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Blaenau Gwent

Our Ref./Ein Cyf.
Your Ref./Eich Cyf.
Contact:/Cysylltwch â: Gwasanaethau Democraidd

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Iau, 22 Medi 2022 Dydd Iau, 22 Medi 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR

A meeting of the Cyfarfod Cyffredinol y Cyngor will be held in Siambr y Cyngor, Canolfan Ddinesig on Dydd Iau, 29ain Medi, 2022 at 10.00 am.

Yours faithfully

Damien McCann
Interim Chief Executive

AGENDA

Pages

1. CYFIEITHU AR Y PRYD

Mae croeso i chi ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg yn y cyfarfod, mae angen o leiaf 3 diwrnod gwaith o hysbysiad ymlaen llaw os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais.

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg a byddwn yn cyfathrebu gyda chi yn eich dewis iaith, dim ond i chi rhoi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn creu unrhyw oedi.

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh and English and we will communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to any delay.

Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a gafwyd.

4. CYHOEDDIADAU'R CADEIRYDD

Derbyn cyhoeddiadau'r Cadeirydd.

5. CYFARFOD CYFFREDINOL Y CYNGOR 5 - 16

Ystyried ac os credir yn addas gymeradwyo cofnodion y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 21 Gorffennaf 2022.

6. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU CYNLLUNIO 17 - 22

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Cynllunio a gynhaliwyd ar 28 Gorffennaf 2022.

7. PWYLLGOR CRAFFU CYNLLUNIO 23 - 26

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Cynllunio a gynhaliwyd ar 8 Medi 2022.

8. PWYLLGOR GWEITHREDIAETH 27 - 32

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gweithrediaeth a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Gorffennaf 2022.

9. PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHIANT AC ARCHWILIO 33 - 36

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethiant ac Archwilio a gynhaliwyd ar 11 Gorffennaf 2022.

10. PWYLLGOR SAFONAU 37 - 40

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Safonau a gynhaliwyd ar 19 Gorffennaf 2022..

11. PWYLLGOR LLYWODRAETHIANT AC ARCHWILIO 41 - 44

Cadarnhau cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Llywodraethiant ac Archwilio a gynhaliwyd ar 27 Gorffennaf 2022.

12. CWESTIYNAU AELODAU

Derbyn cwestiynau, os oes rhai, gan Aelodau.

- 13. CWESTIYNAU GAN Y CYHOEDD**
- Derbyn cwestiynau, os oes rhai, gan aelodau o'r cyhoedd.
- 14. CYNNIG – DATGARBONEIDDIO CRONFEYDD PENSIWN CYMRU** 45 - 46
- Ystyried y cynnig a atodir.
- 15. CYNNIG – IAWN I GYFLOGEION A GOLLODD MAS AR GYNLLUN CYDNABYDDIAETH ARIANNOL LLYWODRAETH CYMRU** 47 - 48
- Ystyried y Cynnig a atodir.
- 16. BLAENRAGLEN GWAITH ARFAETHEDIG 2022-23 Y CYNGOR** 49 - 60
- Ystyried yr adroddiad a atodir.
- 17. POLISI CYFARFOD AML-LEOLIAD** 61 - 96
- Ystyried adroddiad y Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Perfformiad a Democrataidd.
- 18. CYNLLUN DEWISOL COSTAU BYW** 97 - 122
- Ystyried adroddiad y Prif Swyddog Adnoddau.
- 19. ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL Y CYFARWYDDWR GWASANAETHAU CYMDEITHASOL 2021/2022** 123 - 152
- Ystyried adroddiad Cyfarwyddwr Corfforaethol Interim Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol.
- 20. ADRODDIAD AELODAETH** 153 - 154
- Ystyried yr adroddiad a atodir.
- 21. EITEMAU EITHRIEDIG**
- Derbyn ac ystyried yr adroddiad dilynol sydd ym marn y swyddog priodol yn eitem(au) eithriedig gan roi ystyriaeth i'r prawf budd cyhoeddus ac y dylai'r wasg a'r cyhoedd gael eu heithrio o'r cyfarfod (mae'r rheswm dros y penderfyniad am yr eithriad ar gael ar restr a gedwir gan y swyddog priodol).

22. LLUNIO RHESTR HIR – SWYDDOGION JNC 155 - 156

Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 6 Medi 2022.

23. LLUNIO RHESTR FER – SWYDDOGION JNC 157 - 158

Ystyried adroddiad y cyfarfod a gynhaliwyd ar 13 Medi 2022.

To: Councillor C. Smith (Aelod Llywyddol)
Councillor C. Bainton
P. Baldwin
Councillor S. Behr
D. Bevan
Councillor K. Chaplin
M. Cross
Councillor H. Cunningham
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
M. Day
Councillor S. Edmunds
Councillor J. Gardner
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
Councillor G. Humphreys
Councillor R. Leadbeater
Councillor E. Jones
Councillor J. Morgan, J.P.
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
Councillor D. Rowberry
T. Smith
G. Thomas
Councillor J. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
L. Winnett
Councillor D. Woods

All other Members (for information)
Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officers

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO:	<u>THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL</u>
SUBJECT:	<u>ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL – 21ST JULY, 2022</u>
REPORT OF:	<u>DEMOCRATIC OFFICER</u>

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR C. SMITH (PRESIDING MEMBER, CHAIRING)

Councillors C. Bainton
P. Baldwin
S. Behr
D. Bevan
K. Chaplin
M. Cross
H. Cunningham
D. Davies
G. A. Davies
M. Day
J. Gardner
J. Hill
W. Hodgins
J. Holt
G. Humphreys
R. Leadbeater
E. Jones
J. Morgan, J.P.
J. C. Morgan
J. P. Morgan
L. Parsons
D. Rowberry
T. Smith
G. Thomas
J. Thomas
S. Thomas
H. Trollope
J. Wilkins
D. Wilshire

L. Winnett
D. Woods

AND: Interim Chief Executive
Corporate Director of Education
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial & Customer
Head of Legal & Corporate Compliance
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
Head of Regeneration
Head of Adult Services
Head of Organisational Development
Service Manager Performance & Democratic Communications & Marketing Manager

ALSO: Mr. Phil Diamond - Head of the Regional Partnership Team

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
2.	<u>APOLOGIES</u> Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S. Edmunds and the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services.	
3.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.	

4.	<p><u>PRESIDING MEMBER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></p> <p>Congratulations were expressed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Alfie Skinner who had represented the British Junior Golf Team in San Diego, California and had finished 18th and 10th in two events. <p>RESOLVED that an appropriate letter be sent.</p>	
5 25.	<p>– <u>MINUTE BOOK – NOVEMBER 2021 – APRIL 2022</u></p> <p>The Minute Book for the period November 2021 – April 2022 was submitted for consideration, whereupon:</p> <p><u>Annual Meeting of the Council – Part 2 – 10th June, 2022</u> <u>Chair of Democratic Services Committee</u></p> <p>For accuracy, it was reported that Councillor Julie Holt had declined the position of the Chair of Democratic Services Committee as had all other Members of the Independent Group at this current point in time.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the minutes be approved and confirmed as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
26.	<p><u>MEMBERS QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by Members.</p>	
27.	<p><u>PUBLIC QUESTIONS</u></p> <p>There were no questions submitted by members of the public.</p>	

28.

MOTION – COST OF LIVING

Consideration was given to the Motion submitted regarding the cost of living.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the Motion be supported and

- The pay claim submitted by UNISON, GMB and Unite on behalf of council and school workers, for an increase of £2,000 or RPI (whichever was greater) be supported.
- The Local Government Association be called upon to make urgent representations to central government to fund the NJC pay claim.
- The Chancellor and Secretary of State be written to calling for a pay increase for local government workers to be funded with new money from central government.
- A meeting be convened with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways in which the council could support the campaign.
- All local government workers be encouraged to join a union.

<p>29.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Members considered the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that Council was satisfied that there was a sufficient level of support for Elected Members.</p>	
<p>30.</p>	<p><u>ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2021/2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Scrutiny & Democratic Officer.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely, the ‘scrutiny activity’ that had been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2021/22 be approved and the report published on the Blaenau Gwent website.</p>	
<p>31.</p>	<p><u>SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be deferred and re-considered at the September Meeting of the Council.</p>	

<p>32.</p>	<p><u>SCHEDULE OF MEMBERS REMUNERATION 2022/2023</u></p> <p>The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely, the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2022/23 be agreed and published.</p>	
<p>33.</p>	<p><u>STATEMENT OF PAYMENTS MADE TO ELECTED MEMBERS IN 2021/2022</u></p> <p>The report of the Head of Organisational Development was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, i.e. in order to comply with relevant legislation that the Statement of Payments Made to Members during 2021/22 be published.</p>	
<p>34.</p>	<p><u>THE COUNCIL'S SUITE OF DISCIPLINARY AND CAPABILITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the suite of Disciplinary and Capability Policies and Procedures be approved for implementation. This would ensure that the policies reflect best practice, statutory requirements and strengthens current practice.</p>	

<p>35.</p>	<p><u>EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>A Member requested that the document be amended to reflect that the policy would only apply to volunteering within the local community of Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and Option 1 be endorsed, namely that the Volunteering Policy be supported for implementation.</p>	
<p>36.</p>	<p><u>REGIONAL POPULATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT (PNA)</u></p> <p>The joint report of the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services and Head of the Regional Partnership Team was submitted for consideration.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Population Needs Assessment be endorsed.</p>	
<p>37.</p>	<p><u>REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR COMMISSIONED DOMICILIARY CARE PROVIDERS DUE TO THE INCREASE IN FUEL COSTS</u></p> <p>Due to the need to consider the following item as a matter of urgency, the Presiding Member confirmed that the following matter could be considered under the Provisions of Paragraph 4(b), Section 100(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Adult Services.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that an immediate urgent response to the current staffing crisis in social care be developed and implemented and the current commissioned hourly rate to providers be increased by £1 per hour.</p> <p>This would be time limited for a 6-month period to December 2022.</p>	
<p>38.</p>	<p><u>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 28th January, 2022.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>	
<p>39.</p>	<p><u>MEMBERSHIPS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to:</p> <p><u>ANEURIN BEVAN COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The appointment of one representative on the above. <p>RESOLVED that Councillor E. Jones be appointed to the Aneurin Bevan Community Health Council.</p> <p><u>GWENT ARCHIVE JOINT COMMITTEE</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The appointment of one representative on the above. <p>RESOLVED that Councillor H. Trollope be appointed to the Gwent Archive Joint Committee.</p>	

ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS

The following recommendations were made by the Panel on 30th June, 2022 to appoint in principle:

Ebbw Fawr Learning Community – Jon Mower
Willowtown Primary School – Jordan Colcombe
St. Illtyd’s Primary School – Sarah Long
Deighton Primary School – Councillor Ellen Jones
The River Centre – Jacqueline Gwynne

It was, thereupon, unanimously,

RESOLVED that the above appointments be endorsed.

Membership - Advisory Panel for the Appointment of Local Authority Governors

Pursuant to the revised terms of reference agreed at the Panel meeting on 30th June, the membership of the Advisory Panel for Local Authority Governors was reviewed as follows:

- 3 Majority Group Members (including the Executive Member for People & Education who will Chair the Panel); and
- 3 Members from the Minority Group

It was, therefore, RESOLVED that following Members be appointed to the Panel:

1. **Executive Member – People & Education**
Councillor S. Edmunds (Chair)
2. Councillor D. Bevan
3. Councillor D. Davies
4. Councillor G. A. Davies
5. Councillor J. Hill
6. Councillor T. Smith

	<p><u>Cost of Living Crisis Cross Party Working Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishing and appointing Members to the above-named Working Group. <p>RESOLVED that the following Members be appointed to the above-named Working Group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leader of the Council/Executive Member Corporate Overview & Performance 2. Deputy Leader of the Council/Executive Member Place & Environment 3. Executive Member – Place & Regeneration 4. Executive Member – People & Education 5. Executive Member – People & Social Services 6. Chair of Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee 7. Councillor G. Humphreys 	
<p>40.</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS</u></p> <p>Members considered the time of future Council meetings.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that all future Council meetings commence at 10.00 a.m.</p>	

41.	<p><u>EXEMPT ITEMS</u></p> <p>To receive and consider the following reports which in the opinion of the proper officer were exempt items taking into account consideration of the public interest test and that the press and public should be excluded from the meeting (the reasons for the decisions for the exemptions was available on a schedule maintained by the proper officer).</p>	
42.	<p><u>SHORTLISTING – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 17th June, 2022.</p> <p>It was unanimously,</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the decisions contained therein be noted.</p>	
43.	<p><u>APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – JNC OFFICERS</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p>	

<p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 & 13, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p>	
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Consideration was given to the report of the meeting held on 28th June, 2022.

It was unanimously,

RESOLVED that the report which related to staffing matters be accepted and the post be offered to Joanne Watts on a salary in accordance with JNC 1 (£52,178 - £57,392).

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT PLANNING, REGULATORY & GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE – 28TH JULY, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR LISA WINNETT (Chair)

Councillors D. Bevan (Vice-Chair)

P. Baldwin

J. Hill

G. Humpreys

J. Gardener

D. Wilkshire

WITH: Team Manager Development Management
Team Leader Development Management
Team Leader Built Environment
Planning Officer (x 3)
Compliance Officer
Solicitor
Press Officer

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declaration of interests was raised:-</p> <p><u>Councillor D. Wilkshire</u> Item No. 5 - Planning Applications Report - Application No. C/2022/0081 - Land adjacent to Ty Coed Sycamore Drive, Rassau, Ebbw Vale - Detached Dwelling</p> <p>It was reported that Councillor Wilkshire would not take part in any discussion or vote.</p>
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor W. Hodgins.</p>
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>It was proposed and seconded that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p> <p>RESOLVED accordingly.</p>
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p><u>Application No. C/2022/0081</u> <u>Land adjacent to Ty Coed Sycamore Drive, Rassau, Ebbw Vale</u> <u>Detached Dwelling</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, 4 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation and 2 Members voted against the officer's recommendation. It was thereupon,</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p> <p>Councillor Wilkshire did not take part in the vote</p>

Application No. C/2021/0290
Land adjacent to Park Hill Road, Tredegar
Variation of Condition 1 (Extend the life of the permission) of
planning permission C/2015/0237 (New development for 141
dwellings)

The Planning Officer reported that the sum of £350,000 noted in 5.13 of the application in respect of a commuted sum to be used for projects on local nature reserves should read £35,000.

RESOLVED accordingly.

It was unanimously

FURTHER RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

Application No. C/2021/0329
Land Adjoining Park Hill, Park Hill Road, Tredegar
Construction of three new detached dwellings served by new
shared driveway with parking provision for 2 cars on each plot;
including landscaping, services and off-site highway improvement
works

It was reported that this application had been **DEFERRED**.

Application No. C/2022/0100
Land North of Unit 33, Rassau Industrial Estate, Rassau
Erection of building for B1/B2/B8 use, to provide six units, together
with associated parking, access and cycle store

It was unanimously

RESOLVED that planning permission be **GRANTED**.

No. 6

APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: JULY 2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.

<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: 14 RHYD CLYDACH, BRYNMAWR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision for planning application C/2021/0157 be noted.</p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPEAL UPDATE: DAN-Y-BRYN, NEWPORT ROAD, POCHIN, TREDEGAR</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Planning Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the appeal decision for planning application C/2021/0095 be noted.</p>
<p>No. 9</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 1ST JUNE TO 8TH JULY, 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>No. 10</p>	<p><u>QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – QUARTER 3: OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development and Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>No. 11</p>	<p><u>ANY AREAS FOR MEMBERS BRIEFINGS OR TRAINING</u></p> <p>The following members briefing/training was reported:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Briefing Session for Non Planning Members - 19th September, 2022 which was also open for Members of the Planning Committee.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement Member Briefing to be arranged in September as it had not been completed as part of the mandatory training in July. <p>The aforementioned members briefings/training were noted and accepted.</p>
No. 12	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CASE UPDATE</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Compliance Officer.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT PLANNING COMMITTEE – 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR LISA WINNETT (Chair)

Councillors D. Bevan (Vice-Chair)

P. Baldwin

M. Day

J. Hill

W. Hodgins

G. Humphreys

J. Thomas

D. Wilkshire

WITH: Team Manager Development Management
Team Manager Built Environment
Team Leader Development Management (x2)
Planning Officer
Solicitor
Press & Publicity Officer

AND: **Public Speakers**
Pam Jenkins (Objector) Application No. C/2021/0329
Phil Williams (on behalf of Applicant) Application
No. C/2021/0329
Councillor G.A. Davies – Ward Member (Objector on
behalf of residents) Application No. C/2021/0366

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>No declarations of interests were reported.</p>
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Gardner and J. Morgan and the Service Manager Development & Estates.</p>
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>AREAS FOR MEMBER BRIEFINGS AND TRAINING</u></p> <p>No areas for Members Training/Briefings were raised.</p>
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>PLANNING APPLICATIONS REPORT</u></p> <p><u>Application No. C/2022/0103</u> <u>Playground and Land adjacent to Chartist Way, Tredegar</u> <u>Proposed new welsh medium primary school, incorporating a new drop-off area facility, staff parking, bus turning including a multi-use games areas, and relocation of the existing playground</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, 8 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation and 1 Member voted against the officer's recommendation. It was thereupon,</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p> <p><u>Application No. C/2021/0329</u> <u>Park Hill Road, Land Adjoining Park Hill, Tredegar</u> <u>Construction of three new detached dwellings served by new shared driveway with parking provision for 2 cars on each plot; including landscaping, services & off site highway improvement works</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p> <p><u>Application No. C/2021/0366</u> <u>Former Quarry adjacent to Nantycroft, Rassau, Ebbw Vale.</u> <u>NP23 5DA</u></p>

	<p><u>Submission of Reserved Matters for approval in relation to layout (47 no. units), appearance, scale, landscaping and associated works pursuant to outline planning permission C/2018/0205</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, 8 Members voted in favour of the officer's recommendation and 1 Member voted against the officer's recommendation. It was thereupon,</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p> <p><u>Application No. C/2022/0164</u> <u>Shoda Sauces, Units 19 and 20, Rising Sun Industrial Estate, Blaina. NP13 3JW</u> <u>Erection of a new detached storage building over existing hard standing area, with additional ancillary office accommodation, replacement parking area with new access drive and associated works</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p> <p><u>Application No. C/2022/0186</u> <u>74A & Caleb Cottage King Street Brynmawr Ebbw Vale NP23 4RG</u> <u>Change of use of ground floor offices and first and second floor living accommodation to create two dwellings plus conversion and change of use of Calebs cottage to one dwelling together with associated external, creation of garden and provision of parking</u></p> <p>Upon a vote being taken, it was unanimously</p> <p>RESOLVED that planning permission be <u>GRANTED</u>.</p>
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>APPEALS, CONSULTATIONS AND DNS UPDATE: SEPTEMBER 2022</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager – Development & Estates.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>LIST OF APPLICATIONS DECIDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS BETWEEN 11TH JULY 2022 AND 12TH AUGUST 2022</u></p>

	<p>Consideration was given to the report of the Senior Business Support Officer.</p> <p>The Chair reported an error on page 120 of the report C/2022/0146 should read 68B High Street, Blaina and C/2022/0113 should read St Mary's Roman Catholic School.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>
No. 8	<p><u>ENFORCEMENT CLOSED CASES BETWEEN 31ST MAY 2022 AND 22ND AUGUST 2022</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Service Manager Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report which contained information relating to a particular individual be accepted and the information contained therein be noted.</p>

COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 13TH JULY, 2022

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

**PRESENT: Leader/
Executive Member - Corporate Overview & Performance
Councillor S. Thomas**

**Deputy Leader/
Executive Member – Place & Environment
Councillor H. Cunningham**

**Executive Member – Place & Regeneration
Councillor J.C. Morgan**

**Executive Member – People & Education
Councillor S. Edmunds**

**Executive Member – People & Social Services
Councillor H. Trollope**

**WITH: Interim Chief Executive
Chief Officer Resources
Chief Officer Commercial
Head of Organisational Development
Head of Regeneration
Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance
Head of School Improvement, Inclusion and Education
Press Officer**

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.
No. 2	<u>APOLOGIES</u> An apology for absence was received from the Corporate Director Education.
No. 3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u> There were no declarations of interest or dispensations raised.
No. 4	<u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u> It was proposed and seconded that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m. RESOLVED accordingly.
	<u>MINUTES</u>
No. 5	<u>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</u> Consideration was given to the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 16 th March, 2022. RESOLVED that the Minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

	<u>GENERAL MATTERS</u>
No. 6.	<p><u>CONFERENCES, COURSES, EVENTS AND INVITATIONS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the following:-</p> <p><u>The Installation of the next Archdeacon of the Gwent Valleys and Diocesan Director of Mission - Sunday 19th June 2022</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor D. Wilkshire, Deputy Presiding Member be approved to attend.</p> <p><u>Armed Forces Day 2022</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that Councillor D. Bevan, Armed Forces Champion be approved to attend.</p>
	<u>CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO</u>
No. 7	<p><u>WORKFORCE OPPORTUNITY FOR A 'BRIDGING LOAN' TO SUPPORT WITH THE INCREASING COST OF USING A CAR FOR WORK PURPOSES</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and an offer be made to employees who use their car for work purposes the opportunity of applying for a 'bridging' loan of £200 that was fully repayable. The situation would be reviewed in March 2023 or earlier should the cost of fuel reduce, the pay award has been implemented or there was any other change. The loan would be repayable via monthly instalments over 12 months. The 'bridging' loan was fully recoverable with immediate effect if an employee terminates their employment with the Authority.</p> <p>Discussions would continue in relation to the potential of a temporary review of mileage rates with the trade unions.</p>

	<p>The loan opportunity would be advertised through line managers and the Chief Executive Newsletter and would only be available to those who have claimed mileage over the last year and use their car for work purposes. The employee would be required to sign a declaration and commitment to repay the loan in the future (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>PLACE AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
<p>No. 8</p>	<p><u>SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (SPF)</u> <u>LOCAL INVESTMENT PLAN AND REGIONAL INVESTMENT PLAN</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Regeneration and Development.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and agreed to proceed with the Regional Shared Prosperity Fund process (Option 1) as follows:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek agreement for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) to act as Lead Local Authority for the UK SPF for the Cardiff Capital Region and for them to submit the CCR Investment Plan to the UK Government by the deadline of 1st August 2022. 2. Grant delegated authority for the Head of Regeneration and Development (in consultation with the Leader and Executive Member for Place and Regeneration, Chief Executive, Chief Officer Resources/Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer/ Head of Legal and Compliance) to take necessary actions to meet the submission deadlines and requirements. 3. A number of interventions be agreed to ensure that the 2022/23 funding was spent in a timely manner, including some at-risk recruitment. This would be at financial risk to the council in the first instance. Contracts could be further extended once confirmation of SPF funding was received. 4. It was agreed to use part of the 4% SPF (£1,120,000 over three years) administration/management fee to appoint a small project team to manage and administer the delivery of the SPF programme for BGCBC.

