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

THIS IS A MEETING WHICH THE PUBLIC ARE ENTITLED TO ATTEND

Dydd Mercher, 22 Mawrth 2023 Dydd Mercher, 22 Mawrth 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD

A meeting of the Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd will be held in Siambr y Cyngor, Canolfan Ddinesig on Dydd Llun, 27ain Mawrth, 2023 at 1.00 pm.

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 rybudd os dymunwch wneud hynny. Darperir gwasanaeth cyfieithu ar y pryd os gwneir cais am hynny

2. YMDDIHEURIADAU

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau.

3. **DATGANIADAU BUDDIANT A GODDEFEBAU**
- Ystyried unrhyw ddatganiadau buddiant a goddefebau a gafwyd.
4. **PWYLLGOR GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD** 5 - 8
- Derbyn cofnodion y cyfarfod o'r Pwyllgor Gwasanaethau Democrataidd a gynhaliwyd ar 8 Tachwedd 2021.
- (Dylid nodi y cyflwynir y cofnodion er pwyntiau cywirdeb yn unig).
5. **ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL 2023 PANEL ANNIBYNNOL CYMRU AR GYDNABYDDIAETH ARIANNOL** 9 - 34
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Datblygu Sefydliadol.
6. **ADRODDIAD BLYNYDDOL 2022/23 Y PENNAETH GWASANAETHAU DEMOCRATAIDD** 35 - 40
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, Llywodraethiant a Phartneriaethau.
7. **DIWEDDARIAD CYNLLUN GWEITHREDU CYNGOR AMRYWIOL** 41 - 50
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, Llywodraethiant a Phartneriaethau a'r Rheolwr Gwasanaeth Perfformiad a Democrataidd.
8. **CYFRES POLISIŌAU DATBLYGU AELODAU Y CYNGOR** 51 - 86
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9. **PROTOCOL DERISEBAU CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL BLAENAU GWENT 2023-27** 87 - 100
- Ystyried adroddiad y Pennaeth Gwasanaethau Democrataidd, Llywodraethiant a Phartneriaethau.

To: J. Wilkins (Cadeirydd)
Councillor C. Bainton (Is-gadeirydd)
J. C. Morgan
D. Bevan

M. Day
Councillor E. Jones
L. Parsons
Councillor C. Smith
L. Winnett

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

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COUNTY BOROUGH OF BLAENAU GWENT

REPORT TO: THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 8TH NOVEMBER, 2021

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC & COMMITTEE SUPPORT OFFICER

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR J.C. MORGAN (CHAIR)

Councillors B. Summers
 M. Cook
 M. Day
 K. Hayden
 S. Healy
 J. Hill (substituting for Cllr J. Collins)
 H. McCarthy, B.A. (Hons)
 L. Parsons
 K. Pritchard

ALSO: Scrutiny Chairs & Vice-Chairs

Chair and Vice-Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
 Councillors H. Trollope & J. Holt

Chair and Vice-Chair of Social Services Scrutiny Committee
 Councillor S. Thomas & K. Rowson

Vice-Chair of Community Services
 Councillor C. Meredith

AND: Head of Organisational Development
 Service Manager, Performance & Democratic
 Organisational Development Manager –
 Payroll, Health & Safety

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
No. 1	<u>SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION</u>	

	It was noted that no requests had been received for the simultaneous translation service.	
No. 2	<p><u>APOLOGIES</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Collins, M. Cross and G.A. Davies.</p>	
No. 3	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported.</p>	
No. 4	<p><u>DEMOCRATIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September, 2021.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED that the Minutes be received as a true record of proceedings.</p>	
No. 5	<p><u>DRAFT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES 2022/23</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Organisational Development which was presented to inform Members of the proposals contained within the draft report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales for 2022/23.</p> <p>The Organisational Development Manager – Payroll, Health & Safety introduced the report and highlighted the main points contained therein.</p> <p>A Member commented that although he supported the work of the Remuneration Panel he believed that Members should not be setting their own levels of remuneration. He felt strongly that he could not support the proposed increases due to the position with regard to COVID-19, the Government’s low pay offer to Council staff of 1.75% and to NHS workers who had put themselves at risk throughout the pandemic and felt that the UK workforce in general had been treated poorly. He reiterated that on behalf of his group he could not support these increases and hoped</p>	

those comments would be sent back to the remuneration panel for their deliberations.

