the Committee received progress updates against:

- Local Housing Strategy;
- Flying Tipping;
- Six Bells Renewal Area Project Update;
- Homelessness Performance Update;
- Litter and Dog Control Offences – Annual report;
- Vibrant and Viable Places closure report;
- Pest Control Performance Update; and
- Annual Review of Flood Management Plan.

## **Other Committee Work**

In addition to the formal Scrutiny meeting, a number of briefing sessions were held to ensure that Members are kept informed of key work areas. These briefing sessions enabled Members to identify further specific areas of work for Scrutiny. These areas include:

- Housing Allocations Policy;
- Highway Maintenance Plan and Streetscene;
- Energy Programme;
- Enterprise Zone; and
- Aneurin Leisure Trust Overview.

## **Joint Scrutiny Committees**

### **Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee**

The Council has a responsibility under the Children Act 2004, to make arrangements for safeguarding and to promote the welfare of children within their boundaries. These arrangements should ensure that all children and young people are safe and include the identification of vulnerable learners in need or at risk of significant harm. The Council also needs to maintain a record of staff suitability. Importantly, the Council has a duty to promote safe practices and create a culture of safety.

Safeguarding reports are presented to a Joint Committee of the Education and Learning & the Social Services Scrutiny members. These monitoring arrangements provide an opportunity for the Joint Committee to monitor progress and provide appropriate challenge in order to make further improvements and to ensure that the Council's safeguarding processes remain effective. Adult safeguarding performance information is now also reported in the Joint Committee.

The Chairs of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee & the Social Services Scrutiny Committee also chair the Joint Committee on a rotational basis.

### **Joint Finance Scrutiny Committee**

On a quarterly basis, a Joint Committee of all Scrutiny Members is held which receives financial information relating to all portfolio areas. This gives members the opportunity to monitor the information as well as refer specific service items onto the relevant Scrutiny Committee. By scrutinising the financial position of the Council on a quarterly basis Members are able to advise and influence the areas that require most focus.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

**Financial Efficiency Programme:** The Financial Efficiency Programme has been developed to address the financial challenges that the Council faces. Members of the Joint Committee receive quarterly monitoring reports on the projects that are being monitored as part of the Programme using the Council's Project Management Framework. Members have been able to request additional detail, provide challenge and formulate recommendations that contribute to the decisions made in relation to the governance arrangements and associated projects.

## **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs) replacing the voluntary Local Service Boards in each local authority area, to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being by strengthening joint working across all public services. To ensure local accountability there is a requirement under the Act to establish scrutiny arrangements for the PSB.

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee acts as the PSB Scrutiny Committee, with Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees invited as members when acting in the role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee and was established in February 2017.

The PSB Scrutiny Committee will operate in the same way as other Scrutiny Committees but will hold the Public Services Board to account rather than the Executive Committee and will also be responsible for holding the collective body of the PSB to account rather than individual bodies.

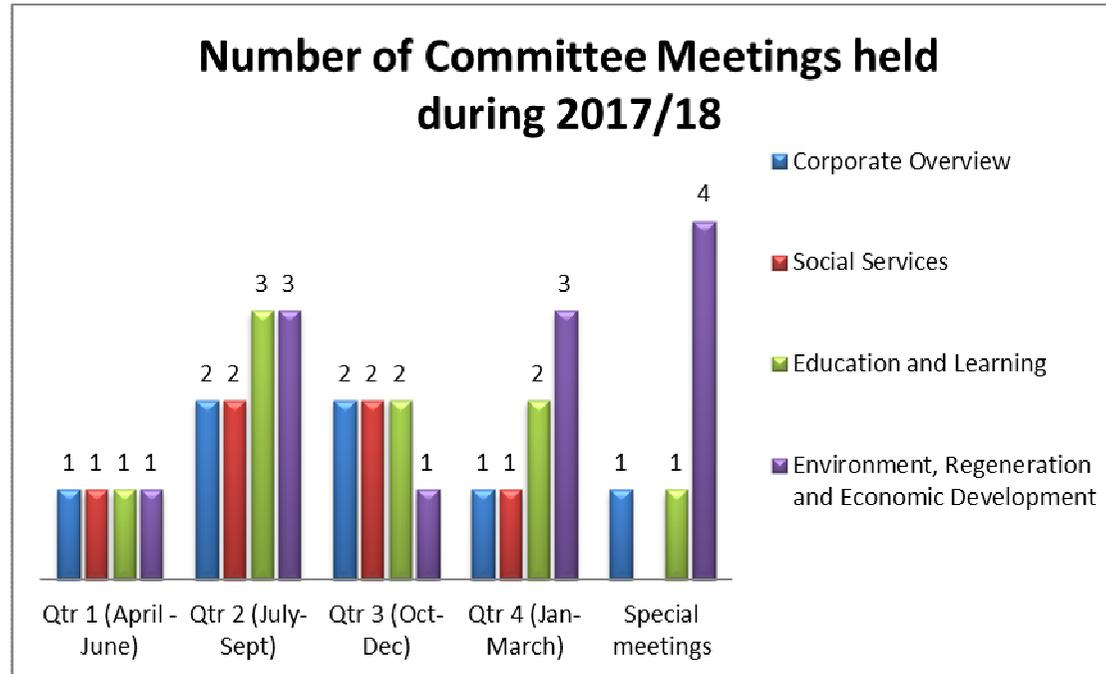
The role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Review and scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by the Public Services Board;
- Review or scrutinise the board's governance arrangements;
- Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- Consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- Carry out other functions in relation to the board that are imposed on it by the Act.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Public Services Board Committee.