	<p><u>PEOPLE AND EDUCATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 9	<p><u>RIGHTS, VALUE, ETHICS (RVE) SYLLABUS</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director Education.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Executive Committee adopted the agreed syllabus for use in primary schools from September 2022 and for those all through/secondary schools implementing Curriculum for Wales from 2023 as set out in the report (Option 1).</p>
	<p><u>PLACE AND REGENERATION PORTFOLIO</u></p>
No. 10	<p><u>SALE OF LAND, ASHVALE, TREDEGAR</u></p> <p>Having regard to the views expressed by the Proper Officer regarding the public interest test, that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and that the report should be exempt.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the public be excluded whilst this item of business is transacted as it is likely there would be a disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 14, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended).</p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Regeneration.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the information which contained details relating to the business/financial affairs of persons other than the Authority be accepted (Option 2).</p>

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE
- 11TH JULY, 2022**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Ms Joanne Absalom (Chair)

Councillors S. Behr (Vice-Chair)

J. Gardner

W. Hodgins

C. Smith

T. Smith

Mr M. Veale

WITH: Chief Officer Resources
Audit & Risk Manager
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Data Protection & Governance Officer
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships

AND: Mike Jones) Audit Wales
Alice Rushby)

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<p><u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u></p> <p>It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.</p>	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J. Wilkins and Mr T. Edwards.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>Councillor Tommy Smith declared an interest in Item No. 9 – Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Manager 2021/22.</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2022/23</u></p> <p>Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2022/2023.</p> <p>A Member proposed that Ms Joanne Absalom be appointed to the role, and this proposal was seconded.</p> <p>RESOLVED that Ms Joanne Absalom be appointed Chair of the Governance & Audit Committee for 2022/2023.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee held on 14th April, 2022 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>CODE OF GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee approve and adopt the revised Code of Governance (Option 1).</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2022-2027</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the basis for audit selection / prioritisation as described in section 2, and approve the audit plan attached at Appendix A, deeming it to provide sufficient coverage upon which the Audit and Risk Manager can provide an annual Audit opinion, enabling the Governance & Audit Committee to fulfil its assurance role. (Option 1).</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>AUDIT PLAN OUTTURN 2021-22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Officer Resources and the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Governance & Audit Committee note the levels of audit coverage in each service area, the plan outturn for the financial year and the performance of the Internal Audit Service for the financial year 2021/22.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & RISK MANAGER 2021/22</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the annual opinion of the Audit & Risk Manager be noted as follows:-</p> <p>‘Based on the findings of the audit work undertaken during 2021/22, in my opinion, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council’s system of internal control during the financial year 2021/22 operates to a level which gives Reasonable Assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control.’</p>	

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STANDARDS COMMITTEE

19th July, 2022

PRESENT: MR. R. ALEXANDER (CHAIR)

Councillor J. Thomas

Ms. S. Rosser
Mr. F.R Lynch
Mr. S. Williams

WITH: Head of Legal and Corporate Compliance (Monitoring
Officer)
Data Protection & Governance Officer

1. SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

No requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.

2. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received for:

Councillor M. Cross and Helen Roberts.

3. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Introductions were undertaken.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

No declarations of interest or dispensations were reported.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Standards Committee held on the 28th January, 2022 were submitted.

Following a brief discussion,

The Standards Committee AGREED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.

6. RENEWAL OF TERMS OF OFFICE

The Governance & Data Protection Officer explained membership of the Committee as follows:

No Member to exceed a term of 10 years (to include one term of 6 years and a second term of 4 years)

It was reported that two Members of the Committee had reached their 6 year first term, namely Ronnie Alexander and Helen Roberts. However, Helen Roberts had decided not to take up a second term, and as a result there would be a vacancy on the Committee.

It was then proposed that Ronnie Alexander's position on the Committee be formally extended for a term of 4 years, and this was seconded and AGREED.

7. RENEWAL OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the appointment of Chair for 2022/23.

It was AGREED that Mr. R. Alexander be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee for 2022/23.

Nominations were then sought for the appointment of Vice-Chair, and it was AGREED that Mr. S. Williams be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for 2022/23.

8. SECTIONS 62 & 63 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT & ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021: DUTIES OF LEADERS OF POLITICAL GROUPS

A discussion ensued when the following points of action were raised:

- A Member suggested a review be undertaken of the number of Local Resolutions undertaken by the Monitoring Officer.
- A Member also suggested an overview of the work of the Democratic Services Team, in terms of the training provided for elected Members, be brought to the Standards Committee.
- Consideration of a register of interests.
- Training on dispensations had been granted to Members, and further training to be offered.

- Members of the Standards Committee to meet with Leaders of political groups.

8. FUTURE WORK PLAN/TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

The following points were raised:

Schedule of meetings for the year.

Monitoring Officer to provide a schedule of training that has been provided for Members.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Meeting with Group Leaders in October.

Next meeting of the Standards Committee – January TBC.

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE PRESIDING MEMBER AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE
- 27TH JULY, 2022**

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: Ms Joanne Absalom (Chair)

Councillors S. Behr (Vice-Chair)
W. Hodgins
C. Smith
T. Smith
J. Wilkins

Mr M. Veale

WITH: Audit & Risk Manager
Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships
Professional Lead – Internal Audit
Senior Auditor
Corporate Director of Education
Data Protection & Governance Officer
Scrutiny & Democratic Officer

AND: Charlotte Owen) Audit Wales
Alice Rushby)

DECISIONS UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u> It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	

<p>No. 2</p>	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillor J. Gardner.</p>	
<p>No. 3</p>	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>The following declarations of interest were reported:</p> <p>Councillor Tommy Smith - Item No. 8 Internal Audit Progress Report (Appendix B3)</p> <p>Councillor W. Hodgins – Item No. 8 Internal Audit Progress Report (discussions re SRS)</p>	
<p>No. 4</p>	<p><u>TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u></p> <p>RESOLVED that future meetings be held at 10.00 a.m.</p>	
<p>No. 5</p>	<p><u>GOVERNANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee held on 11th July, 2022 were submitted.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
<p>No. 6</p>	<p><u>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022-23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>It was reported that the date of the last Committee should be amended to read 26th April, 2023.</p> <p>RESOLVED, subject to the foregoing, that the report be accepted and the Forward Work Programme for the Governance and Audit Committee be approved.</p>	
<p>No. 7</p>	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER</u></p>	

	<p>Consideration was given to report of the Audit & Risk Manager.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Internal Audit Charter in line with good practice and the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) be approved.</p>	
No. 8	<p><u>INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Professional Lead Internal Audit.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the findings within the attached Appendices and notes progress on activities for the period 1st April 2022 to 30th June 2022.</p>	
No. 9	<p><u>AUDIT WALES – BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2021</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the Annual Audit Summary published in January 2022.</p>	
No. 10	<p><u>AUDIT WALES 2022 AUDIT PLAN FOR BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to report of the Chief Officer Resources.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the report be accepted and the Committee note the work planned for 2022 by the Auditor General for Wales to discharge his statutory responsibilities as the Council’s external auditor and fulfil his obligations under the Code of Audit Practice.</p>	

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Motion – Decarbonising Welsh Pension Funds

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will work with the Welsh Government, other local authorities and other parts of the public sector to develop a shared strategy for decarbonising the investments made by their pension funds and redirecting that investment into Wales based projects which decarbonise both energy consumption and production.

Signed by:

Councillor Sonia Behr
Councillor Helen Cunningham
Councillor Jules Gardner
Councillor Diane Rowberry
Councillor Tommy Smith

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Motion to Council—Redress for employees who missed out on Welsh Government's Financial Recognition Scheme.

This Council recognises and recompenses the hard work and dedication of employees from Workforce Development, Early Years Childcare and Play, Families First, and Flying Start, who are part of the Social Services Directorate.

These members of our workforce did not receive payment from Welsh Government's NHS and Social Care Financial Recognition Scheme despite carrying out the same duties throughout the Covid 19 pandemic as their colleagues in the Health and Social Care sectors, who benefitted from the scheme.

Council notes:

1. There was a profound injustice in this situation. Initial guidance issued in April 2021 stated that all employees under the Director of Social Services were included in the scheme, which was a one off payment of £735. Two weeks later, the guidance changed, resulting in these members of staff missing out on the scheme.

2. Our employees were actively on the front line at the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. They;

- Supported the most vulnerable children and families in Blaenau Gwent
- Kept all Flying Start childcare settings open and repurposed them to take children of critical workers and our most vulnerable children so that keyworkers could continue work
- Continued face to face contacts throughout the pandemic, putting themselves and their families in the path of the unknown
- Delivered food parcels, children's activity parcels, heating and lighting tokens and carried out welfare checks to keep families safe and stop their needs from escalating into crisis.

3. Many of the staff in this sector are amongst the lowest-paid employees in the Authority, starting from a scale 3 grade. This payment would make a significant difference to them and to their families material well-being. It would also act as recognition of their dedication in such unprecedented circumstances.

4. Approximately 100 workers missed out on the scheme, which would cost around £73,500 in total to right. During the past four years, the Council has

enjoyed the most positive increase in RSG in decades, including an 8.4% rise earlier this year. Despite the poor financial outlook ahead, the council is duty bound to right this wrong.

Therefore, this Council resolves:

To recognise the dedication and hard work of our employees from Workforce Development, Early Years, Childcare and Play, Families First and Flying Start.

To allocate a one-off payment of £735 from the Council's Corporate Budget to the workers who missed out on the scheme and right the injustice suffered by them.

Signed: Cllr H Cunningham, Cllr D Bevan, Cllr K Chaplin, Cllr H Trollope, Cllr P Baldwin.

Agenda Item 16

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 24.08.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.09.2022

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Proposed Council Forward Work Programme 2022-23**

Portfolio Holder: **All Portfolio Holders**

Report Submitted by: **Ceri Edwards-Brown - Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
July 2022	25.08.22				September 2022	September 2022	29.09.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present and seek approval for the Council Forward Work Programme for 2022-23 (Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Work Programme is a key aspect of the Council's planning and governance arrangements and supports the requirements of the Constitution.
 - 2.2 The topics set out in the Work Programme link to the strategic work of the Council as identified by the Council's Corporate Plan, agreed by the Council in July 2020, corporate documents and supporting business plans.
 - 2.3 All Scrutiny Committees and the Executive Forward Work Programmes have been aligned to the Council Forward Work Programme.
 - 2.4 As the document is fluid there is flexibility to allow for regular review between the Chair and the Council.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 The Work Programmes have been endorsed by the relevant departments of the Council, and all Scrutiny Committees and the Council will agree their work programmes as part of the September cycle of meetings.
 - 3.2 **Option 1**
To agree the Forward Work Programme for Council for 2022-23.

 - Option 2**
To suggest any amendments prior to agreeing the Forward Work Programme.

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Council
DRAFT Forward Work
Programme 2022/23

**Presiding Member: Councillor C.
Smith**

**Deputy Presiding Member: Councillor
D. Wilkshire**

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting Date: Thursday 21st July 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 1st July 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services 2021/22	Approval To present the 2021/22 Annual report of the Head of Democratic Services.	Sarah King	N/A
Annual Scrutiny Report 2021/22	Approval To approve the Annual Scrutiny Report.	Gemma Wasley	N/A
Schedule of Members Remuneration 2022/23	Approval To consider and agree the Schedule of Members Remuneration for 2022/23.	Andrea Prosser	N/A
Statement of Payments made to Elected Members	Approval To consider and agree the publication of the Statement of Payments made to Members.	Andrea Prosser	N/A
The Council's Suite of Disciplinary & Capability Policies & Procedures	Approval To consider and agree the Council's suite of Disciplinary and Capability policies and procedures	Andrea Prosser	N/A
Volunteering Policy	Approval To consider and agree the Policy.	Andrea Prosser	N/A
Portfolio: People and Social Services			
Population Needs Assessment	Approval To endorse the Population Needs Assessment.	Phill Diamond	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting Date: Thursday 29th September 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 9th September 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23	Approval To approve the Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23	Chair	Scrutiny FWPs –
Multi Location Meeting Policy	Approval To approve	Sarah King	N/A
Cost of Living Discretionary Scheme	Approval To approve	Bernadette Elias	N/A
Portfolio: Executive Member People & Social Services			
Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/22	Approval To approve the Director of Social Services Annual report 2021/22.	Tanya Evans	People Scrutiny Committee – Date TBC

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

SPECIAL Meeting Date: Wednesday 26th October 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Thursday 6th October 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Annual Self-Assessment of Council Performance 2021/22 To be published by 31 st October each year	Approval To approve the Assessment of Performance.	Sarah King	Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee – 19.10.22 Governance & Audit – 20.10.22
Council Constitution	Approval To approve the updates to the Council's Constitution	Andrea Jones	N/A
Support Arrangements for Members Appointed to Outside Bodies	Approval To approve.	Sarah King	N/A
Portfolio: Deputy Leader / Place and Environment			
Public Space Protection Order	Approval Members to approve the report.	Dave Thompson	Place Scrutiny Committee – 20.09.22
Portfolio: People and Social Services			
Market Stability Report	Approval To agree the report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Phil Diamond	N/A
Regional Integration Fund Financial Plan	Approval To agree the report prior to submission to Welsh Government.	Phil Diamond	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting Date: Thursday 24th November 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 4th November 2022

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Draft Annual Report	Approval To inform Members of the proposals contained with the draft report of the Independent Remuneration	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – 18 th November 2022
Diverse Council Action Plan	Approval To present to Members progress of the Diverse Council Action Plan.	Gemma Wasley	Democratic Services – 18 th November 2022
Workforce Strategy Review and year 2 action plan	Approval To present the review and year 2 action plan for Members' approval.	Andrea Prosser	Corporate and Performance – 11 th November 2022
Treasury Management – Outturn 2021/22	Budget Monitoring Provides the Treasury Management out-turn position for the 2021/22 financial year, including details of all Treasury management activities undertaken during the year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate and Performance – 19 th October 2022
Portfolio: Place and Regeneration			
Replacement Local Development Plan	Approval To consider progress on the Replacement Local Development Plan and next steps.	Steve Smith	Places Scrutiny Committee – 08.11.22

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting Date: Thursday 26th January 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 6th January 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio:			
Portfolio:			

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

SPECIAL Meeting Date: DATE TO BE AGREED

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown:

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Revenue Budget 2023/24	Approval To approve the Revenue Budget.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee -
Fees & Charges Register 2023/24	Approval To approve the Fees and Charges Register.	Rhian Hayden	N/A

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting Date: Thursday 30th March 2023

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 10th March 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Leader / Corporate and Performance			
Treasury Management – Mid-Year Review	Budget Monitoring To scrutinise the Treasury Management activities carried out by the Authority during the first half of the 2022/23 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee – 03.02.23
Treasury Management – Strategy Statement 2023/24	Budget Monitoring To present the Treasury Management Strategy, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy recommended for adoption in the 2022/23 financial year.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee – 17.03.23
Capital Strategy Review	Performance Monitoring To consider the implementation of the Capital Strategy.	Rhian Hayden	Corporate and Performance Scrutiny Committee – 17.03.23
Pay Policy Statement 2023/24	Approval To seek approval of the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.	Andrea Prosser	N/A
IRPW Final Annual Report	Approval To approve	Andrea Prosser	Democratic Services – 24 th March 2022
Final Gwent Well-being Plan 2023-2028	Approval To approve	Sarah King	
Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services 2022/23	Approval To approve the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services.	Sarah King	Democratic Services – 24 th March 2022

Council Forward Work Programme 2022/23

Annual General Meeting Date: Thursday 25th May 2022

Report Submission Deadline Date to Ceri Edwards-Brown: Friday 5th May 2023

*Reports received after this date will be included on the next agenda of Council

Report Title	Purpose of Report	Lead Officer	Other Committee Meeting Date
Portfolio: Corporate Services			
Annual Meeting Reports			
Annual Cycle of Meetings 2023/24	To approve the Annual Cycle of meetings.	Gemma Wasley	N/A

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Agenda Item 17

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 06.09.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.09.2022

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Multi Location Meeting Policy**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas - Leader of the Council/Executive Member Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Gemma Wasley, Service Manager Performance and Democratic**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	01/09/20	20/09/22					29/09/22	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 For Council to approve the Multi Location Meeting Policy which will be used to inform Members, Officers and the public how multi-location meeting arrangements and the electronic broadcasting of meetings will take place in future.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 Since April 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has come into force and enables Councils to operate multi-location meetings whereby Members, Officers, the public and Press are able to attend meetings physically or remotely.
- 2.2 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides that Councils are required to:
- a) Electronically broadcast meetings (with effect from May 2022).
 - b) Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Cabinet, Committee, Sub-Committee and Joint Committee meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as ‘multi-location meetings’.
 - o Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully virtually, partially virtually or as physical meetings (authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings).
 - o Participants in the meetings must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast

(full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.

- c) Publish all meeting documents on the Council's website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers.
- A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within 7 working days of the meeting.
 - Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council's offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
 - The Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.

2.3 When considering arrangements for remote attendance or 'multi-location meetings', authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: <https://gov.wales/local-authority-multi-location-meetings-interim-guidance>

2.4 The statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

2.5 The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

2.6 **The Purpose of a Multi-Location Meeting**

The establishment of multi-location meetings has a number of benefits which the Council is looking to promote. Multi Location Meetings:

- Provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants;
- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way;
- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel;
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements; and
- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

2.7 **Blaenau Gwent Council Multi-Location Meetings**

The Committee Room (Abraham Derby Room), at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale, has multi-location meeting capability to enable participants to attend and fully participate remotely or in person.

2.7.1 The Multi-Location Meeting Policy is to be used to support all meetings of the Council, its Committees and member development sessions, whose participants are not all in the same physical place.