Another Member agreed with his colleague's comments and said he could not support the increases, and felt that the situation with COVID and the austerity measures could put pressure on annual budgets. He enquired regarding the budget with the reduction in Councillor numbers from 42 to 33 next May. The Organisational Development Manager said that based on 33 elected members from May 2022 and adding on the proposed pay increases it was within the current budget, however, if the proposed increases were not agreed there would be a saving to the Authority. The exact figures would not be known until after the May 2022 elections.

In response to a Member's question regarding the report being presented to full Council for approval, the Service Manager Performance & Democratic confirmed that all reports from the Democratic Services Committee were presented to full Council for a decision and the draft IRP Report would be presented to the next full Council meeting.

A Member commented that the Democratic Services Committee could make recommendations around the different points contained within the report and those recommendations would go back to the Remuneration Panel for deliberation along with other recommendations from all 22 Local Authorities across Wales. The final proposal would be presented to full Council in early 2022.

Another Member commented that the report had not taken on board Blaenau Gwent constituents and the impact of COVID, he could not support these increases while some Home Care workers were on the minimum wage and nurses had been offered pay increases under 2%.

Another Member felt that with the reduction of Councillors in the next election it was wrong to increase salaries. He also agreed with his colleague's comments and said that with some people earning the minimum wage and others such as bus drivers on low wages he could not support the increases. Other Members also endorsed these comments.

A Member asked for clarification on senior salaries, the Organisational Development Manager clarified that Members in receipt of a Band 1 or Band 2 senior salary cannot receive a salary from any NPA or FRA to which they have been appointed, they remain eligible to claim travel and subsistence expenses only. Band 3 would be able to receive a salary from the NPA or FRA to which they are appointed.

In relation to ICT training, the Service Manager advised Members that they were currently in the process of preparing the Induction Programme for the new Council in May and ICT was a key part of that programme.

In response to a Member's question, the Organisational Development Manager advised that other than the proposed pay increases to elected Members and also the co-optees every other detail contained within the report remained the same from the previous year.

At the invitation of the Chair a Member proposed to recommend that the Democratic Services Committee did not support the increases in remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW proposals for 2022/23, however, the report be presented to Council for consideration of all other aspects of the report.

This proposal was seconded.

Upon a vote being taken it was unanimously

AGREED to recommend to Council that the report be accepted and Option 2 be endorsed, namely that the Democratic Services Committee did not support the increases in remuneration as set out in the draft IRPW proposals for 2022/23, however, the report be presented to Council for consideration of all other aspects of the report.

Agenda Item 5

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of meeting: **27th March 2023**
Report Subject: **Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report 2023**
Portfolio Holder: **Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member Corporate and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Andrea Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
Virtual	Virtual			24/03/2023			30/03/2023	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the determinations within the annual report 2023/2024 (attached at appendix 1) of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) before approval at Council.
- 1.2 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the IRPW's Annual Report to take effect from 1 April each year.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The IRPW is responsible for setting the levels and arrangements for the remuneration of members of the following organisations.
 - Principal Councils – county and county borough councils
 - Community and Town Councils
 - National Park Authorities
 - Fire and Rescue Authorities
 - Corporate Joint Committees
- 2.2 The IRPW is an independent body and is able to make decisions about:
 - The salary structure within which members are remunerated
 - The type and nature of allowances to be paid to members
 - Whether payments are mandatory or allow a level of local flexibility
 - Arrangements in respect of family absence
 - Arrangements for monitoring compliance with the Panel's decisions
- 2.3 The Panel is an independent organisation and the organisations listed above are required, by law, to implement the decisions it makes.
- 2.4 The Annual Report of the IRPW, sets out the Decisions and Determinations on pay, expenses and benefits for elected members of principal councils, community and town councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities for implementation from April 2023.