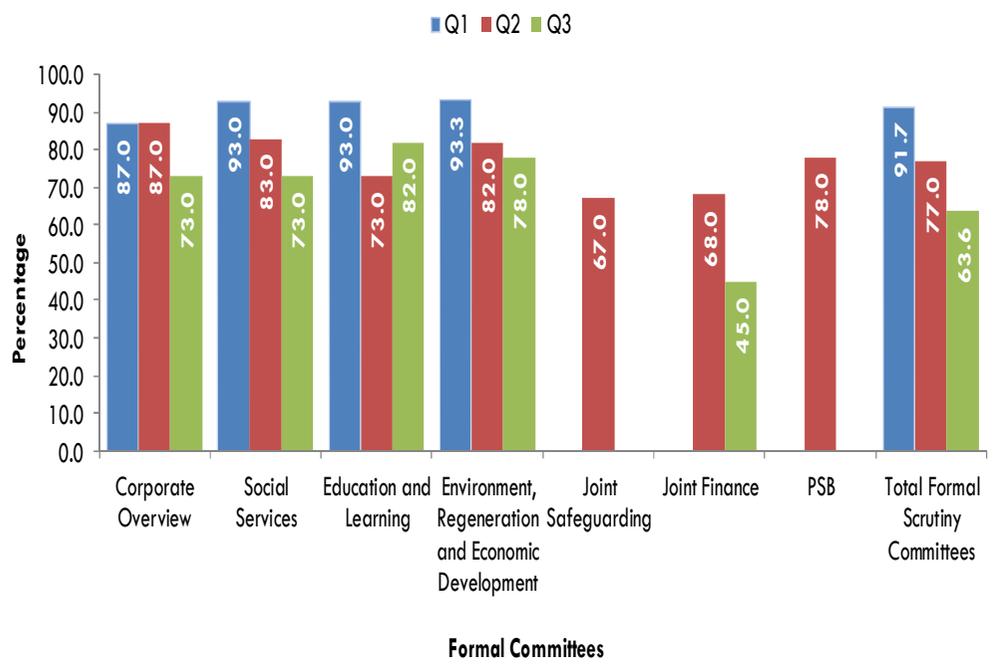
## Scrutiny Committee Performance

The chart below shows the number of committee meetings held during 2017/18 and the number of special meetings arranged.