2.7.2 The Multi-Location Meeting Policy includes detail of:

- Legislative requirements;
- Detail of what a Multi Location Meeting is;
- The process in Blaenau Gwent;
- Broadcasting of Meetings;
- Recording of Meetings by Others;
- Exempt and Confidential items;
- Calendar of Meetings;
- Attendance;
- Meeting Procedures; and
- Chairing.

2.7.3 The Multi Location Meeting Policy is supported by a number of other documents that should be considered when either conducting or participating in a multi location meeting, including:

- The Council's Constitution;
- Hybrid Meeting Protocol; and
- Information Security Policy.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CMT/Committees/Other groups)

3.1 **Option 1**

Approve the Multi Location Meeting Policy and for it to be used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions.

3.2 **Option 2**

Make amendments to the content of the Multi Location Meeting Policy, noting the legislative requirements, before adopting the Policy and for it to be used to support all future democratic meetings and member sessions.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Multi Location Meeting Policy is a requirement of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

- 4.2 The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

The resources required to support multi location meetings have already been established. No further investment is required at this time.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a risk to the Council if the Multi Location Meeting Policy is not adopted in line with Legislation.

The Council is required to offer for democratic meetings to be held on a hybrid or remote basis. Authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings.

5.3 ***Legal***

The Multi Location Policy has been developed following Welsh Government guidance and the requirements as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

There is a requirement for all meetings of Council to be broadcast live. This will be a future development for the Council.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Democratic Services staff are trained in use of the hybrid meeting system and in operating multi location meetings.

Further training is being sought on the broadcasting of live meetings as there is a statutory requirement for all Council meetings to be broadcast live (the current arrangements for recording meetings and uploading the recordings onto the website are suitable for all other democratic meetings).

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

As part of the Council's performance management information the number of attendees at committees and those attending virtually or physically is recorded and included as part of the Joint Performance and Finance Report. The information can also be presented to the Democratic Services Committee.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Multi Location Meetings provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Multi Location Meetings:

- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way; and
- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The hybrid meeting system and Multi Location Meeting Policy supports long term thinking for the Council and provides future proofing for democratic meetings that support digital infrastructure.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The Multi Location Meeting Policy and Information Security Policy have been developed to prevent issues arising from the inappropriate use of the Council's ICT.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Arrangements can be made in future for partner organisations to utilise the hybrid meeting system at the General Offices.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Training and support for managing the hybrid system will be provided across Council Services, such as Business Support, so that meetings, outside of the democratic arrangements, can operate on a hybrid basis.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

Multi Location Meetings:

- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel; and
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment (complete an impact assessment to consider how the decision might help to reduce the inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage).***

A socio economic impact assessment is not required for this report.

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment (screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)***

The Multi Location Meeting Policy provides alternative options for attendance at meetings, supporting those with caring or work needs as well as those who may not be able to attend meetings physically. Reasonable adjustments can be considered, on a case by case basis, to support the engagement and participation in meetings by members, officers and the public.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

The Democratic Services Committee will have responsibility for the reviewing of the Multi Location Meeting Policy.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Multi Location Meeting Policy



DRAFT MLM
Policy.docx

- Constitution - [The Council Constitution | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Note – the Constitution will be undertaking a review. The arrangements outlined in this report will be reflected in a future Constitution

- Hybrid Meeting Protocol



Hybrid Meetings
Protocol.docx

- [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

- Information Security Policy



Information-Security-Policy-v12-FINAL.d



Blaenau Gwent Multi-Location Meetings **Policy**

Background

Since April 2021, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 has come into force and enables Councils to operate multi-location meetings whereby Members, Officers, the public and Press are able to attend meetings physically or remotely.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provides that Councils are required to:

- a) Electronically broadcast meetings (with effect from May 2022).
- b) Make and publish arrangements to ensure that all Council, Cabinet, Committee, Sub-Committee and Joint Committee meetings may be attended remotely (i.e. enabling persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting) – also referred to as ‘multi-location meetings’.
 - Meetings must be capable of being held virtually, but each authority must decide whether their meetings will be held fully virtually, partially virtually (where some participants are in the same physical location, whilst others join the meeting virtually, also referred to as ‘hybrid meetings’) or as physical meetings (authorities may not mandate physical attendance at meetings).
 - Participants in the meetings must be able to speak to and hear each other; and for meetings which are required to be broadcast (full Council meetings), participants must also be able to see and be seen by each other.
- c) Publish all meeting documents on the Council’s website, including notices, summonses, agendas, reports and background papers.
 - A note of the meeting, including Members in attendance and decisions made, must be published within 7 working days of the meeting.
 - Notice of meetings is no longer required to be posted at the Council’s offices. However, copies of agendas and reports must be made available for the public if meetings are held physically.
 - The Council is also required to make public access provision for members of the public who cannot access electronic documents, for example, by providing access to computers, copies of documents, or making documents available for inspection.

When considering arrangements for remote attendance or ‘multi-location meetings’, authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: <https://gov.wales/local-authority-multi-location-meetings-interim-guidance>

The statutory guidance sets out a number of general principles to guide authorities when developing their meeting arrangements, namely, transparency, accessibility, good conduct, Welsh language, local needs and future generations. The guidance confirms the meeting arrangements should be reflected in the procedure rules set out in the constitution.

The statutory guidance also stipulates that authorities should develop a policy setting out how the multi-location meetings will operate and reflect the meeting arrangements in the constitution.

What is a Multi-Location Meeting?

A Multi-Location Meeting is a meeting whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Some of the participants may be physically located in the meeting venue whilst others join from their home or other remote location.

The Welsh Government Statutory Guidance stipulates that local democracy and the needs of the public in engaging with multi-location meetings are an important consideration in deciding where and when meetings will be convened.

It is also acknowledged that some participants may prefer physical meetings due to protected characteristics or circumstances which limits their ability to participate online. Some participants however may wish to join council meetings remotely and from another location as a matter of default because they have working or caring responsibilities, protected characteristics, which make attending meetings in person difficult.

The Purpose of a Multi-Location Meeting

The establishment of multi-location meetings has a number of benefits which the Council is looking to promote. Multi Location Meetings:

- Provide greater participation in meetings by the public and external participants;
- Make it easy for the public to view and participate in decision making and the democratic process observing discussions, recommendations and decisions are made in a transparent way;
- Ensure compliance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in terms of making the authority more sustainable and resilient. Multi-location meetings reduce the carbon footprint of physical meetings. They also reduce both the reliance on paper and reduce the need for travel;
- Provide significant time and cost savings for councillors and officers particularly in relation to regional arrangements; and
- Make it easier for participants to take part in meetings when they have employment, family, caring or other commitments.

Blaenau Gwent Council Multi-Location Meetings

The Committee Room (Abraham Derby Room), at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale, has multi-location meeting capability to enable participants to attend and fully participate remotely or in person. The room also has a designated public gallery to allow the public and Press to attend in person. The Council has determined that all meetings must be able to operate as multi-location meetings to ensure that participants are able to attend remotely or physically should they wish to do so. All Committees may be viewed at: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/cbc-democracy) please select the chosen committee to view from the options provided.

This Multi-Location Meeting Policy is to be used to support all meetings of the Council, its Committees and member development sessions, whose participants are not all in the same physical place. Such meetings can either be held:

- Hybrid – with some participants joining through remote means (Microsoft Teams) and some attending physically in the same place as others. Hybrid Meetings will be conducted and broadcasted via the Council's hybrid meeting solution from the Council Committee Room. These meetings will be recorded and uploaded, within two days of the meeting taking place, onto the Council's website (apart from meetings which are either partly or wholly confidential in nature).
- Entirely Remote – whereby all participants are taking part via remote means (Microsoft Teams) and recorded and uploaded the following day onto the Council's website (apart from meetings which are either partly or wholly confidential in nature).

Broadcasting Meetings

The Act requires for all Full Council meetings to be recorded live. This will be undertaken by using Microsoft Teams Live with the broadcast being shown on the Council's website. All other formal Committee meetings will be recorded and then uploaded to the Council's website within two days of

the meetings taking place. All recordings can be found here [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Democracy (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)) please select the chosen committee to view from the options provided.

Recording of Meetings by Others

In meetings which are open to the public, filming and use of social media is permitted during meetings so long as there is no disturbance to the conduct of the meeting.

Exempt or Confidential Items

On occasions Committees will be required to consider exempt information in which the public and Press will be excluded from the meeting, both physically and remotely.

When this happens the agenda will be scheduled to ensure that all exempt items are included at the end of the meeting in order to minimise any disruption to the meeting. There will also be two meeting invites sent to participants:

- Electronic meeting invite 1 will be for the open part of the agenda and will include Members, Officers, the Press and public. This section will be recorded and uploaded to the Council website within two days of the meeting taking place.
- Electronic meeting invite 2 will be for the exempt part of the agenda and will ONLY include those Members and Officers required to this part of the meeting. This section of the meeting will be recorded but WILL NOT be uploaded onto the website and will be kept in a locked electronic folder only accessible by Democratic Services Staff and CLT.
**note a transcript for both meetings will be available following the meeting, but ONLY those invited to the meeting of the exempt items will be able to access this.*

Calendar of Meetings

A programme of meetings will be developed annually which identifies when, where and how each of the Council's meetings will be held. This may be subject to change during the year for operational reasons.

Attendance at Meetings

Invitations to meetings will be provided electronically and will provide details of the meeting, its location and timings. Certain meetings will include links to enable the participants to join remotely should they wish to do so. On receipt of the invitation, and if requested, participants will need to indicate their intentions to attend the meeting physically or remotely to enable any necessary administrative and support arrangements to be put in place by Democratic Services.

All those invited to attend a hybrid meeting will need to inform Democratic Services on 01495 356139 no later than 3 working days of their preference to attend physically or remotely. If Democratic Services receive no information within 3 days of the meeting it will be assumed that all invitees will attend remotely.

Owing to the necessary administrative and support that is required to hold hybrid meetings a minimum number of physical attendees will be put in place for each meeting. If the minimum number is not met, the meeting will be held fully via remote methods.

Meetings are also attended by a range of participants other than committee members. Officers and committee members should notify Democratic Services of additional participants who will be attending with details and contact information of the participant. The external participants will be contacted by Democratic Services to confirm their attendance, explain how they can join the meeting either as a physical or remote participant and the meeting procedures. If the external

participant is joining the meeting remotely an electronic meeting invitation similar to that of other participants will be sent.

The minimum physical attendance (including Members, Officers and external participants) numbers and arrangements will be in place as follows:

Meeting	Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Scrutiny Committees Governance and Audit Committee Democratic Services Committee 	All meetings will be offered as hybrid. Minimum number of physical attendees - 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Committee Licensing Committee 	All meetings will be offered as fully remote.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council 	All meetings will be offered as fully remote.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive 	All meetings will be offered as fully remote.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member development sessions 	All meetings will be offered as hybrid. Minimum number of physical attendees - 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other 	All meetings will be offered as hybrid. Minimum number of physical attendees - 5

Members of the public will also be able to attend physical meetings at the General Offices. In the event that the number of members of the public needs to be limited then seats will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Members of the public who wish to view a meeting which is to be fully remote should make a request to the Head of Democratic Services, by noon three days before the remote meeting to enable appropriate arrangements to be made.

Procedure at Meetings

Those participants attending the meeting remotely should also ensure that they have appropriate internet connectivity to join and maintain their attendance throughout the meeting.

If attending physically and using a laptop the person should ensure that it is on mute and the sound is off **(this is imperative to stop sound feedback)**.

All those participating in the meeting, physically or remotely, will need to indicate when they would like to speak, via physical hands up in the Committee Room or hands up on Teams. Only when brought in by the Chair may someone speak. They should remember then to unmute their microphone when speaking and to re mute when finished. Participations must speak clearly and into the microphone.

For all meetings, Members are requested to leave their cameras on throughout the duration of the meeting. Officers will only turn on their cameras if they are speaking and members of the public and Press will be asked to keep their cameras off for the duration of the meeting.

It is inevitable that there will be occasions when a remote participant may need to disable their camera due to poor connection/internet issues. If this occurs the participant should use the chat function to inform the meeting Chair and Democratic Services staff of the issue.

Reports will not be shown on screen. Only on rare occasions, such as providing a presentation, will the information be shown on screen.

All attendees are encouraged to use their Council devices at meetings so that agendas and papers can be viewed online.

A participant at a meeting wishing to speak in Welsh is required to contact Democratic Services at least 3 days in advance of a meeting so that the necessary translation arrangements can be made. All meetings will be facilitated by a Democratic Services Officer.

Attendance at Meetings Whilst out of the Country

Members wishing to attend meetings whilst out of the Country and using their own personal or Council devices will be able to do so by accessing free Wi-Fi facilities as the Council will not be able to reimburse costs. However, to enable access to Council meetings abroad the Information Security Policy states that approval must be sought from the SRS, SIRO and Data Protection Governance Officer before taking equipment abroad. Information will be sought to understand, where the device will securely stored/locked, what Wi-Fi will be accessed and is it secure, international data transfer and the risk of the device being lost/stolen.

Should Members wish to access meetings using mobile phones (Council or Personal) or other personal devices such as laptops, iPads etc the Council will not be able to reimburse call or data costs. This access would therefore be a matter for the Member and subject to the Council's existing BYOD (bring your own device) policy. Please note, no documentation or personal information should be downloaded to a personal device.

Technical support on any Council supported devices whilst abroad will not be provided by the Council's ICT provider SRS, or Democratic Services Officers.

Record of Attendance

The Democratic Services Officer will record attendance of each committee member and participant at the meeting and record attendance in the minutes of the meeting. Committee Members are to inform the relevant Democratic Services if they are unable to attend a meeting and their apologies will be recorded at the meeting and published in the minutes of the meeting.

Quorum

The quorum of a meeting is one quarter of the voting Members unless specified otherwise within the Council's Constitution. The quorum shall include those attending remotely and physically; providing they are able to speak and be heard by each other and to see and be seen by others when actively participating in proceedings.

If the numbers present fall below the quorum required, the meeting ends immediately.

Voting

It is acknowledged that technical issues may dictate the method of voting but voting will comply with the voting rules set out in the Council Procedure Rules. Methods of voting include electronic voting, a roll call vote and show of hands (either physical or virtual). Committee members should ensure that they have been present for the discussion and debate on agenda items so as to be able to exercise their vote.

The result of any vote will be announced immediately following the vote by either the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer.

Chairing Meetings

It is understood that chairing a multi-location meeting is very different to chairing a face-to-face only meeting and the job of the Chair is particularly challenging. Chairs and vice-chairs are encouraged to attend meetings in person in order to benefit from the direct support of Democratic Services.

In general Chairs of meetings should:

- Ensure they are prepared for the meeting.
- Ensure all participants are able to access the meeting and can see and hear each other.
- Introduce themselves and others to members of the public who may be present.
- Check occasionally to ensure no one has been lost due to technical difficulties and provide support to those participants experiencing challenges.
- Remember that all participants may want to participate whether attending physically or remotely. If attending physically, ensure those attending remotely are able to contribute and if attending remotely ensure that you ask if anyone attending physically from the Committee Room would like to contribute.
- Ask all those attending, whether physically or remotely, to mute their microphones and to only take them off mute when brought in by the Chair. All will then need to re mute once they have spoken.

When opening the meeting inform everyone that the meeting will be recorded and will be uploaded onto the Council's website (for Council meetings the recording will be live broadcast).

If any public or Press are in attendance physically at the General Offices inform them that the public seating area is not generally filmed, however, by entering the meeting room and using the seating area they are consenting to being filmed and the possible use of these images being used on the website and/or for training purposes.

As identified above also note that filming is allowed to be undertaken by those seated in public gallery and again, by sitting in the seating area, they consent to being filmed.

Disruptive Behaviour – If a member of the public interrupts proceedings, the Chair will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chair will order their removal from the meeting. With regards to Elected Members, the procedure outlined within the Council's Constitution will apply.

Chat Function Use

Participants should only use the chat function if there is something they need the meeting to be aware of i.e. are having sound issues, or need to leave the meeting early etc.

The chat facility is not to be used for discussions, as all discussions must be made verbally in the meeting for the sake of individuals observing the meeting and / or the meeting recording if a recording is being made.

The chat is not to be used for other reasons. Be mindful that everyone in the meeting can see the chat content.

Supporting Documents

This guidance Policy should be read in conjunction with the Councils Constitution, Hybrid Meeting Protocol and Information Security Policy.

Constitution – [The Council Constitution | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

Note – the Constitution will be undertaking a review. The arrangements outlined in this report will be reflected in a future Constitution

Hybrid Meeting Protocol –



Hybrid Meetings
Protocol.docx

Information Security Policy –



Information-Security-Policy-v12-FINAL.d

Councillor Hybrid Meetings Protocol

This guide is provided to Members and Officers to support in the use of Microsoft Teams and how to participate in hybrid meetings.

The document provides steps and pictorial guidance to help you on any aspects of the hybrid meeting process. For those already familiar with Microsoft Teams a quick bullet point step by step is provided below.

Please can all Members and Officers read the full document initially.

Join a remote meeting using Microsoft Teams

- Step 1** You will receive a calendar appointment via email from the Democratic Team. You should accept or decline this appointment depending on your attendance.
- Step 2** You will need to click the link within the outlook calendar, or within the calendar in Microsoft Teams to join the meeting.
- Step 3** You will be taken to a 'holding' screen. This is where you are able to see if your camera and microphone are turned off or on. It is best to keep your microphone off until you are ready to speak.
- Step 4** Once happy with settings, click 'Join Now'. This will take you into the meeting with everyone else.
- Step 5** If you wish to raise a question during the meeting, click the raise hand icon to indicate to the chair you wish to speak. The Chair will note the hands raised and will call you in to speak accordingly.
- Step 6** Once the meeting has finished, click the red square with the white telephone icon to leave the meeting.

Top Tips

Do

- ✓ Consider blurring your background under the settings in the video, this will prevent anything in your background being visible including pictures of family etc. which may be distracting for other meeting participants.
- ✓ Consider your personal appearance, you'll be on show throughout the meeting.
- ✓ Ask family members to stay out of shot as people wandering about making coffee can be distracting.
- ✓ Be aware of the tools and functionality. You do not want to be talking away for a couple of minutes only to have your microphone muted and no one can hear you.
- ✓ If your internet connection is poor, consider turning off the incoming video under settings. This will reduce the amount of network needed to participate.
- ✓ Remember to use the raise hand function to indicate to the chair when you want to speak. Unmute your microphone when you start to talk otherwise others won't be able to hear you.
- ✓ Consider using headphones to listen to the meeting, whether in the General Offices or on Microsoft Teams, the audio through headphones will be clearer than the sound coming through your laptop or other device and will also ensure there is no feedback between the microphone and the speakers.
- ✓ Try and keep your device still and on a hard surface. If you are holding it or it is on your lap, every movement you make will come across on the image you project to everyone.
- ✓ If you find your picture is dark on the screen, try turning on the room lights or have a lamp on to the side of you.
- ✓ Think about your surroundings and be aware of what is being discussed. For example, if you are discussing an exempt item, you should make sure no one else is able to see or hear the content of the meeting, if you are unable to be in a room on your own, using headphones would help.
- ✓ Remember that everything you do on screen will be seen by everyone in the meeting and can be viewed by the public, therefore, it is recommended that you do not smoke or eat during the meeting (as would be the case if you were physically in the meeting at the General Offices).

Don't

- ☒ Use the chat functionality for anything other than voting and interacting with the chair.
- ☒ Leave your microphone on unless you are speaking. Everyone will be able to hear everything you say throughout the meeting unless your microphone is muted.
- ☒ Be tempted to dress down just because you are taking part remotely. Think about how you look on the video and how this will be portrayed on the live stream to the public. It will still be a meeting of the Council like any other.
- ☒ Wait until the meeting time to log in and set up. Test everything in advance, try calling other people to make sure you can hear and be heard.

- ☒ Stay in the meeting for any longer than is required and make sure you leave the meeting properly. If you don't people will still be able to see and hear you. At the end of the meeting, turn off your microphone AND camera to minimise the risk of people hearing things you don't want them to.

Microsoft Teams Functions

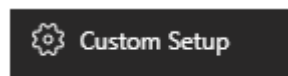
An overview of what the buttons do and how to use them is below:



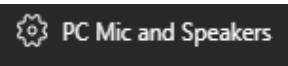
This is the Camera icon that lets you toggle the camera on and off by pressing the grey circle next to it. You can turn this on and no one will be able to see your picture, except you. Your camera will only be available for others to see you once you Join the meeting. Use this time to adjust the position of your surface pro or device to get the best picture you can for you. Whatever you see here, the people will see on the live stream.