- 2.5 The IRPW has a duty to set payments that are fair and that encourage and enable democratic participation. It must also take account of affordability and acceptability.
- 2.6 In making its determinations for this Annual Report, the IRPW considered a range of benchmarks, including past, current, and projected indices and actual figures and the known and forecast extent and impact of multiple economic and social factors. These included post Brexit and COVID work environments and the cost of living, energy, and climate crises.
- 2.7 The IRPWs proposals are consulted on and, following consideration of the views received in response to its consultation, the IRPW makes its final determinations which are published each year in its Annual Report.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 The report has been considered by the Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 21st November, where a draft consultation response has been developed following discussion.
- 3.1.1 Democratic Services Committee to note the determinations in the final IRPW Annual Report for 2023/2024.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the IRPW's Annual Report to take effect from 1 April each year.
- 4.2 The Panel is an independent organisation and the organisations listed in paragraph 2.1 are required, by law, to implement the decisions it makes.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***
The determinations set out in the annual report of the IRPW will be paid from the Members allowances. The determinations are within current budget.
- 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***
Failure to comply with the Panel's determinations will result in reputational damage for the Council. This is mitigated by Democratic Services Committee and Council considering and agreeing the determinations.
- 5.3 ***Legal***
The report outlines the plans of the IRPW in terms of elected member remuneration which will become regulation.
- It is also the responsibility of the Council to establish our position on how to respond to any Freedom of Information requests we receive in relation to reimbursement of costs of care. The IRPW states that it is not the intention to disclose details of individual's claims.

5.4 **Human Resources**

There are no direct staffing implications from this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The report details the main determinations within the 2023/24 annual report of the IRPW as they relate to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council.

Summary of the Independent Remuneration Panel's Determinations for 2023 to 2024

6.1.1 **Determination 1 - Basic salary for elected members of principal councils:**

The basic level of salary for elected members of principal councils will set at £17,600.

The basic salary, paid to all elected members, is remuneration for the responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance. It is based on a full time equivalent of three days a week. The Panel regularly reviews this time commitment and no changes are proposed for 2023 to 2024.

Last year the Panel reset the basic salary to align with the 2020 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office of National Statistics. This reduced the imbalance that had arisen between the basic salary of members of principal councils and the average salaries of their constituents. The change took effect from the May 2022 local elections.

Building on this decision the Panel has determined that for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 it is right to retain a link between the basic salary of councillors and the average salaries of their constituents. **The basic salary will be aligned with three fifths of the all Wales 2021 ASHE, the latest figure available at drafting. This will be £17,600. This will represent a 4.76% increase in the basic salary.**

6.1.2 **Determination 2 – Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils:**

The limit on the number of senior salaries payable (“the cap”) will remain in place.

All senior salaries include the basic salary payment. The different levels of additional responsibility of and between each role is recognised in a banded framework. No changes to banding are proposed this year.

Early next year the Panel will gather evidence from principal councils to explore whether and how the workload of elected members has changed.

The ASHE 2021 increase applies to the role element of Band 1 and Band 2 salaries – leader, deputy leader and executive members.

Band 3 and Band 4 salary holders will receive a small increase to the role element of their pay and the role element of Band 5 pay will remain frozen. The increase in basic salary will apply.

Determinations for 2023 to 2024 include

- An increase of 4.76% in the basic allowance for all councillors of principal councils, taking the basic salary from £16,800 to £17,600.
- Senior salary payments as follows:

Band	Role	Group A	Group B	Group C*
Band 1	Leader	£66,000	£59,400	£56,100
	Deputy Leader	£46,200	£41,580	£39,270
Band 2	Executive	£39,600	£35,640	£33,660
Band 3	Committee Chair (if paid)	£26,400		
	Civic Head			
	Presiding Officer			
Band 4	Leader of largest opposition group	£26,400		
Band 5	Leader of Other Political Groups	£21,340		
	Deputy Civic Head			
	Deputy Presiding Officer – no role payment	£17,600		

**Group C: Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Isle of Anglesey*

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore all other Determinations from 2022 to 2023 still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Travel and subsistence;
- Care and Personal Assistance;
- Sickness Absence;
- Corporate Joint Committees,
- Assistants to the Executive,
- Additional salaries and Job sharing arrangements and
- Co-opted Members

6.1.3 Determination 3 - Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees:

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £8,800.

The salary of vice-chair will be £4,400.