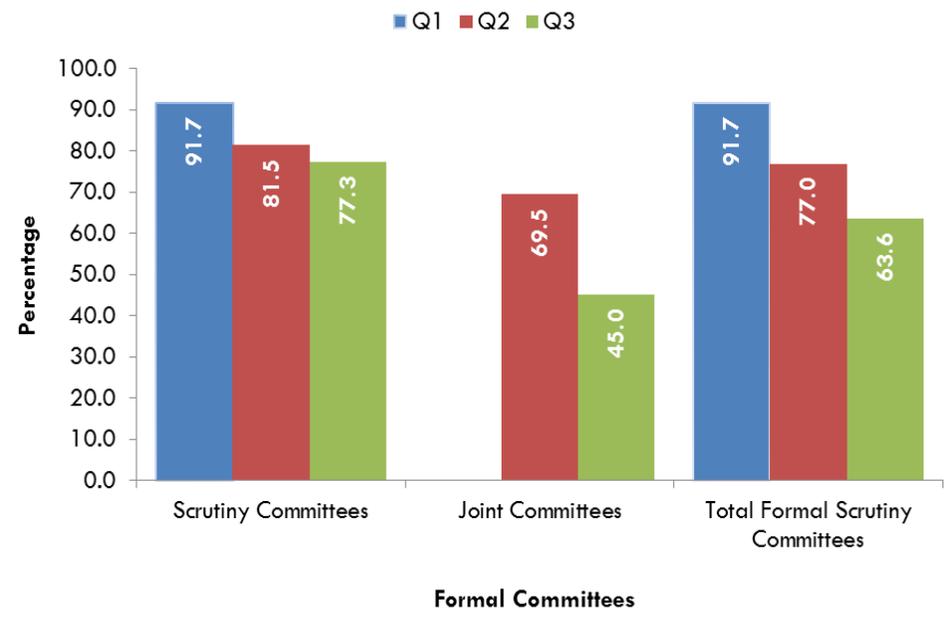


Also during 2017/18, 3 Joint Finance Scrutiny Committee and 1 Special, 1 Joint Safeguarding Scrutiny Committee and 2 Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee meetings were held.