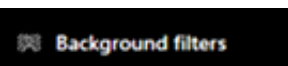
This is your Microphone button. Again press the grey circle to toggle it on and off. Turning it on now tests the sound and no one else can hear you.



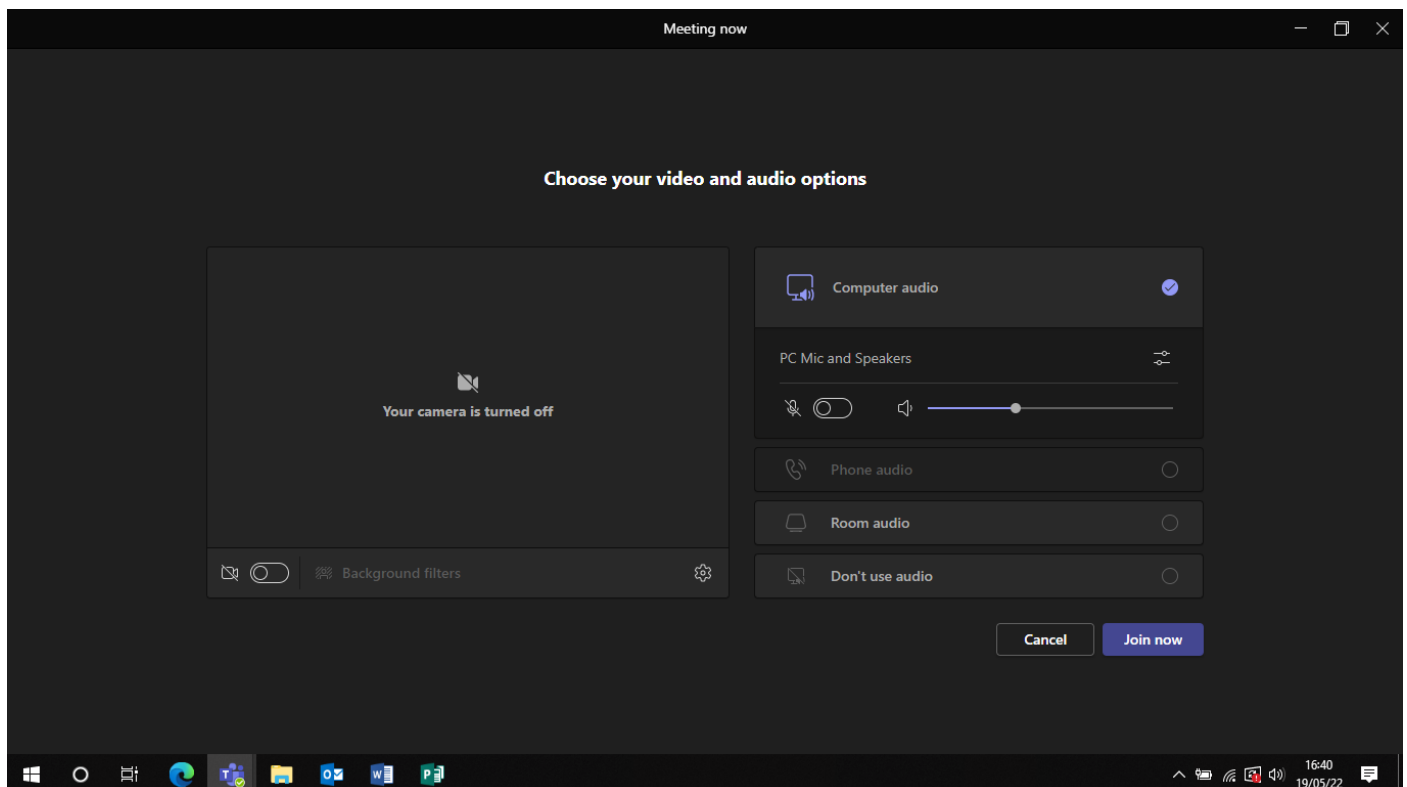
These options let you toggle with your sound and microphone settings. We would recommend listening to the meeting through headphones as the audio is clearer than through the device but this will be down to personal preference. Depending on if you have headphones plugged in or not will depend on the option that appears here.



You can also change your background at this point. To do this your Camera will need to be turned on, then:

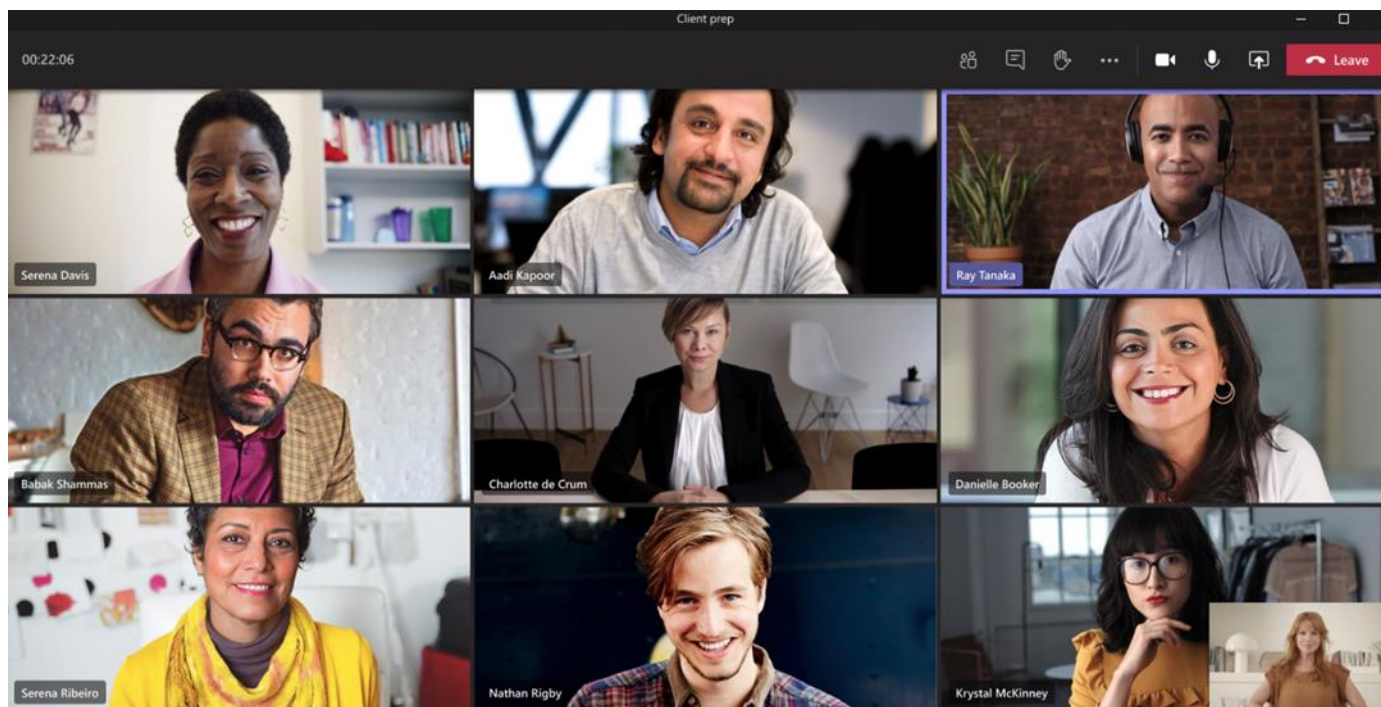


- Click Background filters
- A list of background pictures will appear on the right of the screen
- Click your desired picture
- This will now be set as your background



Once you are happy with everything and ready to join the meeting, click Join Now at the bottom right of the screen. Once you click this and join the meeting, everyone within the meeting will be able to see and hear you as long as your microphone or camera is active.

Once you have joined the meeting other participants will appear on the screen. Depending on the number of people in the meeting, you can only see a certain amount of attendees on screen. When you speak, you will appear on screen. It will look similar to the below.



You should familiarise yourself with the tool bar at the top of the window to understand what the buttons do and when to/when not to use them. An overview of those buttons is below.



This button lets you toggle the camera on and off. Now you are in the meeting you should leave your camera on at all times. This will ensure that your image appears on the live stream as well as to other members of the meeting.



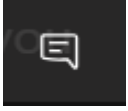
This button lets you toggle your microphone on and off. By default you should turn your microphone off until you are ready/invited to speak. To turn it on/off simply click the button once.



WARNING: This button lets you present your desktop to the rest of the people in the meeting. It is unlikely you will need to use this in a formal meeting environment but be mindful that once you click this, others will be able to see what is on your computer.



The three dots are additional options you can turn on and off. The two settings in here you might use are 'blur background' this will simply blur your background image and only show you clearly on the screen. The other option could be to turn off the incoming video signal however you should only use this where your internet connection is very poor and you are struggling to follow proceedings.



This is the chat button for the meeting. If you click onto this icon a pop up window will appear on the right hand side of the screen. You should only use the chat function if there is something you need for the meeting to be aware of i.e. you are having sound issues, or need to leave the meeting early etc. The chat is not to be used for other reasons. Be mindful that everyone in the meeting, but not on the recording, can see the chat content.



This button allows you to see a list of the other participants at the meeting.

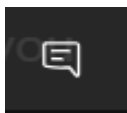


This button allows you to Raise your virtual hand to indicate to the Chair that you wish to speak. Wait until the Chair brings you into the discussion before speaking.



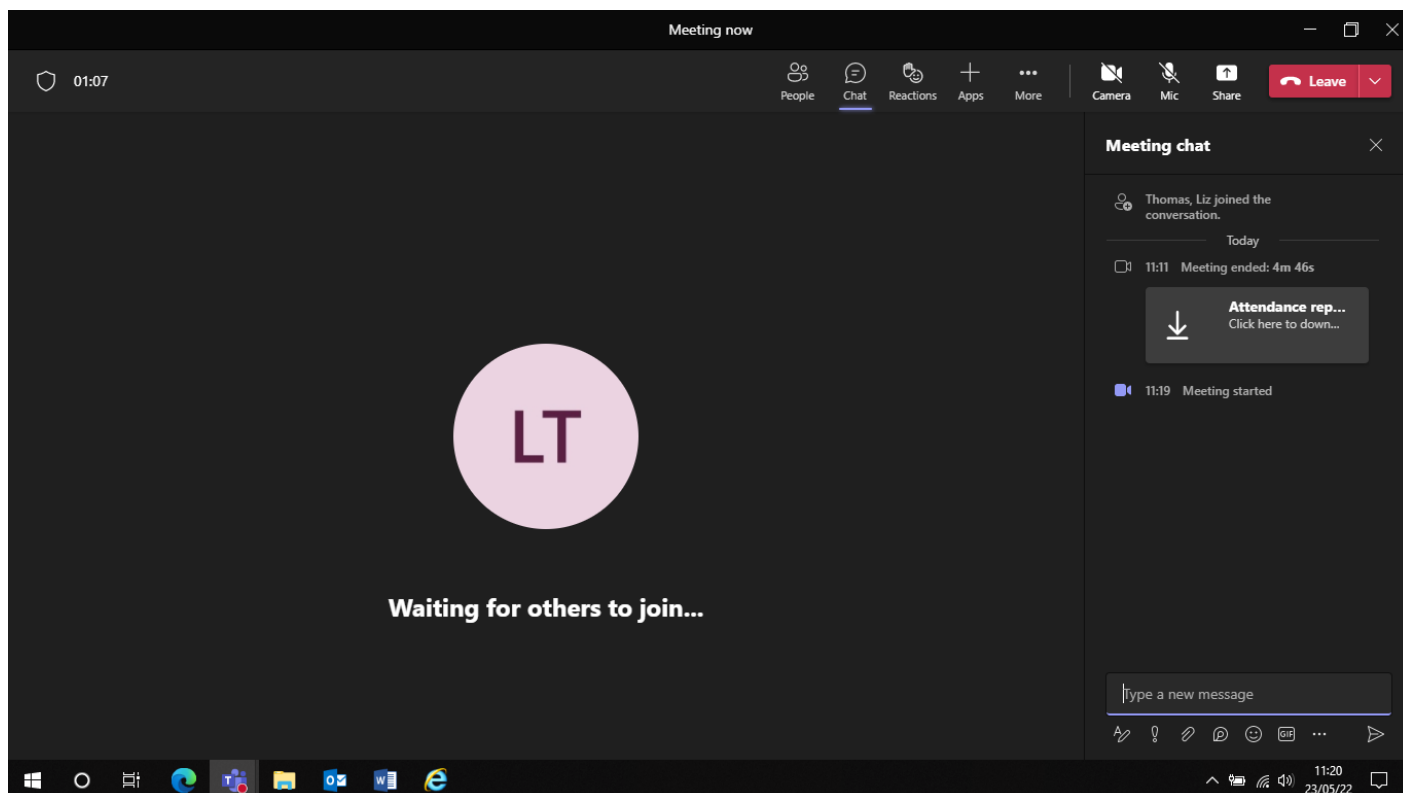
This button lets you end your participation in the meeting. The meeting will continue until all participants have left. If you click this by mistake and want to re-join the meeting, simply follow the original instructions and it will take you back into the meeting.

The Chat Overview and how to use



This is the chat button for the meeting. If you click onto this icon a pop up window will appear on the right hand side of the screen. You should only use the chat function if there is something you need for the meeting to be aware of i.e. you are having sound issues, or need to leave the meeting early etc. The chat is not to be used for other reasons. Be mindful that everyone in the meeting, but not on the recording, can see the chat content.

Once you click the chat button in the meeting, it will appear on the right hand side of you screen. You will still be able to see the video of people talking and hear what is going on. This is a separate part of the system that allows text chat without it being public.



At the top of the chat window are people's messages that have already been submitted, these include your messages. At the bottom of the window you can type you message in the box that says 'Type a new message'. Simply enter the text here and press Enter on your keyboard (the big button on the right below backspace) and it will post your message for all participants to see.

Do not use that chat functionality to chat between each other, this is critical to allowing us to manage and chair the meeting effectively.

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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Information Security Policy

V1.2



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Issued: February 2021 Review: January 2023

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Document History

Author	Version	Date	Review Date	Reason for Change
Rhian Hayden	V1.0	February 2021	March 2022	Policy creation – redrafted policy replacing old Information Security Policy 2013
Steve Berry	V1.1	April 2021	March 2022	Introduction of Document History table and minor amendments to detail removal of equipment from country, external information sharing and references to “Home Drives” to “Personal Storage Areas”
Kathy Buckley	V1.2	February 2022	February 2023	Minor updates and yearly review

1.0 AIMS OF POLICY

1.1 SCOPE

- 1.1.1 This policy applies to all Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council employees, schools, volunteers, members, contractors, third-parties and all authorised users with access to our information assets. They are referred to as 'users' throughout this policy.
- 1.1.2 It sets out the approach Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council have adopted to develop, manage and improve Information Security and ensure that our valuable information resources are properly protected against loss or compromise.
- 1.1.3 Where this policy refers to other standards, procedures and guidelines they must be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.1.4 Within the context of Information Security, the term 'information' includes data and any form of communication recorded or transmitted in transcript, verbally, manually or electronically. In terms of tangible assets, Information Security principles extend to paper documents, computer files, electronic records, data sticks, CDs, drives or any other storage or processing medium.
- 1.1.5 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council recognise that users access various social media platforms, the internet and forums both as part of their business-operation and within their personal lives. In conjunction with this policy all users are expected to read, understand and adhere to the Social Media policy.

1.2 INTENTION

- 1.2.1 Information Security is different to 'Information Governance' which embraces a much broader set of administrative procedures necessary to manage the entire life of information from origin, through processing, to disposal. However, Information Security is an integral component of Information Governance and for this to be effective, a consistent, well organised and properly administered information structure must be established in all working environments throughout the organisation.
- 1.2.2 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council adopts the view that information should be open unless its sensitive or personal. This is because sharing of information is critical to our day to day business decision making and helps other agencies use our information to develop innovative solutions and inform policy making. Open Data principles do not apply to sensitive or personal information, and it's critical that security arrangements are in place to prevent accidental sharing of this.
- 1.2.3 Every aspect of carrying out our business involves Information Security considerations, therefore it remains the responsibility of all people who work for or partner with Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council to safeguard our information resources and ensure that all necessary protective measures are in place to prevent its loss or damage.

- 1.2.4 In applying this policy, it is also important that the breadth of protective security principles relating to information, IT, personnel and physical security are fully integrated to create sufficient depth and resilience to complement business continuity requirements and guard against all prevailing threats.
- 1.2.5 Finally, Information Security must take full account of a range of legislation (including DPA and GDPR) governing the manner in which information and data is managed and protected. A common theme is 'confidentiality' and, to remain legally compliant, obligations are placed upon staff to ensure that information is protected.

1.3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.3.1 The organisation cannot function without information, processes and networks that combine to create a complicated data infrastructure. From this it is important to identify the more sensitive operational, financial or business information that requires specific protection and to develop measures to prevent, detect and mitigate loss or compromise.
- 1.3.2 There is always a need to balance the needs of the business operation with the need to keep sensitive and confidential data secure. Every attempt will be undertaken to do this electronically and seamlessly, but there is still a need to adopt measures that preserve:
- Confidentiality – ensuring that information is accessible only to those authorised to have access, and protecting assets against unauthorised disclosure. Unauthorised access will not be tolerated.
 - Integrity – safeguarding the accuracy and completeness of information, and protecting assets from unauthorised or accidental modification
 - Availability – ensuring that authorised users have access to information and associated assets to carry out their duties effectively.
- 1.3.3 Another significant aim is to reinforce 'confidentiality' and 'need to know' principles. Information supplied in confidence, used to support business operations or connected with other sensitive business activities, must be treated in a confidential manner and only imparted to others in the official course of duties on a strict 'need to know' basis. This requirement is supported by legislation including:
- Data Protection Act 2018 / GDPR - requires personal data to be properly safeguarded and not disclosed unless properly authorised and justified. It also requires us to state the legal basis under which we gather, retain and use data along with allowing the data subject the right access to see the information and ensure its accuracy.
 - Computer Misuse Act 1990 (and amendments within The Serious Crime Act 2015) – renders it illegal to gain access to or use a computer without authority.
 - Freedom of Information Act 2000 - provides for disclosure of non-personal data, subject to exemptions including the prevention and detection of crime.

1.3.4 You must act honourably at all times and protect the reputation of the council.

1.4 THREATS AND VULNERABILITIES

In adopting relevant protective measures, the nature of threats and vulnerabilities must be considered.

1.4.1 Much of the work of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is of interest to others and, while the organisation must operate as an open public service, it is important to protect sensitive assets and guard against undesirable elements including cyber-attacks and, in some cases, the media.

1.4.2 As well as external vulnerabilities, the organisation and its users must avoid, deter, and counter unauthorised or illegal internal activity including any deliberate or accidental act or omission which could lead to loss of or compromise information.

1.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.5.1 All Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council users have a duty of care to ensure security is maintained. When data is processed as part of a business requirement they must ensure it is safe and secure at all times and is only distributed to the correct people.

1.5.2 Any security issues identified or suspected must be reported to the Data Protection Officer through the escalation procedures (dataprotection@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk) as well as the Information Security Officer via security@blaenau-gwent.co.uk

1.5.3 All users are responsible for ensuring their Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council equipment including laptops, mobiles and tablets are secure and are never left unattended, particularly in public places.

1.6 CHALLENGES & REPRESENTATIONS

1.6.1 Challenges and representations concerning this policy should be directed to the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and Information Security Officer at security@blaenau-gwent.co.uk

1.7 CONFIDENTIALITY

1.7.1 Information has uses beyond the normal day to day job, and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council operates a policy of opening up key data for others to use for a variety of different reasons, not least of all to inform critical decisions on the levels of service provision.

1.7.2 However, much of the information in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is sensitive because of its operational, business or personal content, and where this is the case strict rules of confidentiality apply.

- 1.7.3 Sensitive and personal information is available to relevant staff and partner agencies to do their jobs, and is provided for official use only. Communication of sensitive or personal information to anyone not authorised to receive it is **strictly not permitted**, and disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who wilfully uses or discloses this information.
- 1.7.4 All printing of documents must be kept to a minimum, and only printed if there is an absolute business need.
- 1.7.5 When transferring information either internally or externally of the organisation users are responsible for ensuring that an appropriate secure method of transfer is used. Where unsure whether a method is appropriate or secure users should seek advice from the Data Protection Officer or Information Security Manager.