6.1.4 **Determination 4 - Payments towards costs and expenses of members of Community and Town Councils:**

Members of Community and Town Councils will be paid £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home. And Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore all other Determinations from 2022 to 2023 still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Payments for undertaking senior roles;
- Contributions towards costs of care and personal assistance;
- Reimbursement of Travel and subsistence costs;
- Compensation for financial loss;
- Attendance allowance and
- Co-opted Members

6.1.5 **Determination 5 – Payments to National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities:**

The basic pay of members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities has been increased by 4.76%. Full details of the levels of remuneration for members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities, is set out in the report.

All other Determinations for 2022 to 2023 will still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering;

- Contributions towards costs of care and personal assistance;
- Reimbursement of Travel and subsistence costs;
- Compensation for financial loss;
- Co-opted Members and
- Restrictions on receiving double remuneration where a member holds more than one post.

6.1.6 **Determination 6:**

All other Determinations set out in the 2022 to 2023 [Annual Report](#) of the Panel remain valid and should be applied.

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

Members of Council represent their ward and the borough in order to provide a voice to the constituents, support decision making and provide community leadership.

- 6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***
The IRPW engaged with members, officers and interested parties in the consultation on their annual report 2023/2024.
- 6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***
The IRPW considers evidence and research in order to establish the reasoning for its determinations and aims to support the role of elected member now and in the future.
- 6.5 ***Preventative focus***
The IRPW consider it important that payments to elected members of principal councils are fair and at a level that is not a disincentive to potential candidates for election. Therefore, the Panel has decided to reset the basic salaries of elected members to closer align with the average earnings in Wales.
- 6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***
The IRPW works collaboratively with key stakeholders engaged in promoting participation in local democracy.
- 6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***
Elected Members work across all directorates of the Council in order to understand activity and to inform effective decision making.
- 6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***
There is no direct link to reducing carbon emissions from this report however, the Council and its members have moved to an online approach to working greatly reducing the negative impact on the environment through the stopping of printing committee papers.
- 6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***
The decision for remuneration is for the IRPW to make and the Council is a consultee in this, there is no direct decision from the Council.
- 6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***
The IRPW aims to support members with regards to:
- Travel and subsistence
 - Care and Personal Assistance
 - Sickness Absence
7. **Monitoring Arrangements**
- 7.1 Arrangements are in place to consider the reports of the IRPW as required through the democratic process.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *IRPW Annual Report 2023/2024*



Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

Annual Report

February 2023

Annual Report 2023 to 2024

Section	Page number
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2. Role and Responsibilities of the Panel	4
3. Deliberations and Determinations	6
4. Consultation and Summary of Determinations	15

Section 1: Introduction

This is the Final Annual Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, setting the Decisions and Determinations on pay, expenses and benefits for elected members of principal councils, community and town councils, National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities for implementation from April 2023.

This is my first Report as Chair of the Panel, having been appointed in June 2022. I would like to take this opportunity to thank John Bader, the outgoing Chair, for his service over many years and who led the Panel through two significant pieces of work last year – the [Independent 10 Year Review of the Panel](#) and restoring the link between elected members salaries and average earnings in Wales. I also thank Joe Stockley for his service and I am pleased to announce the appointment of Bev Smith in June this year. Saz Willey, Vice Chair, and Ruth Glazzard continued to lead the work of the Panel during this period of change and I thank them for the support they have given both Bev and I, as new members. Ruth Glazzard stood down from the Panel at the end of 2022, when she took up a new Public Appointment. The Public Bodies Unit is currently recruiting for a new Panel member.

This year the Panel has continued to focus on and take forward the recommendations from the [Ten-Year Review](#). There are four key strands to this work – review the way we work, set out a three year strategy for the Panel, improve how we communicate and engage with stakeholders and build a robust evidence base to inform decisions.

We have embarked on the recommended Effectiveness Review of the way we work and have started developing our longer-term strategy with Panel Development Days in August and February. We have agreed that our mission is to deliver a fair and accountable reward framework for Wales, to support communities to have their voices heard within our local democratic bodies. We will use our expertise and professionalism to build trusting, sustainable partnerships to inform our work and deliver the changes Wales needs.

We aim to improve the way we communicate and engage both with our immediate stakeholders and the general public. As a first step we now publish a summary of our monthly meetings on our [website](#), but recognise there is much more to do. We aim to improve the accessibility and ease of use of our website and develop it into a more useful resource tool for people. We intend it to be an easy-to-use store of information on our Determinations, and, building on our current [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page, develop our Guidance on how all decisions should be applied.