### Member Attendance at Formal Scrutiny Committee Meetings

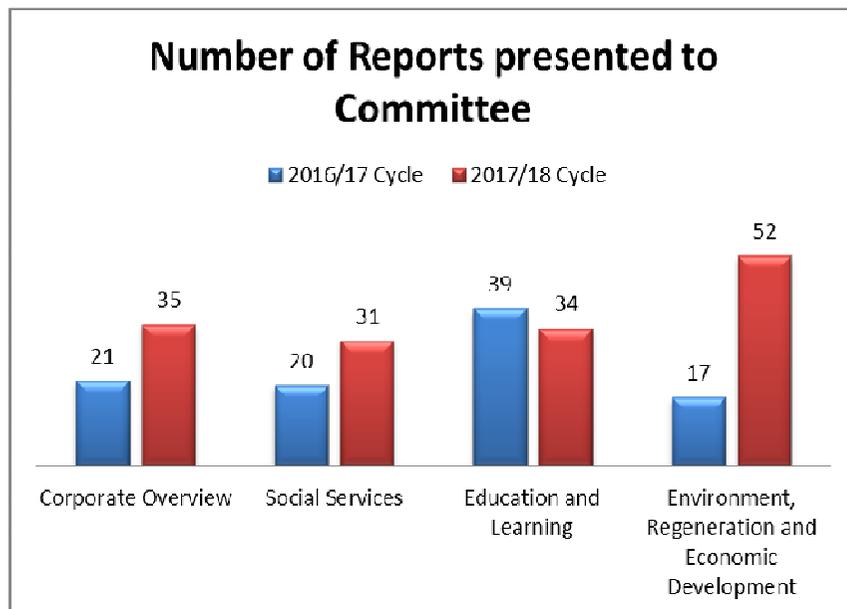


### Member Attendance by Meeting Type

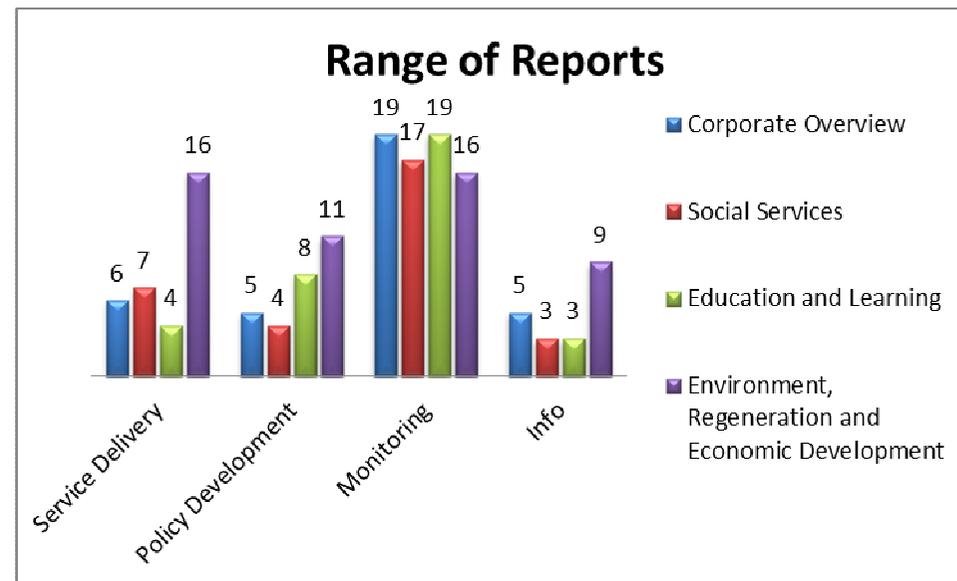


The below chart shows the number of reports submitted through the Scrutiny Committee process during 2017/18, compared to 2016/17.

It should be noted that in 2016/17 the Leisure and Active Living area of work sat within the then Education, Active Living and Learning Scrutiny Committee and was moved to the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee in 2017/18. However, of the 39 reports presented to committee during 2016/17, 5 of those were the Leisure and Active Living area of work and in 2017/18, 3 of the 52 reports were related to the Leisure and Active Living area of work.



During the cycle the Scrutiny Committees consider and challenge a range of reports, as well as receiving information reports on new areas of work. The chart identifies the range of reports via category:-



**Note:** This is the main category for each report; some reports may fit into more than one category.

### Public Involvement

During 2017/18, 5 scrutiny committee meetings have been promoted via Facebook, 2 Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee meetings and 3 Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committees.

## **Scrutiny Development**

Scrutiny arrangements in Blaenau Gwent are continuously evaluated and revised as part of our development work.

In order to build on previous work and to further improve the Scrutiny function, internal and external evaluations have assisted with the continuation of strengthening our Scrutiny function.

We have a comprehensive evaluation process for Scrutiny that is used to identify where further improvements in the Scrutiny process need to be made. The evaluation process includes:

- An Evaluation Session for Members at the end of each formal Scrutiny meeting;
- Officer and Member feedback is sought via the distribution of a questionnaire; and
- Annual evaluation with both and officers.

The areas of further improvement that are identified will be included in our planned work for Scrutiny for 2018-2019 and are set out in our Scrutiny action plan, that is monitored by Democratic Services Committee. The main areas of the plan for Scrutiny include:

- A review of the Forward Work Programme Criteria;
- Development of the Forward Work Programmes linked to the Council's new Corporate Plan and recent Senior Management Review;
- A review of the printing of Democratic papers at meetings;
- The scoping of a business case for the provision of webcasting;
- Member attendance on the Corporate Website following every meeting; and
- A revision of the Corporate Report Format.

In 2017/18 we continued to encourage public involvement by identifying topics of public interest at Agenda Management meetings and advertising the committee meetings via social media. In 2018/19 we will continue to promote committee meetings via Social Media and will consider other avenues to encourage public involvement in the Scrutiny Committee process.

Members of the public can access information via the Blaenau Gwent website on the 'Get Involved with Democracy' section.

## Contact Information

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

### Head of Democratic Services

**Bernadette Elias**

Tel.: (01495) 355016

Email:

[Bernadette.elias@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:Bernadette.elias@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

### Corporate Performance Manager

**Gemma Wasley**

Tel.: (01495 355089)

Email:

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

### Scrutiny Officer/Adviser

**Elizabeth Thomas**

Tel: (01495) 354795

Email:

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

**Address:** Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Civic Centre  
Ebbw Vale  
Gwent NP23 6XB

**Web:** [www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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

Contact details for Councillors can be found on our website at [www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

### Getting involved

You are invited to contribute towards the Scrutiny process and encouraged to suggest items for the work programme or attend meetings to ask questions, please do so by contacting the Scrutiny Officer or by responding through the website.

You can also observe any public meeting from the Public Gallery.

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

Well-being Objectives 2017-18 –

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/policies-plans-strategies/well-being-objectives-2017/>

Single Integrated Plan –

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Single Integrated Plan](#)

Council Minutes and Reports –

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/councillors-committees/>