1.8 NEED TO KNOW

- 1.8.1 As an employee of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council it is normal for you to encounter personal, confidential information. You will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement to this effect – normally as part of your employment contract. It goes without saying that this confidentiality must be protected. This includes information that is stored and displayed electronically, held in documents or publications and over the telephone or in conversations. Therefore, users must not discuss or divulge any information to anyone else, other than those who have to a need to know and must not use information for any other purpose than it was intended.

1.9 CLEAR WORKSTATION PRACTICES

- 1.9.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council works in a very agile way, and as a result much of its information is electronic. However, where paper documents are used they must be managed in a way that prevents unauthorised access to sensitive information. This includes securing physical information in appropriate cabinets when not in use, particularly outside normal working hours. It's also important to make sure that paper documents taken away from the office are stored separately from desirable items like laptops or other mobile devices.

1.10 CLEAR SCREEN PRACTICE

- 1.10.1 Password protected screen savers must be activated when you leave your laptop or mobile device to prevent unauthorised access to information or systems. Be aware that mobile devices are desirable and can be the target for thieves. Make sure they are all password protected and that screen locks are activated if they haven't been accessed for 30 seconds.

1.11 SYSTEMS ACCESS AND PASSWORDS

- 1.11.1 Users and third parties are only permitted access to files and systems for which they have been specifically authorised. Access permissions are set up at the time of employment, and must be reviewed when there is a restructure, change of job or change of system. It's the responsibility of the manager to ensure this is done, and it's your personal responsibility to inform your manager immediately if you find you have access to anything you shouldn't see. Having unauthorised access to information does not entitle you to view it.

- 1.11.2 Passwords and other security processes are in place as part of the normal security arrangements and no attempt must be made to bypass them.
- 1.11.3 Passwords must not be divulged to others, nor written down.
- 1.11.4 Your password should not comprise of obvious names or dates that could easily be associated with you.

1.12 CORPORATE ASSETS (SOFTWARE/HARDWARE)

- 1.12.1 You will be prevented from loading unauthorised software onto any Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's systems or devices. This is a critical part of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's security arrangements and you must not attempt to alter/amend/compromise the security in any way.
- 1.12.2 Anti-Virus software runs on either a server or workstation and monitors network connections looking for malicious software. Anti-virus software is generally reactive, meaning a signature file must be developed for each new virus discovered and these virus definition files must be sent to the software in order for the software to find the malicious code.
- 1.12.3 Virus definition files are periodic files provided by vendors to update the anti-virus software to recognize and deal with newly discovered malicious software.
- 1.12.4 All computer devices connected to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council network shall have anti-virus software installed, configured so that the virus definition files are current, routinely and automatically updated, and the anti-virus software must be actively running on these devices. All files on computer devices will be scanned periodically for viruses.
- 1.12.5 You must not prohibit anti-virus or updates on any software from running, or bypass, exploit or deliberately avoid updates from running, as this will be deemed to be a violation of this policy and subject to disciplinary. This is not restricted to antivirus software and includes patches and updates to all software and hardware owned by the Council.
- 1.12.6 Approved/licenced software and/or Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's corporate information must not be downloaded, copied, shared, compromised, deleted, or distributed in any way that may have the potential to cause the council harm.
- 1.12.7 If you require additional software as part of your role, please raise with the SRS Service Desk.
- 1.12.8 Line of business systems (email, HR/Payroll etc) must only be used for business purposes.
- 1.12.9 The internet is a business tool, and activity is monitored. Please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy for more information.
- 1.12.10 Email and messaging services (including but not limited to Microsoft Teams, Skype, etc) are business tools, and all communications should be conducted in a professional manner as you are representing Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Spam (chain email) is not to be forwarded on, and any suspicious email (phishing email) should not be opened, and referred to security@blaenau-gwent.co.uk for investigation.

- 1.12.11 You will be provided as part of your role computer equipment, and potentially a mobile phone. You must look after these devices and not leave them unattended, or unlocked. You must not attach/connect any unapproved third party hardware to your Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council equipment. If you require access to additional equipment or require third party hardware to be connected to your devices, you must request this via SRS Service Desk.
- 1.12.12 Corporate equipment should not be used to store personal information.
- 1.12.13 The Social Media policy should be referred to prior to presenting the council on any social media platform, and should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.12.14 Any employee or third party working on behalf of the council must seek approval from SIRO, DPO and Information Security Manager prior to taking any Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council equipment abroad

1.13 OVERSIGHT OR EAVESDROPPING

- 1.13.1 When discussing or processing issues of a sensitive nature on Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council premises or in public, extra care must be taken to avoid oversight of mobile computing devices, or eavesdropping on conversations.
- 1.13.2 When working remotely, be mindful of meetings and telephone conversations you are having in the home environment. Make sure that your door is shut when discussing confidential/corporate issues so that members of your family/third parties are not able to hear the detail of that conversation.
- 1.13.3 When attending a confidential call through MS Teams, either in the office or working remotely, a headset connected to your laptop must be used for the call. This is to avoid eavesdropping of calls and the two-way conversation being heard by third parties.

1.14 DISPOSAL OF DEVICES AND INFORMATION

- 1.14.1 Mobile devices must be disposed of by the SRS when they become obsolete. The SRS have a contract for this that ensures devices are wiped and correctly disposed of using approved methods. You must not attempt to dispose of mobile devices yourself. Please contact SRS Service Desk for old equipment to be collected.
- 1.14.2 All sensitive/corporate paper documents must be shredded using the onsite Confidential Waste bins provided and not put in the general paper waste facilities.
- 1.14.3 All printing of documents must be kept to a minimum, and only printed if there is an absolute business need.
- 1.14.4 This section of the policy should be read in conjunction with the Record Retention and Disposal Policy.

1.15 BREACHES OF SECURITY

1.15.1 Any security incident or occurrence that has the potential to compromise the organisation, staff, information or other assets, must be reported immediately to –

- Your Line Manager;
- The Data Protection Officer - dataprotection@blaenau-gwent.co.uk
- Information Security Officer - security@blaenau-gwent.co.uk

1.16 CONTRACTORS/THIRD PARTIES

1.16.1 Contractors and Third Parties must agree to adhere to this policy before access to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Information Assets or Sites is provided.

1.16.2 All contractors and third parties must sign an NDA prior to accessing Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's sites, systems or network.

1.16.3 Contractors and Third Parties' access to Information Assets or Sites must be the minimum necessary to achieve business purposes.

1.16.4 Contractors and Third Parties must connect to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council network in a secured way.

1.16.5 Contractors and Third Parties that breach Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's policies, procedures or contractual clauses will be subject to termination of contract or criminal proceedings if deemed appropriate.

1.16.6 On termination of contract, Contractors and Third Parties must relinquish any assigned software licences and passwords to 3rd party systems and must also return any Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council or related asset(s) issued during the contract, including-

- Information Assets (paper records, laptops, files, removable media, hard drives, mobile phones, End User Devices etc.);
- Access control software, hardware tokens, ID, passes etc.

1.17 REMOTE WORKING/MOBILE DEVICES

1.17.1 When working remotely users must make all reasonable efforts to secure the data and assets of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Remote users should not leave their equipment unlocked or unattended at any time.

1.17.2 Remote workers must keep Information Assets in a locked area, cupboard or safe, out of plain sight, out of the reach of children and animals, away from any sources of heat, cold, or liquid.

1.17.3 When working remotely, be mindful of meetings and telephone conversations you are having in your environment. Make sure that your door is shut or nobody can eavesdrop when discussing confidential/corporate issues so that members of your family/third parties are not able to hear the detail of that conversation.

1.17.4 Users must immediately report any incidents that involves loss, theft, or compromise of an asset or loss or corruption of data.

1.17.5 This section should be read in conjunction with the Agile Working Policy.

1.18 PHYSICAL SECURITY

1.18.1 All visitors to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council must sign in at reception and be accompanied throughout the duration of their visit. Users are encouraged to challenge people they don't recognise to ensure they are authorised to access sites.

1.18.2 To ensure the physical security of Information Assets users should –

- Keep Information Assets in a locked area, cupboard or safe, out of plain sight, out of the reach of children and animals, away from any sources of heat, cold, or liquid.
- When using public transport Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Information Assets must not be left unattended.
- When transported in a car or vehicle, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Information Assets must be out of plain sight and not left unattended. Equipment should not be left in a vehicle overnight.
- Take reasonable care when transporting Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Information Assets in hand luggage, bags, and backpacks and not leave them unattended.

1.18.3 As part of your role, users will be issued with an ID badge/access card. This card will provide you entry only into the areas you are permitted. Users should not try to gain access to areas where their card does not provide access. Under no circumstances should a user allow another person to use their ID card to gain access into a building/area.

1.18.4 Lost cards should be reported immediately to a line manager and access to the card should be disabled.

1.19 HOME DRIVES/PERSONAL FILE STORAGE & STORAGE OF FILES/DATA

1.19.1 Each employee of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will have access to their own storage area, called a "Home Drive" or "Personal File Storage". Home Drives/Personal File Storage areas are part of the corporate network and are to be used for business purposes only.

- Personal photographs and files/data are not to be stored in this location.
- Files/data relating to your operational performance, or staff records can be stored here to avoid other persons viewing this information.
- All files/data relating to normal business activity should be saved on the network drives.

1.20 COMPLIANCE

1.20.1 If a Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Employee, Members, Contractor or Third Party breaches this policy, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council may:

- Restrict or terminate the User’s right to use Information Assets;
- Withdraw or remove any material uploaded by that User in contravention of this policy;
- Disclose information to law enforcement and regulatory agencies and take legal action;
- Take such other action as it deems appropriate, including up to and including dismissal through the disciplinary procedure.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council reserves the right to monitor employee, members, contractor, and third party activity across all Information Assets owned by the council.

2.0 COMPLIANCE WITH THE WELSH LANGUAGE SCHEME

2.1 This Policy will comply with the organisation’s Welsh Language Scheme in terms of dealing with the Welsh speaking public, impact upon the public image of the organisation and the implementation of the Language Scheme.

3.0 IDENTIFICATION SECTION

Policy Title:	Information Security Policy
Policy Owner:	Senior Information Risk Owner
Department Responsible:	All
Links to other Policies/Procedure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data Protection Policy• Acceptable Usage Policy• Information Governance Polices• Social Media Policy• Record Retention & Disposal Policy• Cyber Security Incident Response Policy• Agile Working Policy
Policy Implementation Date:	1 February 2021
Next policy review date:	February 2023

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Agenda Item 18

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 20.09.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 16.09.2022

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **R. Hayden – Chief Officer Resources**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	13/09/22				23/09/22		29/09/22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present the proposed Blaenau Gwent Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme (Appendix 1) for Members consideration.

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 During 2022, the Welsh Government has provided funding to all local authorities to provide a £150 one-off cost of living payment to all those eligible households in council tax bands A to D and those qualifying under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Main Scheme).
 - 2.2 Additional funding has also been provided to each Council's to enable them to provide support under a discretionary scheme, to help households considered to be in need of assistance with their living costs.
 - 2.3 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has received £746,000 to fund the Discretionary Scheme.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 *To include Recommendation(s) / Endorsement by other groups, e.g. CMT/Committees/Other groups)*
 - 3.1.1 **Option 1 – to consider and agree the proposed Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme**
 - 3.1.2 **Option 2 – to consider the proposed Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme and suggest amendments prior to agreeing the scheme.**
 - 3.2 The proposed Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme will be considered by the Corporate Overview & Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2022.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The Cost of Living Support Scheme and Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme was announced as part of the Welsh Government's Supplementary Budget on 15 February 2022.

The schemes are intended to provide immediate support as Wales recovers from the pandemic and support households to deal with the impact of increasing energy and other costs.

- 4.2 The Discretionary Scheme fund can be used by each local authority to support it considers to be in need of assistance with their living costs. Each local authority will determine its use of discretionary support as it deems appropriate to address local needs.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

- 5.1.1 WG have provided funding of approximately £746,000 to enable Blaenau Gwent to deliver a local Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme.

In the unlikely event of an overspend against the scheme the additional costs will need to be funded by the general reserve.

5.1.2 ***Option 1 – agree the proposed Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme***

It is estimated that the proposed scheme will be delivered within the available resources. The actual cost will be dependent upon actual take up / applications received.

5.1.3 ***Option 2 – suggest amendments prior to agreeing the Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme***

The impact of any suggested changes to the scheme will be assessed to ensure the costs remain within the funding available i.e. re-profiling of funding.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- 5.2.1 There is a risk that eligible applicants will exceed the number estimated resulting in an overspend against budget.

This has been minimised by setting specific dates for eligibility (not open ended), assuming maximum take up of scheme at those dates and suggesting the proposing the payment levels.

- 5.2.2 There is a risk that a lower number of applicants than estimated register / apply for the payment resulting in an underspend against the available resources and eligible households not receiving the financial support they are entitled too.

This will be minimised by administering a direct payment for those household where we have current bank details and implementing a programme of communication to raise awareness of the scheme.

Any underspend can be carried forward and utilised in future years.

5.3 **Legal**

- 5.3.1 The Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme will be administered in accordance with WG grant terms & conditions.

5.4 **Human Resources**

- 5.4.1 Staff across Corporate Services will be involved in delivery of the scheme.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

See proposed scheme.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

- 6.2.1 Agreement and adoption of a Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme will provide direct financial support to eligible households within Blaenau Gwent and indirect support for those households needing to utilise Food banks and / or seek advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

6.3 **Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)**

- 6.3.1 CLT have considered the proposed policy. A communication programme will be implemented to raise awareness of the scheme and encourage eligible households to register / apply for the payment.

6.4 **Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)**

- 6.4.1 n/a – the proposed scheme will help eligible households with an ‘immediate’ financial contribution to help them with the Cost of Living pressures currently being faced.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

- 6.5.1 The financial contribution to eligible households, food banks and Citizens Advice Bureau will help support families facing significant hardship.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

- 6.6.1 Financial contributions will be made to the Blaenau Gwent Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau to increase resources available to support the families in Blaenau Gwent.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

n/a

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

n/a

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment** *(the screening template should be completed for any decisions to identify if a full integrated impact assessment (IIA) is needed. A full IIA will need to be completed if the decision is part of the socio-economic duty to consider how the decision might help to reduce the inequalities of outcome associated with socio-economic disadvantage).*

6.9.1 The integrated Impact Assessment undertaken in relation to this proposed policy is attached at Appendix 2.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 *State how the work will be monitored e.g. through scrutiny or directorate performance management arrangements*

Delivery of the Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme will be monitored by the Resources Service as part of the performance management arrangements in place.

Background Documents / Electronic Links

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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cost of Living Payment – Discretionary Scheme

Overview:

During 2022, the Welsh Government has provided funding to all local authorities to provide a £150 one-off cost of living payment to all those eligible households in council tax bands A to D and those qualifying under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (Main Scheme).

Additional funding has also been provided to each Council to enable them to provide support under a discretionary scheme, to help households considered to be in need of assistance with their living costs. **Discretionary Scheme Eligibility:**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has received £746,000 and the discretionary scheme will be used to support households that meet the following criteria:-

A payment of **£150** will be made to eligible households in Council Tax Band E to H, where on the 15 February 2022, the person liable to pay council tax lives in the property as their sole or main residence and were not in receipt of support through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

A payment of **£150** will be made to households where on the 15 February 2022, the person liable for council tax lives in the property as their sole or main residence, is not eligible for a payment under the main scheme AND is in receipt of one of the following exemptions or reliefs:

- **Exemption Class N** – All residents are students
- **Exemption Class S** – All residents are under the age of 18 years
- **Exemption Class U** – All residents are severely mentally impaired
- **Exemption Class W** – Annexe or self-contained part of a property occupied by an elderly or disabled relative of the residents living in the rest of it
- **Exemption Class X** – All residents are care leavers who are 18 or over but have not yet reached the age of 25, or where every resident is either a care leaver or falls under the definition of a student or a severely mentally impaired person
- **Exemption Class E** – Unoccupied because the only usual occupier left to receive personal care as a resident of a hospital, nursing or residential care home

- **Exemption Class I** – Unoccupied because the only usual occupier has left the property to receive care elsewhere (other than a place mentioned in Class E)
- **Exemption Class J** – Unoccupied because, the only usual occupier lives elsewhere, for the purpose of providing care to another person
- **Exemption Class K** – The liable person last occupied the dwelling as their main residence and is a student studying elsewhere

A payment of **£150** will be made to households who would have been eligible under the main scheme but did not register for or receive payment before the 30 September 2022.

Where it is deemed reasonable, a payment of up to **£150** will be made to households who were not eligible under the main scheme and do not fall into any of the above categories of eligibility. The award of this payment will be at the discretion of the Council (Leader / Leader of the Opposition / S151 Officer).

Any decision is final and there are no grounds for appeal.

A payment of **£100** will be made to households who have their sole or main residence in Blaenau Gwent and were in receipt of a Free School Meal payment in August 2022. The payment will be made directly into the bank account in which you received the Free School Meal payment.

As part of this scheme, the Council will also make a contribution of £100,000 to the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank for the support of residents of Blaenau Gwent and a further £50,000 to Citizens Advice Bureau to enable additional resources to be deployed to support individuals across Blaenau Gwent with financial / debt advice.

The scheme will be open to applications until 31 March 2023.

How will payments be made:

Eligible households in Council Tax Bands E to H (& those who were eligible under the main scheme) - where we hold current direct debit details on council tax accounts we will look to make payment directly into bank accounts. Where we do

not hold current direct debit details we will send a letter inviting you to apply for the above payment.

If you do not receive a letter of invitation you cannot register for this payment.

Households in receipt of any of the eligible exemptions - we will send a letter inviting you to apply for the above payment.

Eligible Households in HMO's / temporary accommodation – you can make an application for this payment and will be required to provide evidence that you are responsible for energy bills directly or pay a service charge for energy costs

Households eligible for free school meals – payment will be made directly into the bank account that your August free school meal payments have been made to.

In all other instances households will need to register for their eligibility to be assessed.

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Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) has been designed to help support the Council in making informed and effective decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of statutory legislation, such as the Equality Act 2010. It consists of 10 main sections as outlined below:

- Section 1 - Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Section 2 - Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards
- Section 3 - Socio-economic Duty
- Section 4 - Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way
- Section 5 - Data
- Section 6 - Consultation
- Section 7 - Decision

Lead Officer	Head of Service	Service Area & Department	Date
Service Manager Revenues & Charging Assessments	Chief Officer Resources	Resources, Corporate Services	16/09/22

Briefly outline the proposal indicating what change or decision is to be made, also provide any documentation that may be used to support this. **What is the proposal that needs to be assessed?**

Introduction of a Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme - The scheme is intended to provide support as Wales recovers from the pandemic and support households to deal with the impact of increasing energy and other costs.

The scheme proposes: -

- Payments of £150 to eligible households – eligibility criteria, applicants cannot have received a payment under the main Cost of Living Scheme
- Payment of £100 to households where households were receiving free school meal payments in August 2022 (this is likely to be an additional payment to households who would have received a payment from the Main scheme or who would be eligible for the £150 payment from the Discretionary Scheme)
- Grant of £100,000 to BG Food Bank to provide support to individuals & families in BG.
- Grant of £50,000 to BG Citizens Advice Bureau to provide additional resources to support to individuals & families with financial / debt advice.

Options are 1) to agree the proposed scheme or 2) suggest amendments to the scheme

Section 1 – Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

Briefly outline below if there will be any positive or negative impacts, on any groups of people with protected characteristics, who are covered by the Equality Act 2010, as a result of the proposal being considered.

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Age <i>(people of all ages)</i>	Eligible adult households (both individuals & families) within BG will be entitled to a direct payment. All households will be eligible to access support from the Food Bank & CAB		
Disability <i>(people with disabilities/ long term conditions)</i>	People with disabilities and those with none will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food		

	Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		
Gender Reassignment <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression is different to the sex they were assigned at birth)</i>	All BG households regardless of gender will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Marriage or Civil Partnership <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	All BG households (regardless of whether or not they are) in a marriage and / or Civil Partnership will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		
Pregnancy and Maternity <i>(women who are pregnant and/or on maternity leave)</i>	Women who are pregnant and / or on maternity leave will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		
Race <i>(people from black, Asian and minority)</i>	People of all racial backgrounds will be eligible for the direct		

<i>ethnic communities and different racial backgrounds)</i>	payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		
Religion or Belief <i>(people with different religions and beliefs including people with no beliefs)</i>	All BG households regardless of religion and belief will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		
Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on those with a protected characteristics?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
Sex <i>(women and men, girls and boys and those who self-identify their gender)</i>	All BG households regardless of sexual orientation will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau		

<p>Sexual Orientation <i>(lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, other)</i></p>	<p>All BG households regardless of sexual orientation will be eligible for the direct payments & to access support from the Food Bank and Citizens Advice Bureau</p>		
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Section 2 - Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards

The Welsh Language Measure 2011 and the [Welsh Language Standards](#) require the Council to have 'due regard' for any positive or negative impacts that proposal may have on opportunities to use the Welsh language.