Whilst we are an independent body, we will continue to work collaboratively with key stakeholders engaged in promoting participation in local democracy. The Welsh Government published research exploring the barriers to standing for elected office and the changing role of the councillor and held a series of events across Wales to highlight and discuss the findings.

We took an active part in these events, hosting seminars on remuneration and the changing role of local councillors. We welcomed the opportunity to share knowledge, experience, and best practice across a range of subjects and particularly the focus

on developing a shared understanding of how we can take collective action to increase diversity in local democracy.

The Panel has decided that this year will be a year of consolidation. Major changes were put in place last year, and a significant uplift in salary levels was agreed. We wish to allow time for last year's Determinations to bed in and to allow the Panel to continue its development of a research and evidence base to inform future decisions and move to a longer term planning cycle. This report reflects that decision.

During the past few years, we have been considering the structure of our reports and how we can make them more accessible to all. We have concluded that much of the information published replicates previous years, often without significant change. For this report we decided to focus on the changes made as a result of the proposals. We have therefore decided that the majority of the content set out in previous reports will be removed from the report and placed on the Panel's website. We will make arrangements for those who are unable to access the website.

This change has significantly reduced the size of the report and made it more manageable to navigate. This approach is also in line with our efforts to respect the challenges facing us in protecting our planet.

We included an online survey in this year's Draft Annual Report for the first time and would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete this, or send in written responses to our consultation questions and comments on the Draft report.

Panel Membership

Frances Duffy, Chair
Saz Willey, Vice Chair
Bev Smith

Detailed information about the members can be found on the website: [Panel website](#)

Section 2: Role and responsibilities of the Panel

Role of the Panel

The Panel is responsible for setting the levels and arrangements for the remuneration of members of the following organisations.

- Principal councils – county and county borough councils
- Community and town councils
- National Park Authorities
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Corporate Joint Committees

The Panel is an independent body and is able to make decisions about:

- The salary structure within which members are remunerated
- The type and nature of allowances to be paid to members
- Whether payments are mandatory or allow a level of local flexibility
- Arrangements in respect of family absence
- Arrangements for monitoring compliance with the Panel's decisions

The Panel is an independent organisation and the organisations listed above are required, by law, to implement the decisions it makes. There is no requirement set by the Panel for principal councils to vote on the Determinations. The Panel also sets out Guidance on how its Determinations should be applied, and all councils must have due regard to this Guidance. The current guidance is set out in the [2022 to 2023 Annual Report, Annex 2 "The Regulations"](#). This guidance is still applicable.

The Panel is also consultee for proposed changes to the pay of principal council Chief Executives.

Principles

The work of the Panel is underpinned by a set of principles which guides its approach, methodology and decision making. They are:

- **Upholding trust and confidence** – Citizens rightly expect that all those who choose to serve in local authorities uphold the public trust by embracing the values and ethics implicit in such public service.
- **Simplicity** – The Framework is clear and understandable.
- **Remuneration** – The Framework provides for payment to members of authorities who carry a responsibility for serving their communities. The level of payment should not act as a barrier to taking up or continuing in the post.
- **Diversity** – Democracy is strengthened when the membership of authorities adequately reflects the demographic and cultural make-up of the communities such authorities serve.

- **Accountability** - Taxpayers and citizens have the right to receive value for money from public funds committed to the remuneration of those who are elected, appointed or co-opted to serve in the public interest.
- **Fairness** - The Framework will be capable of being applied consistently to members of all authorities within the Panel's remit as a means of ensuring that levels of remuneration are fair, affordable and generally acceptable.
- **Quality** - The Panel recognises that the complex mix of governance, scrutiny and regulatory duties incumbent upon members requires them to engage with a process of continuous quality improvement.
- **Transparency** - Transparency of members' remuneration is in the public interest.

Section 3: Summary of Deliberations and Determinations

Methodology

Each year the Panel engages with members of the bodies for which it sets remuneration levels, officers within those organisations and clerks. The Panel also engages with relevant membership bodies including Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and the Society for Local Council Clerks. It does this through a range of meetings which, at the moment, remain mostly online. The Panel has continued with these discussions. They provide an opportunity for the Panel to explore views about existing arrangements, the impact decisions are having on individuals, how the arrangements are operating in practice and any issues or concerns individuals wish to raise. They have also provided an opportunity for discussion about emerging situations which the Panel has considered in its decision making.