Requirements	Does the proposal have any positive, negative, or neutral impacts with regards to the below?	What can be done to mitigate any negative impacts?	Please demonstrate any evidence used to form this opinion.
Compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. <i>For example, Standards 88 - 93 – policy development and review of existing policies)</i>	Neutral impact		
What opportunities are there to promote the Welsh Language? <i>For example, status, use of Welsh language services, use of Welsh in everyday life in work / community</i>	Positive Impact - Policy & registration / application forms will be available in Welsh & English		
What opportunities are there for a person to use the Welsh Language? <i>For example, staff, residents and visitors</i>	Positive Impact - Policy & registration / application forms will be available in Welsh & English		
Is the Welsh language being treated no less favourably than the English language?	YES		

Section 3 - Socio-economic Duty (Strategic Decisions Only – Please refer to our Corporate Reporting Guidance)

Welsh Government's [Socio-economic Duty](#) provides a framework to ensure tackling inequality of outcome is at the forefront of decision making.

Please consider how your proposal could affect the following groups:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- People with low literacy/numeracy
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Carers
- Armed Forces Community
- Students
- Single adult households
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales (WIMD)
- People involved in the criminal justice system
- People misusing substances

Socio Economic Disadvantages	Will the proposal have a positive, negative, or neutral impact?	How could you mitigate the negative impacts outlined?	Please highlight any evidence that has been considered (quantitative or qualitative)
<p>Low Income / Income Poverty (<i>cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.</i>)</p>	<p>Positive: All eligible households in BG will receive a payment to help with cost of living pressures</p> <p>Financial contributions will also be made to the BG Food Bank and CAB to support residents of Blaenau Gwent</p>		
<p>Low and/or No Wealth (<i>enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future</i>)</p>	<p>See above</p>		
<p>Material Deprivation (<i>unable to access basic goods and services i.e., financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.</i>)</p>	<p>See above</p>		
<p>Area Deprivation (<i>where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport) Impact on the environment?</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral impact</p>		
<p>Socio-economic Background (<i>social class i.e., parents' education, employment and income</i>)</p>	<p>Neutral impact</p>		

<p>Socio-economic Disadvantage <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>	Neutral		

Section 4 – Children’s Rights Approach - [The Right Way](#)

The Children’s Rights Approach – The Right Way is a framework for working with children, grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). It places the UNCRC at the core of planning and service delivery and integrates children’s rights into every aspect of decision-making, policy and practice. The Right Way focuses on three main them Participation, Provision and Protection.

Protected characteristics	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on the Children’s Rights Approach?	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on the Children’s Rights Approach?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.
<p>Participation (child or young person as someone who actively contributes to society as a citizen)</p>	No	No	

Provision (the basic rights of children and young people to survive and develop)	Yes – families with children entitled to free school meals will be eligible for an additional payment		
Protection (children and young people are protected against exploitation, abuse or discrimination)	No	No	

Section 5– Community Safety			
Duty to Consider Crime and Disorder Implications			
Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the local authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder, anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment, the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances, re-offending and serious violence.			
Impacts	Will the proposal have any positive impacts on children & people’s	Will the proposal have any negative impacts on children & people’s participation, provision or protection?	Outline how the proposal could maximise any positive impacts or minimise any negative impact. Please indicate any views evidence you have that supports this.

	participation, provision or protection?		
Crime (consider impact on each: victims, offenders and neighbourhoods)	No	No	
Anti-Social Behaviour and behaviour adversely affecting the local environment (consider impact on each: victims, offenders, neighbourhoods and green spaces)	No	No	
Misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances (Think vulnerable children, adults, families and communities)	No	All eligible households in BG will receive a payment to help with cost of living pressures however individuals could use this money to fund drugs, alcohol & other substances	
Re-offending (Think young people and adults, victims, families, communities)	No	No	

Serious Violence (Think vulnerable young people, vulnerable adults, victims, families, communities)	No	No	
Counter Terrorism (People and places that are vulnerable to terrorism or violent extremism)	No	No	
Community Cohesion (Asylum seekers, Migrants, Victims or Hate Crime, Community tensions)	No	No	

Section 6 - Data

Please outline any data or evidence that has been used to develop the proposal. For example, this can be previous consultations, national/regional/local data, pilot projects, reports, feedback from clients etc.

What data/evidence was used? - provide any links.	What were the key findings?	How has the data/evidence informed this proposal?
<p>WG Cost of Living Scheme</p> <p>WG Grant terms & conditions to implement Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme</p> <p>Economic data relating to inflation increases, fuel and energy cost.</p> <p>Data re free school meals eligibility</p> <p>CAB performance data</p>	<p>Eligibility criteria for Cost of Living Main scheme</p> <p>Funding has been made available to deliver Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme</p> <p>WG have requested scheme to be established asap to provide financial assistance to households in BG</p> <p>Approx 1800 families eligible for free school meals</p> <p>CAB caseload relating to BG residents is significantly increasing and additional support required</p>	<p>Identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> households not eligible under main scheme households eligible but not claimed under main scheme vulnerable families / households (via eligibility for free schools meals) <p>Highlighted increasing support being sought by BG households via CAB for finance / debt advice</p>

Are there any data or information gaps and if so what are they and how do you intend to address them?

Section 7 - Consultation.

Using the questions below please provide details of any planned consultations or consultations that have been undertaken to support the proposal, referring to the Gunning Principles as appropriate:

Principle 1: Consultation must take place when the proposals are still at a formative stage. You must not have already made up your mind.

Principle 2: Sufficient reasons must be put forward to allow for intelligent consideration and response. Have people been given the information and opportunity to influence?

Principle 3: Adequate time must be given for consideration and response. Is the consultation long enough bearing in mind the circumstances?

Principle 4: The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account when finalising the decision

Please consider the following questions:

1. Who did you consult?

CLT, Leader of the Council, CAB provided information on increased uptake of their services by people in Blaenau Gwent.

2. When did the consultation take place and was adequate time given for a response?

September 2022

3. Was there enough information provided to respond effectively?

4. What were the findings?

5. Have the findings been considered with regards to the decision?

Section 8 - Decision

Using the information you have gathered from sections 1-9 please state in the table below whether you are able to proceed with the proposal.

Continue with the proposal in its current form

Yes

No

Continue with proposal but take into account reasonable steps to mitigate any negative impacts of the proposal

Yes

No

Please contact Policy & Partnerships should you require any further advice or guidance on completing your assessment via lissa.friel@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or emma.scherptong@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.

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Agenda Item 19

Executive Committee and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: 15.09.2022

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: 20.09.2022

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Hayden Trollope – Executive Member People & Social Services**

Report Written by: **Tanya Evans, Interim Director of Social Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	25.8.22	16.08.22			19.9.22		29.09.22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 (Appendix 1).
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The performance of the department is monitored throughout the financial year from April to March, with quarterly reports presented to the previous Social Services Committee during 2021- 22. At the end of the year a comprehensive self-evaluation of performance is undertaken to inform the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services
 - 2.2 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - Option 1**

Council to approve the publication of the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022.
 - Option 2**

Council to consider the detail contained in the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services 2021/2022 and contribute to the continuous assessment of effectiveness by making appropriate comments and or recommendations for amendment prior to approval and publication.
4. **Evidence of how does this topic support the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

It is a statutory responsibility of the Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF).

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 **Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)**

The Director's Annual Report identifies the pressures and budgetary implications for 2021/2022.

5.2 **Risk including Mitigating Actions**

Social Services maintain a directorate risk register which is aligned to both service level and corporate risk. The risk register is reviewed as part of the business planning process and included within the performance reporting of the Director of Social Services.

5.3 **Legal**

There are no legal implications with this report

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications related in this report

6. Supporting Evidence

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Detail is provided within the Director's Annual Report 2021/2022.

The following is taken from the Directors Summary within the report.

Headline updates:

6.1.1 During 2021/22 Children's and Adult Services continued to maintain the majority of services whilst adhering to the continual changes to guidance from Welsh Government. Safeguarding remained a priority throughout with home visits being undertaken to children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After, care leavers, and those children on the 'edge of care'. Adult services continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and undertake emergency assessments. However, Adult Services at the outset of the pandemic had to close our day services and respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people. However, during 2021/22 adult services respite care has reopened all be it in a staged way to continue to manage the risks associated with the virus.

6.1.2 During 2021/ 22 both Augusta House and the Local Authority Community Options Service have resumed full operations although both have had to adapt their models of delivery to meet the requirements of Welsh Government guidance and the increasing needs and demands of our citizens and their families.

6.1.3 In April 2021 the council adopted an agile working policy. All staff were categorised according to their role as home working, agile or Service /Community Worker. Very few Social Services staff fell into the home working category as the majority of our services are front facing and a large proportion of staff are frontline care workers which are service based i.e. Adult Services Provider teams including our care workers and support workers. Staff have coped well with this transition

largely due to becoming used to working from home as a result of the pandemic. Social services staff continued to work from our main offices at Anvil Court, the VITCC, Beaufort Road, Blaina ICC as well as working from home. Much has been done to ensure this new way of working has not had a negative impact on the workforce. For example, teams still come together face to face for team meetings, newly qualified staff are required to attend the office full time to ensure the correct levels of support are in place, plus the council has developed a Well-being Wednesday bulletin providing information and links on all aspects of well-being to staff.

- 6.1.4 One of the biggest challenges faced during 2021/22 related to lack of workforce capacity. Within Adult Social Services this was across frontline registered care worker roles, both our in-house and externally commissioned care and support services. In Children's Services the pressure was in the locality teams which manage the majority of children on the child protection register, children looked after and court work. The department as a whole has been working hard to look at innovative ways of managing the workload in these areas as well as developing recruitment and retention strategies to address workforce pressures. Despite these significant pressures the existing staff and providers of services have continued to ensure children and adults needs are met, risks are managed and safeguarding issues dealt with.
- 6.1.5 Our Early Year's Child Care and Play Team have continued to provide a full range of services throughout 2021/22. The Flying Start settings remained open to the communities they serve and offered space to enable Health Visitors to undertake their clinics. The team successfully coordinated and delivered an amazing programme of activities using the summer of fun and winter of well-being grants from Welsh Government which was aimed at providing children and young people 0 –25 with activities.
- 6.1.6 The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020-25 continues to reduce the numbers of children looked after and at the end of March 2022 numbers stood at 198 down from 211 the previous year (down from a high of 237). The My Support Team have continued to engage with our most complex children in residential care by providing intensive face to face support. Due to the success of the team Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire have decided to move away from a joint to individual teams. The Blaenau Gwent team became operational from April 2022 and is expected to continue to reduce the numbers of children in residential care.
- 6.1.7 Adult Services continue to work to the 8 key themes of the Living Independently in the Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy. This strategy was due to be reviewed during 21/22 however the pressures of dealing with the pandemic did not allow this. Work to the review the strategy will be completed during 2022/23 in collaboration with our colleagues in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The key theme of the Social Services and Well-being Act is to promote the well-being of people who need care and support. Within the annual report it is highlighted where the Directorate has worked closely with the public to improve

service delivery and user outcomes. Reporting provides the public with the opportunity to view progress of the Directorate and ensure accountability.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 looks to build and strengthen on existing arrangements by involving service users, carers and other key partners where possible in helping shape and influence future design of services.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The Annual report enables the department to plan for the future as spend, risk and performance is continuously reported on and provides a baseline of where the department is currently and where it needs to be in the future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The work undertaken by the department looks to promote a preventative approach to practice through early identification and intervention. Having a proactive rather than re active approach to service planning can also help with planning resources and not spending as much on services in the future.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Social Services work collaboratively across boundaries to benefit citizens requiring health and social care services across Gwent.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The purpose of the SSWBA is to foster integration between Health and Social Services.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The workforce who deliver the functions of the SSWBA 2014 have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

All service provision and functions that sit under social services are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.9b ***Equality Impact Assessment***

The overarching vision is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. ***Monitoring Arrangements***

7.1 Monitoring of the performance of the Social Services Directorate will be reported through the People Scrutiny Committee as per the forward work programme.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Director of Social Services

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Social Services Annual Report 2021/22



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Introduction

Welcome to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Social Services Annual Report 2021/2022
Over the past few years the Department has been developing this annual report to highlight the key areas of improvements and challenges that have been faced.

This report has been developed in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, referred to as 'the Act' throughout this document. The Act aims to provide the most radical change to the way in which Social Services is provided since 1948. It focuses on improving the well-being of people who come to Social Services for support. It is person centred and focuses on prevention and reducing the need for care and support. It recognises that responsibility lies not only within Social Services Departments, but also within the wider Local Authority and with partners (particularly Health and the Third Sector).

The Act shares similar principles with a number of key national/regional strategies that are being implemented throughout the Council, in particular the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Director of Social Services has a statutory requirement to publish an annual report in relation to the delivery of its functions, to evaluate its performance and also include lessons learned. A key aspect of the report is showing how the six Quality Standards have been implemented in relation to well-being outcomes.

This report provides a strategic overview of the work undertaken throughout 2021/2022 and what plans are in place to move forward and includes where Social Services have worked collaboratively with partners. Further supporting information can be found from **page 21** of the report.

Experiences and learning from service users has been considered as part of the development of the report. Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) findings, Audit Wales (AW) findings, case studies, complaints and compliments and quarterly reporting have all been considered as part of the development of this report and evidence from these has been used to inform future learning.

The annual report is used to demonstrate accountability to citizens and service users. As part of this process, the report will be presented to full Council for ratification before it is published on the Council's website and will then be sent to Welsh Ministers. The report will be available on line bilingually and will be shared with partner agencies in order to share good practice, learning and experiences.

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.

There has been a particular focus on continuing our services to ensure that our most vulnerable residents and children continue to get the care and support they require, both in their own homes and registered settings.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most dramatic and far reaching events to impact on everyday life. Whilst departments like Social Services are still in part in the responsive phase, there was a need for reflection on how we responded to this pandemic in order to inform and shape the recovery phase, as well as prepare for the possibility of any future outbreak.

The Council’s Response to COVID 19 – Recovery and Renewal

The Council has identified a number of priorities for recovery and renewal, as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council has identified an overarching recovery theme of ‘community’ with four supporting themes, one of which is Social Services, which covers both Children’s and Adult Services, and has an action plan and monitoring methods in place.

The recovery and renewal plan will act as working document, outlining how we will continue to support the most vulnerable in the community both during and beyond the pandemic.

In Autumn, the Council undertook a Community Impact Assessment pilot which considered a range of qualitative and quantitative research to consider how pre-existing inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19 for key groups such as young people, families with young children and people with learning disabilities. The work identified several key impacts, such as mental health and the digital divide, and our intention is to build on this approach and maximise our use of intelligence to inform future recovery work and ensure decision-making is evidence based.

The significant input from staff has been extremely positive which has enabled services to adapt to change in working conditions and was key to the response and continuation of effective service delivery going forward.



Director's Summary of Performance

As the Interim Corporate Director of Social Services in Blaenau Gwent, I am pleased to present the annual report for 2021/22 which is a requirement of the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (the Act).

Prior to taking up the post of Interim Director in April 2022, I held the Head of Childrens Social Services post for 9 years in Blaenau Gwent working closely with colleagues in Adult Social Services and our partner agencies.

It is fair to say 2021/22 was an equally challenging year to the previous one when the pandemic began. It continued to be difficult and exhausting for all our staff in Social Services as we continued to battle with the impact and the changing landscape of the COVID 19 pandemic. It was another roller coaster of a year with many ups and downs throughout. I have nothing but admiration and pride for our staff who in the face of the virus did not take a backward step, they were truly inspiring, courageous, focussed, committed and professional throughout.

During 2021/22 Children's and Adult Services continued to maintain the majority of services whilst adhering to the continual changes to guidance from Welsh Government. Safeguarding remained a priority throughout with home visits being undertaken to children on the Child Protection Register, Children Looked After, care leavers, and those children on the 'edge of care'. Adult services continued to discharge patients from hospital (including those recovering from COVID-19) and undertake emergency assessments. However, Adult Services at the outset of the pandemic had to close some of our services including our Community Options day centre buildings and Augusta Respite care facility to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable people in line with relevant Welsh Government public health. Both services were remodelled to enable citizens and their families who were assessed as requiring the most critical levels of support and thankfully during 2021/22 the department was able to gradually increase availability of both services with Augusta House resuming operations all be it in a staged way to continue to manage the risks associated with the virus. Our Community Options team have continued to review the way in which day services have been provided and this ongoing remodelling work will continue through 2022/23.

In April 2021 the council adopted an agile working policy. All staff were categorised according to their role as home working, agile or Service / Community Worker. Very few Social Services staff fell into the home working category as the majority of our services are front facing and a large proportion of staff are frontline care workers which are service based i.e. Adult Services Provider teams including our care workers and support workers. Staff have coped well with this transition largely due to becoming used to working from home as a result of the pandemic. Social services staff continued to work from our main offices at Anvil Court, the VITCC, Beaufort Road, Blaina ICC as well as working from home.

Much has been done to ensure this new way of working has not had a negative impact on the workforce. For example teams still come together face to face for team meetings, newly qualified staff are required to attend the office full time to ensure the correct levels of support are in place, plus the council has developed a Well-being Wednesday bulletin providing information and links on all aspects of well-being to staff.

One of the biggest challenges faced during 2021/22 related to lack of workforce capacity. Within Adult Social Services this was predominantly across our in frontline registered care worker roles, both our in-house and externally commissioned care and support services. In Childrens Services the pressure was in the locality teams which manage the majority of children on the child protection register, children looked after and court work.

The department as a whole has been working hard to look at innovative ways of managing the workload in these areas as well as trying to attract staff into these areas of work. Despite these significant pressures the existing staff and providers of services have continued to ensure children and adults needs are met, risks are managed and safeguarding issues dealt with. Our staff are our greatest asset and I am constantly amazed and grateful for the additional tasks they undertake and how they always go that extra mile to ensure the job gets done.

Our Early Year's Child Care and Play Team have continued to provide a full range of services throughout 2021/22. The Flying Start settings remained open to the communities they serve and offered space to enable Health Visitors to undertake their clinics. The team successfully coordinated and delivered an amazing programme of activities using the summer of fun and winter of well-being grants from Welsh Government which was aimed at providing children and young people 0 –25 with activities.

The Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy 2020-25 continues to reduce the numbers of children looked after and at the end of March 2022 numbers stood at 198 down from 211 the previous year (down from a high of 237). The My Support Team have continued to engage with our most complex children in residential care by providing intensive face to face support. Due to the success of the team Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire have decided to move away from a joint to individual teams. The Blaenau Gwent team will become operational from April 2022 and is expected to continue to reduce the numbers of children in residential care.

Adult Services continue to work to the 8 key themes of the Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century Strategy. This strategy was due to be reviewed during 21/22 however the pressures of dealing with the pandemic did not allow this. Work to the review the strategy will be completed during 2022/23 in collaboration with our colleagues in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board.

Ensuring our children looked after remain as close to home is a clear priority for the department. Maintaining our existing foster carers and recruiting more is key to achieving this priority. We have continued to support our foster carers and show our appreciation by holding regular events and support groups. Feedback from questionnaires provide evidence that our foster carers feel well supported and valued.

Finally, I would want to say a huge 'thank you' to all staff, as they have worked immensely hard during such difficult times. Their resilience and strength of character has shone through as all times. They have continued to meet the care and support needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent for which I am very grateful.



Tanya Evans

Interim Corporate Director of
Social Services 2022/23



Damien McCann

Corporate Director of
Social Services 2021/22



Cllr John Mason

Executive Member
Social Services 2021/22

How People are shaping our Services

Previously, as part of the Act, people who use care and support services were invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. Due to the COVID outbreak and available resources being redeployed to support the emergency response, questionnaires were put on hold whilst services were redirected to support the most vulnerable within our community. Welsh Government were also involved heavily in the COVID 19 response and stated that they did require any local authority to provide a questionnaire analysis. On further review of the survey, Welsh Government decided that this was not the best way to engage with service users and the requirement ended. Social Services Departments are now required to work proactively with service users to shape services moving forward.

The Social Services Directorate is committed to providing high quality services to its citizens and below are some examples of consultation and engagement activity throughout the year.

Consultation

- Formal consultation took place with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers. The feedback received was very positive regarding the level of support that Foster Carers received from the department.
- Consultation from the Fostering Well-being programme – this is ongoing consultation work after each set of masterclasses and feedback has been positive. Feedback is used to help shape future masterclasses and the role of the fostering well-being pioneers.
- Consultation survey to all staff and foster carers across the region regarding the Learning and Development Framework – Between November 21 and January 22 a series of workshops (10 in total) regarding the Learning and Development Framework for foster carers were hosted by the RDM. There were separate workshops for staff and foster carers. The presentation made reference to the outcomes of the surveys that were completed earlier in the year and addressed any queries. This then fed into the regional learning and development policy and procedures and is also feeding into the national work on the review of the Framework in practice.

Engagement

Involvement with Individuals, children and families occurs on a daily basis and is recorded as part of care planning. Examples of other engagement activities throughout the year include:-

- Participation and Engagement with the LGBTQ+ groups within all secondary schools. This is supported by the social workers in schools and the community engagement officers who have all received training through Umbrella Cymru.
- Kinship Carers support group sessions
- Inclusive Disabilities Club continues to run every week at the Rassau Resource Centre and is facilitated by families First and is for all those affected by disability. This provides a support group for children with a disability and those who support them including their parent/carers and siblings.
- Skills to Care training
- Presentation opportunity x5 to all foster carers and staff across the region to provide information on Foster Wales, the changes, brand etc. The remit of the event was to welcome people to a new era of Local Authority fostering.
- Carers Engagement service, providing carers telephone engagement service, carers support groups etc

Examples of engagement and consultation are included throughout the report.

Complaints and Compliments

The Social Services Department is committed to providing high quality services to its users; however, despite best intentions, it is recognised that sometimes things can go wrong and the Social Services complaints procedure provides people with the opportunity to voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied with a service.

During 2021/22, there were 3 complaints received in Children's Services. Of these, 2 were classed as stage 1 and 1 was classed as stage 2.

Examples of complaints received in Children's Services this year were :-

- Social Services did not listen to the wishes of the individual during the assessment process; and
- Lack of and miscommunication between parties.

During 2021/22, there were 2 complaints received in Adult Services. Of these, 1 was classed as stage 1 and 1 was classed as stage 2.

Examples of complaints received in Adult Services this year were :-

- Questioning the processes within a service (this however was not upheld); and
- On-going stage 2 complaint regarding a lack of communication from the service.

In order to continue to improve services, the outcomes of complaint investigations and learning from them are undertaken to prevent the situation from occurring again. During 2021/2022 examples of learning identified and actioned include:

Children's Services:-

- Discussions took place during team meetings to share the learning with all Social Workers completing certain types of assessments.

Adults Services:-

- The stage 1 complaint not upheld, and the stage 2 complaint is on-going at this time.

The service also welcomes positive feedback and compliments and uses this learning to improve services moving forward. Examples of compliments received were:-

- You really don't understand what this means to my family and how grateful I am that we have been helped. I thank you all from the bottom of heart—**Family receiving food and gifts from the Christmas appeal**
- I felt so lonely and isolated having a baby during lockdown. It was lovely to talk to other mums, especially about what to expect and knowing I am not the only one feeling like I might be doing it all wrong. Thank you so much for visiting me and letting me be part of this group. Thank you so much for showing me how important I am to my son and that it's ok to take each day as it comes and to enjoy each stage of his precious development—**Flying Start mum attending a virtual parenting programme**
- Thankyou for the wonderful service that you provided and for making our life a lot easier.—**Care Home Team**
- I would like to say a HUGE thank you for all your support to us a family. You have pulled out the stops to help us meet a deadline and you have been professional, patient and empathetic at all times. We appreciate what you have done for us. You have a demanding job and these are challenging times, from what I've gleaned social work requires stamina, both mental and physical! - **Long Term Care**

Promoting and Improving the Well-being of Those We Help

Priorities

The Corporate Plan 2020/22 is the Council’s roadmap setting out the vision, values and priorities of the Council. One key priority within the Plan is, ‘To enable people to maximise their independence, develop solutions and take an active role in their communities’. The business plans throughout the Council, including within Social Services, are aligned directly to the Corporate Plan to ensure that the priorities can be monitored and implemented over the lifespan of the plan. The priorities for Social Services are shown below and the Quality Standards demonstrate where improvement have been made, challenges have been addressed and where outcomes have been achieved.

Corporate Plan Priorities 2020/22 for Social Services are:

- To improve accessibility, provision of information and advice to enable people to support their own well-being;
- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them;
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater;
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering integrated responsive care and support with partners;
- To continue our programme of public engagement and respond in a timely and effective way to feedback;
- To build a collaborative culture between services, partners and communities working together and with people directly to shape and deliver services;
- To put effective safeguarding arrangements in place to protect people from harm; and
- To develop a partnership approach to maximising income reducing the impacts of Poverty.

There are also a number of Corporate priorities identified within the Corporate Plan which all directorates across the Council are expected to implement.

Children’s Services Priorities 2021/22

Priority Title	BRAG
Enhance screening and IAA provision (children and adults)	Green
Support and encourage a cultural change across Children’s services by ensuring that community members have a say in what matters to them	Green
Implementation of the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy	Green
Improve outcomes for Children Looked After by implementing the Corporate Parenting Action Plan	Green
Implement the Safe Reduction of Looked After Children Strategy 2017 –2020	Green
Ensure that all children in Blaenau Gwent have the best start in life (Early Years)	Green
To provide and commission a flexible and affordable mix of high quality placements	Green
All teams to ensure the children and young people of Blaenau Gwent are safeguarded	Amber
Manage the Children’s Services budget to ensure expenditure comes within budget	Green
Children's Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

Adults Services Priorities 2021/22

Priority Title	BRAG
Enhance screening and IAA Adult Services support at our front door in line with recommendations within the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014	Green
Support and encourage a cultural change across Adults services by ensuring that citizens have a say in what matters to them	Green
Ensure that preventative support is available to citizens - promoting personal independence and reducing dependencies	Green
Ensure that we provide / commission modern, high quality care and support provision that meet both current and future well-being needs of our citizens	Green
To develop alternative models of support that promotes independence and supports well-being outcomes	Green
Ensure that vulnerable adults are safeguarded	Green
Develop and maximise opportunities for partnership working across Welsh Government Flexibilities Grants and Welfare reform related programmes	Green
Manage the Adults Service core budget and grant programmes to ensure that expenditure comes within budget	Green
Adult Services contributes to meeting the Sustainable Development Principles	Green

The framework below shows how reporting and monitoring works throughout the Council to create a 'golden thread'.

Planning Framework



Progress of the Quality Standards

During a comprehensive assessment of performance at the end of 2021/22, the following achievements and challenges were identified as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Working with people to define and co-produce personal well-being outcomes that people wish to achieve

During 2021/22, the Information Advice and Assistance Service (IAA) in both children, adults services saw a significant increase in the numbers of referrals received across all partners. Analysis of the data over the past two years has been undertaken to understand the increase in the numbers pre and post pandemic. The total number and average monthly referrals increased and in order to respond to this demand, funding for additional resources in the childrens services IAA Team was agreed until March 2022, from the Social Services Sustainability Fund. A report has been drafted demonstrating that the additional temporary staffing capacity, in place since 2019, was still required and, in fact, further additional capacity is needed in order to support the increase in the number of referrals into the team. It was agreed for the additional temporary posts to be made permanent utilising monies from the core budget in order to ensure sustainability of the team. A number of additional temporary posts were also agreed to be in place for the next 12 months to deal with the further increase in workload. With this additional capacity and sustainability the team is well placed to ensure compliance with part 2 of the Act. During 2021/ 22 a full review of the Adult Services IAA team was completed and the service has now been developed to no longer be reliant on temporary grant funding. The service has been remodelled and the new working arrangements will go live from April 22. The new service promotes an integrated Health and Social Care service that promotes preventative assessments with citizens.

All Children Services IAA Staff have been trained in use of the outcomes approach and the mentors programme continues with 6 weekly meetings. Staff are able to share how the approach is being embedded within their teams and day to day practice, with live cases being discussed and feedback from families and children is also included. In addition, the service as a whole continues to deliver interventions based on an outcomes/strengths based approach which has the voices of children and families at the centre of care planning. Assessment and care planning activity continues to promote the active voice, choice and control philosophy of the Act. Outcomes focused and strengths based approaches to practice continue to be modelled, and the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) remains an active partner in ensuring that children and their families engage in a meaningful way. From April 2022, we will have a large number of newly qualified staff who will also receive this training and adopt this approach into their practice.

An important aspect of providing Social Services to service users is that their voice is heard and they are able to shape the services they receive. Consultation with children and families occurs on a case by case basis and is captured in the care planning documents of each child. A recent example of this was when some of the Children Looked After, which the Council supports, challenged some of the language used and subsequently this encouraged amendments to be made to working practices. The 'Contact Team' is now called the 'Family Time Team'.

In order to raise awareness of advocacy and increase demand into the service an awareness campaign was undertaken so that the Gwent Access to Advocacy (GATA) helpline was utilised. However, the Covid-19 pandemic halted progress and made it difficult to identify the true need and demand for advocacy across Gwent. Advocacy providers and the GATA helpline have highlighted that referrals are now returning to pre-covid levels with a marked increase in parent advocacy relating to child protection cases. In 2023, the Community Health Council will be replaced by a new 'Citizen Voice Body' which should provide the opportunity to co-ordinate the provision of advocacy support across the health board in order to strengthen the citizen's voice in relation to health and social care. Delivery of the Adult Services Gwent advocacy strategy has continued throughout the pandemic and our advocacy framework has continued to support vulnerable adults throughout 2021/22.

The Regional Partnership Board previously successfully submitted a 'Gwent transformational offer' to Welsh Government in response to 'A Healthier Wales' which set out a new £100 million transformational programme. The programme was awarded £8,313,131 for 2021/22. Sustainability will be the focus in this final year, bringing together successful elements alongside successful ICF programmes, to create a framework of services within a model of 'Place Based Care'. All four programmes, have embedded well and the evaluation reports demonstrate both financial efficiencies and improved well-being outcomes for citizens have been achieved.

Working with people and partners to protect and promote people's physical and mental health and emotional well-being

In 2021 a formal consultation with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers was undertaken and the results of which have been shared internally with Senior Management Team, the Placement Team and with Foster Carers. The response rate was just under 17% with a higher response received from the Kinship Foster Carers. The consultation showed that the highest satisfaction rate was achieved regarding support received from Link Workers and the Placement Team (10 out of 10 from generic Foster Carers), and a significant increase in satisfaction with the training and learning opportunities available (8.85/9.35 out of 10). An Action Plan was developed and all actions implemented prior to the 2022 formal consultation which commenced in March 2022 and is due to end May 2022. An analysis of returns including comparisons to the 2021 data will be presented to Senior Management Team in mid 2022.

The Skills to Care course has become mandatory for all those applying to be approved as Kinship Foster Carers. The Foster Wales Marketing Strategy has been rolled out which has included a national media campaign on TV as well as other advertising taking place. Overall, Blaenau Gwent have more children placed with Blaenau Gwent Foster Carers than independent providers which is a huge achievement.

Worcester University has concluded their evaluation of disability services with regards to data collection. Their review included the involvement and contribution of children, young people and their families/carers. The researchers are now analysing the information gathered and completing their report, its findings and recommendations will be shared more widely in September 2022. A longitudinal study by Worcester University will be commencing shortly, during the Autumn of 2022, which will follow children, young people and their families journey through transition from the ages 14 to 24 years.

Families First hold mandatory reflective practice sessions on a monthly basis. These sessions are facilitated by the Team Manager and Clinical Psychologist on an alternate basis and members of the Team are able to discuss cases, share ideas, reflect on what is working well or not, what is important to the family, and how best to support the family to achieve their identified outcomes. Families First paperwork is also being reviewed to become more strength based. Supervision is used to help support workers reflect on their practice and to reinforce an outcomes based approach when discussing families, including the 'what matters question'. This is then reinforced during monthly reflective practice sessions.

There continues to be ongoing strengthening links between the Community Resource Team (Gwent Frailty) and IAA Team. This includes close working with GP colleagues to support pressures across the Health and Social Care sectors. Close work is also ongoing with other professionals such as WAST as well as Primary and Secondary Care colleagues to deliver proportionate assessments at the front door. We have continued to develop a Hospital Hub at Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan to expedite the safe discharge from hospital sites. Working with Gwent Local Authorities the service has been able to support unnecessary hospital admissions to acute sites by enhancing the support provided by the Gwent Home First Service. The hospital hub is focussing on a model of 'Discharge to Recover and Assess' whereby a patient undertakes an assessment at home as opposed to being assessed in hospital when it is deemed appropriate. Integral to promoting independence and reducing dependency on traditional care agencies, is the further enhancement of the Care Management, IAA, Community Resource Team and preventative works streams. In order to meet anticipated health and social care demands over the winter period, there has been an increase in the capacity of a number of projects including:

- Commissioning additional third sector support from the Age Cymru Hospital Discharge Team;
- Recruiting additional Health Care Support Workers to increase the assessments of those receiving double handed care packages, with the aim of reducing these to single handed care with new state of the art equipment;
- Increased capacity of Pharmacy support to enable citizens to be independent with medication;
- Increased availability of Community Meals service to include a potential offer of tea parcels;
- Reviewing all current care packages as part of contingency planning;
- Increasing the capacity of the emergency care @ home / DASH service to respond to urgent care packages, including where there has been a rapid deterioration on a person's condition;
- Scoping the potential to implement a night time response service in partnership with out of hours GP service, WAST, ABUHB and assistive technology providers; and
- Reviewing the dementia reablement service due to the low numbers of referrals.

Meetings are held daily with ABUHB to discuss the escalating crisis across hospital sites. Where possible, to avoid lengthy in patient stays, owing to availability in care homes, assessments at hospital are being prioritised for social work assessments and the availability of domiciliary care packages.

The Children Looked After (CLA) Reduction Strategy has been reviewed and actions are in place up until 2025. This has been aligned to the Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy. Through implementation of these, there has been a slow downward trend of CLA. The end of year figure for 2021/22 is showing a further decrease in the number of CLA moving from 200 to 198 children. Welsh Government has recognised the need to safely reduce the number of children coming into care and identified this as a priority area. In light of this, Integrated Care Fund (ICF) money was allocated to each local authority in Wales, via the Regional Partnership Board in April 2019, to invest in and develop services to safely reduce the numbers of children coming into care. It is important to recognise that the success of the CLA Reduction Strategy is dependent on a whole service approach. The robust preventative interventions delivered by Families First and Flying Start prevent needs from escalating into statutory services. The Information Advice and Assistance Team provides robust screening and initial assessment of all referrals ensuring appropriate action is taken in order to meet need. All of the Social Work Teams work exceptionally hard to keep families together and work with families using a strengths based approach. One of the key elements of the Strategy is to promote workforce stability. However, operational teams are facing staffing shortages. It is accepted that this is a Wales wide position and there is no simple solution. The senior leadership team is addressing how best to respond to the staffing short-fall from multiple standpoints; a separate strategy has been devised to consider short, medium and longer-term solutions (and considering the opportunity to collaborate on a regional basis). In order to support this further, Blaenau Gwent has decided to establish its own My Support Service, rather than operating jointly with Monmouthshire. The residential children budget has shifted from an overspend position to a significant underspend position over the last three years. This is a direct result of having a My Support Team (MyST) and the 14 Plus Team working hard to move children out of residential care and closer to Blaenau Gwent.

As a service area, we continue to prioritise safeguarding across all the teams. The Children's Senior Leadership Team receive quarterly reports on the child protection activity. Safeguarding information in relation to Social Services and Education is also provided to Elected Members through the Democratic process. There are a high number of social work vacancies across the locality teams which is making this work difficult to manage, therefore, safeguarding has been identified a service and corporate risk.

The 2021/22 Corporate Parenting action plan has been delivered throughout the year with great progress being made. A review of this plan has also taken place to determine what needs to be rolled over into the 2022/23 action plan.

As part of the continuous improvement plan, work has been ongoing regarding the pathway for Part 5 investigations. In line with the All Wales Safeguarding Procedures, strategy discussions, in connection with a potential person in a position of trust, will be held by the Safeguarding Manager. The information will then be assessed to consider if the threshold has been met to proceed to a full strategy meeting. The chairing of these meetings will continue to be the responsibility of the service manager.

A new action for 2021 was for the Placement Team to receive attachment training, which will then be delivered via a variety of methods to Foster Carers to enable them to support children who are experiencing attachment and trauma based problems.

For 2021/22 a priority was agreed to support those children where exploitation has been identified as part of the newly adopted Child Exploitation Measurement Tool (CEMT). The CEMT tool kit has been adopted across Gwent and has been built into the Social Services Data System, WCCIS. Officers have ensured all relevant professionals will be invited to Child Exploitation meetings and are currently finalising the prompt indicators. All team training has been completed and will be delivered periodically for new staff. A review of the effectiveness of the new tool will be carried out later in 2022.

This year, after being cancelled last year, the Annual Achievement Award for CLA was incorporated with the Winter Wonderland Event held on 1st December 2021. The annual event recognises the many educational successes of our CLA through the continued period of Covid disruption.

Members from the Safeguarding Team are being based within the IAA Service each week in order to further enhance the service at the 'front door'. A three-year Strategic Plan was published for The South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent-wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB). The pandemic has caused significant disruption to all services and communities across the region. Despite this, Gwent Safeguarding Board and Blaenau Gwent Safeguarding Team have worked diligently to ensure that essential services have remained operational to provide support to the most vulnerable adults. We continue to plan for the implementation of the Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) legislation as a replacement for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), and are delivering training as part of the Regional consortium in addition to increasing capacity at a local level. There has been a shortage of staff, in particular within the domiciliary care sector, which has created problems for service delivery. In order to manage the expected increases in demand over the winter period, a risk management tool is to be implemented to prioritise assessments and care packages. This will be undertaken in partnership with ABUHB and CIW.

A full review of all legacy commissioned projects is underway. Financial management procedures are being used as the basis for the review, focusing on outcomes. Findings from the Community Impact Assessment (CIA) have been reviewed in order to identify the needs and demands falling out of it and how they link to the community element of the Care and Communities Grant (CCG). A significant proportion of the preventative services delivered in Children's Services are dependent on grant funding which is allocated on an annual basis. If this funding was removed, it would be a significant risk to the department. We have seen a decrease in the number of public court applications, which is direct evidence that our preventative approach is working in relation to keeping families together.

Funding assisted places continues to be the priority of the Child Development Fund, this is to enable children in need to experience learning from an early age. Take up of the offer is very positive.

Implementation of the new Care and Support Plan, which is outcome focused and much more user friendly, is now complete and available on the Social Services System, WCCIS. A Blaenau Gwent easy to read brochure, detailing children's rights, entitlements and assistance, is available and includes bespoke local information relevant to our care leavers.

The Authorities Corporate Training Scheme for care leavers goes from strength to strength. The officer responsible for the scheme is employed through the Aspire programme funded from the CCG Legacy funding until March 2022. The brochure has been redeveloped and the programmes on offer broadened to capture all young people. The programme supports all care leavers up to age 25 years. A brochure of external opportunities will also be completed. Young people are supported to find a placement externally if there is nothing suitable available internally.

Families first social workers are now back working face to face in schools and have started working with the River Centre. The community workers have set up a number of groups around bereavement, mental health and LGBT+. The new parenting support worker for the abolition of corporal punishment is in post in readiness for the implementation of the new legislation.