The draft report was published widely and members of the public encouraged to and have provided valuable feedback and we welcome this. This year, the Panel had the opportunity to engage with a wider group of stakeholders at the three Welsh Government “Diversity in Democracy” events and workshops.

The Panel also considers feedback from the publishing of the Annual Report in the previous year. The changes made in last year’s Report, in particular the uplift in the basic salary, seem to have been well received by stakeholders. The issues raised with the Panel have all been centred around the detail of the Determinations, asking for guidance on how they should be applied or asking for points of clarification where the text of the Report was unclear.

The Panel has therefore agreed to review the format and structure of the main Report and make better use of the Panel website to provide information and guidance.

The Panel has a duty to set payments that are fair and that encourage and enable democratic participation. It must also take account of affordability and acceptability.

In making its determinations the Panel considered a range of benchmarks, including past, current and projected indices and actual figures and the known and forecast extent and impact of multiple economic and social factors. These included post Brexit and COVID work environments and the cost of living, energy and climate crises.

Consultation on the draft Annual Report

The Panel produced and issued a draft report on 6 October 2022 for an eight-week consultation, which closed on 1 December 2022.

In addition, as part of the consultation process, stakeholders were invited to answer five questions using an online survey or by return email. A total of 89 responses were received online, whilst 44 were submitted by email to the IRP Mailbox. The

Panel would like to thank everyone who contributed to the consultation. A summary of the responses is included in section 4.

Overall, the responses supported the Panel's determinations and so no changes have been made in the final Determinations. In some areas the wording of the Determinations has been strengthened to clarify areas of uncertainty raised through the consultation, primarily a restatement of the ability for members, on an individual basis, to opt out of part or all of their remuneration.

In addition, the consultation responses, highlighted a few areas that the Panel will consider in their forward work programme for this year. The forward work programme will be published on the Panel's website at the end of March.

Following consideration of the views received in response to its consultation the Panel now makes its final determinations.

Panel's Determinations for 2023 to 2024

Basic salary for elected members of principal councils: Determination 1

The basic salary, paid to all elected members, is remuneration for the responsibility of community representation and participation in the scrutiny, regulatory and related functions of local governance. It is based on a full time equivalent of three days a week. The Panel regularly reviews this time commitment and no changes are proposed for 2023 to 2024.

Last year the Panel reset the basic salary to align with the [2020 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings \(ASHE\)](#) published by the Office of National Statistics. This reduced the imbalance that had arisen between the basic salary of members of principal councils and the average salaries of their constituents. The change took effect from the May 2022 local elections. The rationale for this significant step can be found in last year's Annual Report and a detailed explanatory paper setting out the historical context and analysis is available on the Panel's website.

Building on this decision the Panel has determined that for the financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 it is right to retain a link between the basic salary of councillors and the average salaries of their constituents. **The basic salary will be aligned with three fifths of the all Wales 2021 ASHE, the latest figure available at drafting. This will be £17,600. This will represent a 4.76% increase in the basic salary.**

Salaries paid to Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils: Determination 2

The limit on the number of senior salaries payable ("the cap") will remain in place. At the 2022 local elections boundary reviews changed the number of members for some councils. The Panel adjusted the senior salary cap for these councils in its 2022 to 2023 Annual Report. As there are no further changes for 2023 to 2024, the

maximum number of senior salaries payable within each council remains as set out in the 2022 to 2023 [Report](#).

All senior salaries include the basic salary payment. The different levels of additional responsibility of and between each role is recognised in a banded framework. The framework was revised last year after a review of differentials and market comparators. No changes to banding are proposed this year. Early next year the Panel will gather evidence from principal councils to explore whether and how the workload of elected members has changed.

The [ASHE 2021](#) increase applies to the role element of Band 1 and Band 2 salaries – leader, deputy leader and executive members.

To complete the last year’s realignment of the framework, Band 3 and Band 4 salary holders will receive a small increase to the role element of their pay and the role element of Band 5 pay will remain frozen. The increase in basic salary will apply.

The salary of a leader of the largest (Group A) council will therefore be £66,000. All other payments have been decided in reference to this and are set out in Table 1.

Table 1 – Salaries payable to Basic, Senior, Civic and Presiding members of principal councils

Description	Remuneration		
Elected members of principal councils			
Basic salary (payable to all elected members)	£17,600		
Senior salaries (inclusive of basic salary)	Group A	Group B	Group C
Band 1:			
Leader	£66,000	£59,400	£56,100
Deputy Leader	£46,200	£41,580	£39,270
Band 2:			
Executive members	£39,600	£35,640	£33,660
Band 3:			
Committee Chairs (if remunerated): Civic Head Presiding Officer	£26,400		
Band 4:			
Leader of largest Opposition Group	£26,400		
Band 5:			
Leader of Other Political Groups Deputy Civic Head	£21,340		
Deputy Presiding Member – no role payment	£17,600		

Group A: Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea

Group B: Bridgend, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Newport, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Powys, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham

Group C: Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Isle of Anglesey

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore all other Determinations from 2022 to 2023 still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Travel and subsistence;
- Care and personal assistance;
- Sickness absence;
- Corporate Joint Committees,
- Assistants to the Executive,
- Additional salaries and Job sharing arrangements and
- Co-opted members

Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees: Determination 3

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £8,800.

The salary of vice-chair will be £4,400.

There are no other changes.

Contribution to costs and expenses of members of Community and Town Councils: Determination 4

Last year the Panel carried out a major review of the remuneration framework for community and town councils and undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise with the sector. The Framework was updated then and this year the Panel has decided to make limited but important changes.

The Panel recognise that all members of community and town councils necessarily spend time working from home on council business. This was the case before and during COVID and is continuing. As a result, members have extra domestic costs and also need office consumables.

The Panel considers members should not be out of pocket for carrying out their duties. However, an individual may decline to receive part, or all, of the payments if they so wish. This must be done in writing and is an individual matter. A community or town council member wishing to decline payments must themselves write to their proper officer to do so. Each community and town council must ensure that it does not create a climate which prevents persons accessing any monies to which they are entitled that may support them to participate in local democracy. Payments should be made efficiently and promptly.

Reimbursement for extra costs of working from home

All councils must pay their members £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home.

Reimbursement for consumables

Councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

It is a matter for each council to make and record a policy decision in respect of when and how the payments are made and whether they are paid monthly, yearly or otherwise. The policy should also state whether and how to recover any payments made to a member who leaves or changes their role during the financial year.

Guidance on taxation

It is not within the remit or authority of the Panel to provide specific advice on matters of taxation. Advice can be provided by One Voice Wales and guidance is available on the HMRC website.

The £156 should fall under the statutory provisions of section 316A ITEPA: [Income Tax \(Earnings and Pensions\) Act 2003 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and the current amount that can be paid without attracting a tax liability is £6 per week: [Expenses and benefits: homeworking: Homeworking expenses and benefits that are exempt from tax - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

The level of payments is set out in Table 2.

Table 2 – Payments to Community and Town Councils

Type of payment	Requirement
Group 1	Electorate over 14,000
Extra Costs Payment	Mandatory for all Members
Senior Role	Mandatory £500 for 1 member; optional for up to 7
Mayor or Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	Optional
Financial Loss	Optional
Travel and Subsistence	Optional
Costs of Care or Personal Assistance	Mandatory
Group 2	Electorate 10,000 to 13,999
Extra Costs Payment	Mandatory for all members
Senior Role	Mandatory for 1 member; optional up to 5
Mayor or Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	Optional
Financial Loss	Optional
Travel and Subsistence	Optional
Cost of Care or Personal Assistance	Mandatory
Group 3	Electorate 5,000 to 9,999
Extra Costs Payment	Mandatory for all members
Senior Role	Optional up to 3 members
Mayor or Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	Optional
Financial Loss	Optional
Travel and Subsistence	Optional
Cost of Care or Personal Assistance	Mandatory
Group 4	Electorate 1,000 to 4,999
Extra Costs Payment	Mandatory for all members
Senior Role	Optional up to 3 members
Mayor or Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	Optional
Financial Loss	Optional
Travel and Subsistence	Optional
Cost of Care or Personal Assistance	Mandatory