Children's Services has received feedback from Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) who undertook an assurance check in May 2021. The following comments were made in relation to the outcomes culture in Blaenau Gwent and how the voice of the child is heard: *'Senior managers with staff and partners have worked hard to embed strength based outcomes focused practice. The authority's commitment to strength based outcome focused practice was evident in the files reviewed and staff spoke of how this underpinned their work in both adult and children's services. The authority recognises the importance of gaining people's views to inform practice development and support service improvement. We saw evidence of mentoring groups and peer supervision to share and reflect on case issues and identify potential responses to learning. Evidence showed people's views were sought and their voices heard. Information gathering to represent people's circumstances was also informed by intelligence from a number of relevant partner agencies, notably during early stages of intervention.'*

Consultation has taken place with staff regarding the reconfiguration of preventative services, including the Support Worker roles within IAA and CRT and the Community Connector roles. The new structure, which will be in place from April 2022, will be resilient and sustainable and not reliant on grant funding. Within the new structure, a Senior Practitioner and Senior Therapist will be co-located within the IAA Team to be at the 'front door'. Capacity at Augusta House has been safely increased to support up to four guests. Work is continuing to develop new Augusta Promoting Independence Pods at the site. This project has been delayed due to complications with planning approval and increasing development costs, but the project has now secured additional funding from Welsh Government and should be open late 2022. As part of these plans, the respite offer to young adults, as part of the transition planning from Children's to Adult Services will be increased. The development of the enhanced Day Activities / Community Options Team has progressed well despite the ongoing COVID 19 pressures. Both the Lake View and Bert Denning buildings have safely re-opened but with limited sessional access initially which will be increased as we progress through the year. The outreach service is growing well and is successfully supporting citizens to meet their outcomes both in their own home or in wider community settings.

Supporting people to develop safely and to maintain healthy domestic, family and personal relationships

Both Children and Adult Services has seen an increase in the number of referrals received by the IAA Team. Also, the total number of adults suspected of being at risk of abuse or neglect reported during 2021/22 was 415, which is an increase from the previous year where the figure was 394. The number of children on the child protection register at 31st March 2022 was 64 an increase of 12 from the previous year.

As at 31st March 2022 there were 5 children placed outside of Wales. This is a reduction of 1 from the previous quarter. However, as well as a reduction, it is important to understand that the cohort of individual children has changed. 2 children were the subject of care proceedings and placed with a parent, with the final care plan recommending that there should be no order in place. The plan was accepted by Court and those children are no longer looked after. A 3rd child was placed with extended family, subject to an interim care order, with a final care plan recommending Special Guardianship. That plan was also accepted and that child is no longer looked after. 2 children were placed with kinship carers on a long-term basis. Those children remain in that placement in accordance with their long-term plan. 1 child was placed in residential provision with a plan to return to Blaenau Gwent when the time is right. That child remains in the provision in accordance with the long-term plan. The cohort, therefore, has reduced by 3 in January and February 2022. However, in March 2022 the cohort increased again with two unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, placed in England via the National Referral Scheme (NRS). Though ideally the Local Authority would place within Blaenau Gwent, the young people became Blaenau Gwent's responsibility in March 2022 having been supported in a welcome centre in England (since December 2021). In that time, they developed their individual links and support networks and Blaenau Gwent has attempted to support the maintenance of those links wherever possible. For future young people referred via the NRS, it is hoped that timely referral will enable those young people to be placed more quickly, so that links can be made within area.

The Beaufort Road upgrade is entering into the final phase of the building refurb and will be completed by the Autumn 2022. Crisis facilities are now also available in the bathroom and kitchen. A Harvest festival was held using food the children had grown in the garden. New equipment has been purchased for the rooms and further work is needed outdoors for a trampoline and a shed for storage.

Work is currently ongoing with our third sector partners to consider options for remodelling the service to increase capacity in order to deliver a 7-day emergency response team, working alongside the Domiciliary Care Brokerage service. This will then assist in responding to the current pressures in the domiciliary care sector by providing low level support to domiciliary care agencies and the in house emergency care @ home team (DASH). The service will also support hospital discharge and provide low level prevention support post discharge, to help alleviate the current demands facing hospitals and support people to return home with the support they require. The Welsh Government Carers Grant has been utilised and provides additional support for unpaid carers through a number of initiatives across our in-house services and commissioned provision. The service is carefully monitoring the core budget and, in particular, the new ways of supporting people owing to COVID restrictions and having to offer alternative models of day support, increased staffing levels and increased infection control processes. The use of agency staff is also being monitored due to high levels of staff absences. The Carers Lead Officer and GP Engagement Support Officers continue to support unpaid carers; providing information, advice, assistance on referral carers assessments. They maintain a presence in GP Surgeries and in Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan, and carers are also supported with one to one sessions and appointments. A number of enhanced support opportunities are also being developed, via the COVID recovery grant, to support unpaid carers including:

- Increasing the capacity of the Carers Engagement team from November 2021;
- Increased third sector support for carers;
- Blocked booking of respite beds to support carers;
- Increased availability of respite at Augusta House; and
- Carers 'well-being sessions' and peer support events.

Over the past year, and with the easing of COVID restrictions, Adult Services has seen an increase in reablement packages being provided in terms of right sizing packages of care. Due to the commencement of the single handed care review, the bettercare project has seen an increase in the number of referrals it has received over the year. The total number of packages of reablement completed during 2021/22 was 539 up from 232 in 2020/21.

Working with and supporting people to achieve greater economic well-being, have a social life and live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs

The Children Looked After (CLA) education coordinator has successfully completed the Trauma Informed Diploma to inform and improve practice for our CLA. A number of schools across Gwent have also completed this programme. The Placement Team and Locality Teams undertake parallel planning to prevent drift and ensure children are moved onto their long-term provision as quickly as possible. Placement stability meetings take place for unstable placements and the learning from those meetings informs service and practice development.

A mapping exercise to identify all leisure and community opportunities in the region has been completed and now work will be undertaken to understand local facilities. The take up of social events and activities has taken a downward spiral throughout the pandemic and there seems little appetite from our CLA, but we do aim to prioritise this in the 2022/23 action plan.

The key priority of delivering new outcomes and opportunities for our children each year continues to go from strength to strength including:

- An Accommodation Audit is updated annually and care leavers for the year are identified. Meetings are then held with RSL's to inform them the level of accommodation that will be required that year.
- A new Supported Lodgings advertising and promotion scheme has now been developed and is run by Llamau and funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG). There have been 3 new supported lodging providers recruited by the Authority in a short time along with another waiting to be approved. From the HSG a dedicated floating support service within Llamau has been established and have now recruited a male and female support worker.
- Care leavers are wanting 1 bedroom flats and this continues to be a problem with few RSL's interested in developing this type of accommodation. Meetings with Housing and various RSL's have been held to take this forward and now additional funding has been made available within the Housing Strategy.
- The 'move on' panel has been hugely successful since revised 18 months ago. Lots of young people are accessing accommodation and doing well with the assistance from the RSLs, Supporting People Team and Housing Options.
- The Implementation of a Foster Wales Campaign at both a local and regional level was undertaken in 2021 in order to recruit more foster carers. As a result of the Foster Wales Campaign, we have seen an increase in the number of enquiries for new foster care applicants. At the end of 2021/22, Blaenau Gwent had 49 Foster Carers which is an increase of 32.4% from last year and 23 Kinship Carers (family members caring for children who would otherwise need to enter the care system) which is an increase of 57.5%.

The Service has recently recruited a Housing Support Worker who will be based within the IAA Team providing support to people with housing needs. The Community Resource Team continues to operate a home visiting service so that patients are supported to undertake preventative assessments to avoid the need for health or social care services. The service is continuing to look at funding options in order to increase capacity and enhance Technology Enabled Care (TEC) provision via the Gwent TEC group. A SMART flat is in development, within a sheltered housing scheme, to demonstrate the range of TEC available to support people to continue to live independently within the community. An increase of £828,401 has been received in our Housing Support Grants (HSG) allocation for 2021/22. These monies can now be used to commission services, as evidenced in the Commissioning Plan/Spend Plan, to meet the housing support needs of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The following services have been commissioned:

- Increase in the capacity of the generic floating support service to meet current and future demand;
- Increase of the in-house housing first provision to support individuals with complex needs. Currently, the team are working with 5 individuals, and the introduction of the 9 units at a property in Brynmawr will enhance the scheme and allow the scheme to be delivered effectively;
- A Crisis Worker supporting people affected by domestic abuse has been recruited. The worker will be able to provide timely support to people in a crisis and will also assist in reducing the current demand on the domestic abuse floating support service;
- There is a high demand for the mental health floating support service. The current service has been enhanced by commissioning a Senior Support Worker, a dedicated Benefits Support Worker and an Asset Coach providing strengths based housing related support which is person led;
- An Assertive Outreach Service is now available offering support to people with substance misuse issues residing in temporary accommodation and HSG accommodation based schemes. The service is in the process of commissioning the following service provisions: a young person's floating support service; a Housing Support Worker co-located within Adult Social Services Information, Advice and Assistance Team; and further development of a new supported housing project in Tredegar which will include tenancy support. Regular contact is being maintained with all care homes throughout Blaenau Gwent.

How We Do What We Do

Our Workforce and How We Support their Professional Roles

The past year continued to be a challenging period for the Social Care Sector but the workforce responded with resolve, dedication and commitment.

Workforce Development, as a support service, contributed to the challenges faced in whatever way the sector needed. Whilst pandemic restrictions relaxed overtime, the workforce had to step up to meet the additional pressure caused by high vacancy and sickness absence rates.

The year focused on:

- the continued provision of essential care skills;
- the well-being of the workforce;
- creatively using new ways to enable the successful qualification and registration of student social workers and social care workers;
- supporting recruitment initiatives; and
- providing a risk assessed, prioritised and phased options for the sector.

Innovative ways of delivering training continue to be developed. The changed preferences of the workforce have changed the future delivery models for workforce development. Models that better suit the workforce and the employer.

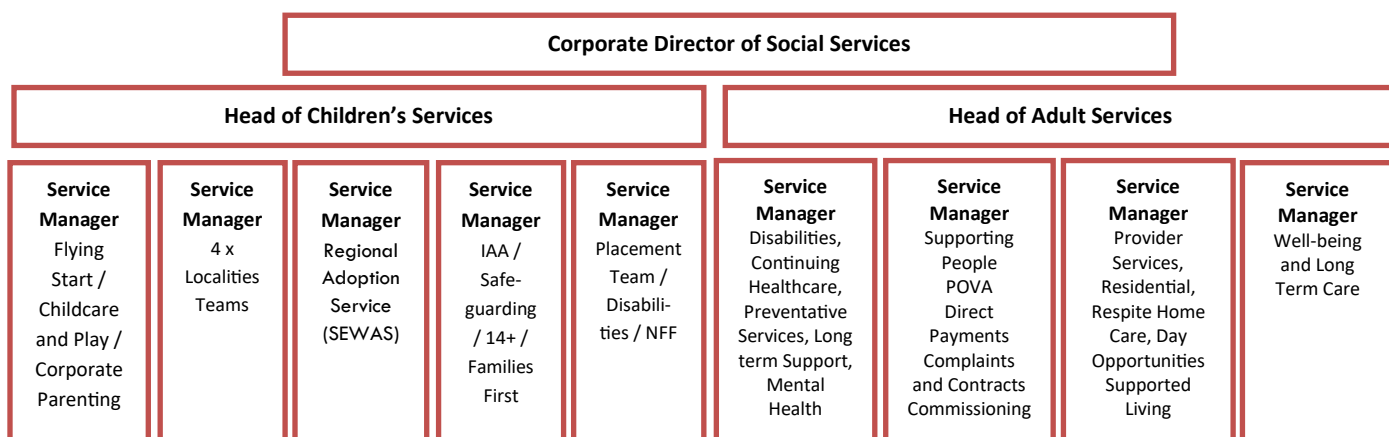
The sector has been provided with the tools to enable an improved learner experience with digital learning. Additional external funding was secured to invest in projectors and screens for establishments and settings enabling the learners to feel the benefits of group learning, shift friendly timing, and minimised costs associated to travel.

Additional funding from Social Care Wales has enabled the authority to improve its investment in its 'grow your own' recruitment strategy, particularly for the current hard to recruit roles.

The organisation has learnt fast on the evolution of workforce development to the extent the authority, in partnership with three other local authorities, is leading on an all-Wales project to secure a fit for purpose digital learner system. The system will respond to the future trends in learning and most importantly put the learner first in its design and functionality.

Benefits continue to be realised for and by the workforce through the scale of opportunity possible due to the joint workforce development service model hosted by Blaenau Gwent in partnership with Caerphilly.

Our Partnership Working, Political and Corporate Leadership, Governance and Accountability



The Corporate Director of Social Services is a member of the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, whereby all Council Directors meet on a weekly basis to consider and make strategic and operational decisions (although some decisions need to be considered by Scrutiny and then ratified by Executive or Council).

In 2021/22 the Directorate had one Executive Member with Portfolio responsibility for Social Services as a whole and was scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee, with safeguarding information reported to the Joint Social Services and Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings were held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

As a whole, the Council has a clear governance and accountability framework and Performance Management Framework in place which all directorates are signed up to. These frameworks are complied with by Social Services who also have additional monitoring requirements as part of the Act.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis Social Services Senior Managers meet with CIW for liaison meetings. CIW also undertake an annual review and evaluation of the Directorate's performance.

Audit and Inspection Progress

Audit Wales

Following on from an initial Audit in 2019 'Corporate Arrangements for Safeguarding of Children' , Audit Wales, in February 2022, commenced a follow-up review. The focus of the review was to determine the extent to which the Council had addressed the eight outstanding recommendations and proposals for improvement to strengthen its corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children. Seeking to answer the following question: Can the Council provide assurance that it has made effective progress since 2019 in addressing the outstanding recommendations / proposals for improvements? The review is now ongoing and being undertaken in two phases. The first phase required the Council to complete a self-assessment and the second phase being a set of structured interviews based on the self-assessment with lead officers and elected members.

Collaboration

Blaenau Gwent Council supports partnership and collaborative working and the Social Services Department continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. Social Services work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses. In addition, Social Services fully participates in the sharing of knowledge, good practice and information, which can result in improved services.

Regional Partnership Boards

The Social Services and Well-being Act sets out a statutory requirement for the development of Regional Partnership Boards. The Boards have been established on current local health board footprints. The Gwent Board includes ABUHB and Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen local authorities. The Executive member in each local authority, with responsibility for health and social care, sits on the Regional Partnership Board. It is an advisory body which provides oversight and direction for areas of integrated working across health and social care. The main priorities of the Board for 2021/22 has been firstly, the continued response to the Coronavirus outbreak across partner agencies and the effect on services. Secondly, the continuation of the Integrated Care Revenue and Capital Funds and the Transformational Offer beyond 2022, Finally, it has been considering the crisis in health and social care with the inability to recruit staff to certain parts of the system.



'Mwy na geiriau/ More than just words

As a department we continue to monitor compliance with our responsibilities within More Than Just Words and the Active Offer. We continue to ensure that when citizens contact both our Adult and Children Services Departments, that they are offered the opportunity to communicate in the language of their choice. Our assessment tools within our Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) system specifically asks the question "Do you require this conversation / assessment to be carried out in Welsh?" The form is then attached to the person's referral.

Our commissioned providers work in partnership with us to promote the Welsh Language and this is reflected in our contracts and service level agreements.

Our Financial Resources and How We Plan For the Future

The total budget allocation for Social Services for 2021/22 was £46.7m. This is an increase from the previous year of £1.300m. At the end of 2021/22 Social Services had an underspend of £3,902,155 and this is due to vacant posts, ICF, Transformation, Home First, Social Services Recovery and Winter Pressures Budget Overspends Grant Funding.

The provision of regular financial forecasting reports in line with the budget monitoring and reporting framework has enabled the Social Services Senior Management Team to make informed decisions on service delivery.

The allocated budget and outturn for 2021/22 is provided in the table below:

The budget for 2022/23 is provided in the table below and includes Strategic Business Reviews savings of £0.155m.

Service Area	Budget	Outturn	Variance (Adverse)/ Favourable
Children's Services	£14,006,860	£12,652,520	1,354,340
Adult Services	£26,509,200	£23,379,940	3,129,260
Business Management / Staff Support	£6,135,580	£6,717,025	(581,445)
Total	£46,651,640	£42,749,485	£3,902,155

Social Services Budget 2022/23		£
1	Commissioning & Social Work	3,939,340
2	Children Looked After	7,389,860
3	Family Support Services	192,370
4	Youth Justice	237,580
5	Other Children's and Family Services	2,389,000
6	Older People Aged 65 and Over	6,862,430

Social Services Budget 2020/21		£
7	Adults under 65 with Physical Disabilities	42,630
8	Adults under 65 with Learning Disabilities	3,608,670
9	Adults under 65 with Mental Health Needs	535,270
10	Other Adult Services	417,650
11	Community Care	17,782,100
12	Support Service & Management Costs	934,170
13	Corporate Recharges	5,487,140
Grand Total		49,818,210

Conclusion

The previous 18 months has been the most significantly challenging in our life time. We have not witnessed a public health crisis of this scale and ferocity in over a 100 years. The consequences of the global health pandemic mean that we have needed to innovate and evolve the way we work and deliver services. Although there has been a lot of emphasis on recovery, the virus has been very much still prevalent this year and there has continued to be significant pressure in managing the delivery of services.

At the end of this reporting period, Welsh Government announced that all legal Covid measures could be removed from 28th March if the public health situation remains stable. This includes a long term transition plan setting out how Wales can live safely with coronavirus just as we live with many other infectious diseases. Learning from this pandemic, along with the implementation of the Act, will shape and influence future design of services going forward.

It is recognised that in the current financial climate there is a need to work smarter and in partnership. Collaborative work with colleagues, partners and as a region ensures a consistent approach to delivering effective services. Assessment and care planning activity continues to promote the active voice, choice and control philosophy of the Act. Outcomes focused and strengths based approaches to practice continue to be modelled, with the involvement of service users, carers and other key partners, where possible, in helping to shape and influence current and future design of services. A preventative approach to practice is promoted by the directorate through early identification and intervention.

During the reporting period the Directorate were subject to numerous audits, reviewing and evaluating the Directorate's performance. These audits highlighted the good work that is being delivered with positive feedback being received.

CIW undertook an assurance check of Social Services to review how the service helps adults, children and carers, with a focus on safety and well-being. The key lines of enquiry covered the four principles of the Act with the judgements and findings aligned to these: People - Voice and Control; Prevention; Partnerships; and Integration and Well-being. Positive feedback was received.

Audit Wales are currently undertaking a review of the Council's safeguarding arrangements, with a particular focus on the activity being undertaken corporately. The review is still ongoing but a great deal of work has progressed within the Council with regards to safeguarding over the past few years.

This Annual Report of the Director of Social Services provides a snapshot of service activity undertaken throughout 2021/22. Details of Further supporting information and links can be found on the following page:

Accessing Further Information and Key Documents

Useful Documents

Reports to Social Services Scrutiny Committee - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Cid=1157&Year=0&LLL=0>

Council Corporate Plan – https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Corporate_Plan_2018-22.pdf

Blaenau Gwent Council Budget Monitoring - <http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Cid=1148&Year=0&LLL=0>

Social Services Website – <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/health-wellbeing-social-care/>

Workforce Development - <http://socialservicesblaenau-gwent.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Useful Websites

Social Care Wales - <https://socialcare.wales>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) - <https://careinspectorate.wales/>

Data Cymru - www.data.cymru

Dewis Wales - <https://www.dewis.wales>

Gwent Safeguarding - <https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk/en/Home.aspx>

Public Service Board - <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/council/partnerships/partnership-working/>

South East Wales Safeguarding Children's Board - www.sewsc.org.uk

Providing Feedback

Social Services welcomes feedback on the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services. Your views are important to us. Please contact us if you would like to give feedback on the plan 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 Adroddiad Blynyddol y Cyfarwyddwr Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.

Write to us:

Director of Social Services

Anvil Court

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Visit our website: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

The Social Services Directorate is satisfied that the information given in this annual report is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This annual report has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.



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Agenda Item 20

Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer: N/A

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer: N/A

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **29th September, 2022**

Report Subject: **Membership Report**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas – Leader/
Executive Member – Corporate Overview
& Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Democratic Services**

Report Written by: **Democratic Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
							29/09/22	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To present a list of Memberships for consideration and determination by Members of the Council.

2. **Scope**
 - 2.1 **ADVISORY PANEL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY GOVERNORS**

To ratify the appointments made at the panel meeting held on 22nd September, 2022. A verbal update will be provided at Council.
 - 2.2 **PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To ratify the appointment of Rhianna Lewis, Youth Forum Representative on the above Committee.
 - 2.3 **NATIONAL ADOPTION SERVICE GOVERNANCE BOARD**

To note that the above Board has also assumed responsibilities for Foster Wales.

To re-affirm the appointment of the Executive Member People & Social Services on the above Board.

2.4 **STRAYING ANIMALS/ANIMAL TRESPASS WORKING GROUP**

To establish and appoint the following Members to the above Working Group:

Executive Member – Place & Environment (Chair)

Chair – Place Scrutiny Committee

Vice-Chair – Place Scrutiny Committee

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 To consider the above.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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