Type of payment	Requirement
Group 5	Electorate less than 1,000
Extra Costs Payment	Mandatory for all members
Senior Role	Optional up to 3 members
Mayor or Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £1,500
Deputy Mayor or Deputy Chair	Optional - Up to a maximum of £500
Attendance Allowance	Optional
Financial Loss	Optional
Travel and Subsistence	Optional
Cost of Care or Personal Assistance	Mandatory

Group number	Size of Electorate
Group 1	Electorate over 14,000
Group 2	10,000 to 13,999
Group 3	5,000 to 9,999
Group 4	1,000 to 4,999
Group 5	Under 1,000

There are no further changes to the payments and benefits paid to elected members and therefore all other Determinations from 2022 to 2023 still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering:

- Payments for undertaking senior roles;
- Contributions towards costs of care and personal assistance;
- Reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs;
- Compensation for financial loss:
- Attendance allowance and
- Co-opted members

Payments to National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities: Determination 5

The three national parks in Wales - Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia were formed to protect spectacular landscapes and provide recreation opportunities for the public. The Environment Act 1995 led to the creation of a National Park Authority (NPA) for each park.

National Park authorities comprise members who are either elected members nominated by the principal councils within the national park area or are members appointed by the Welsh Government through the Public Appointments process. Welsh Government appointed and council nominated members are treated equally in relation to remuneration.

The three fire and rescue services (FRAs) in Wales: Mid and West Wales, North Wales and South Wales were formed as part of Local Government re-organisation in 1996. FRAs comprise elected members who are nominated by the Principal Councils within each fire and rescue service area.

Payments will increase as a result of the uplift proposed for elected members of principal councils. Therefore, there will also be an uplift of 4.76% in the basic salary element.

The remuneration for Chairs will remain linked to a Band 3 senior salary of principal councils. Therefore there will be a small increase to the role element of their pay. Deputy Chairs, Committee Chairs and other senior roles will remain linked to Band 5. Therefore their role element of pay will remain frozen. The increase in basic salary will apply. Full details of the levels of remuneration for members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities, is set out in Table 3.

Table 3 – Payments to National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities

National Parks Authorities	
Basic salary for ordinary member	£4,964
Chair	£13,764
Deputy Chair (where appointed)	£8,704
Committee Chair or other senior post	£8,704
Fire and Rescue Authorities	
Basic salary for ordinary member	£2,482
Chair	£11,282
Deputy Chair (where appointed)	£6,222
Committee Chair or other senior post	£6,222

All other Determinations for 2022 to 2023 will still stand and should be applied in 2023 to 2024, including those covering;

- Contributions towards costs of care and personal assistance;
- Reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs;

- Compensation for financial loss;
- Co-opted members and
- Restrictions on receiving double remuneration where a member holds more than one post.

Section 4: Consultation: Summary of Responses

The Panel produced and issued a draft report on 6 October 2022 for an eight-week consultation, which closed on 1 December 2022.

The website link and pdf version of the draft report was sent to:

- One Voice Wales
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Society for Local Council Clerks
- Principal councils
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- National Park Authorities and
- Community and Town Councils.

Determination 1: Basic Salary increase

Not all councils commented. Three highlighted whether it was correct that members be given an increase during the current cost of living crisis. However, these accepted that personal circumstances of members need to be considered and therefore it should be a personal matter for members to determine themselves whether or not they accept the pay rise or make the choice to opt-out. The Panel considered this feedback, and, whilst mindful of the overall impact on council budgets, agreed that the increase in basic salary was an important factor in encouraging and supporting a diverse group of people to stand for election.

Determination 2: Senior Salaries

There were two key issues raised by stakeholders; firstly whether the level of remuneration adequately recognises the increasing responsibilities of principal council members and secondly whether the current maximum number of senior salaries ought to be reviewed. The Panel noted these points and will consider whether this area should be a focus of the future workplan.

Determination 3: Salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees

No representations were received in relation to the salaries for Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Determination 4: Payments towards costs and expenses of members of Community and Town Councils

Over half of the responses highlighted a concern that the payments were mandatory and that their council did not wish to increase their precept to meet these costs. The fact that the Report did not restate that members can choose to decline their entitlement to payments was not helpful. However, other responses supported the payments.

Ten per cent of the responses received raised concerns about the costs of administration and fifteen responses raised questions about the correct treatment for tax purposes. One clerk also asked if the payments that members receive could be

published globally, similar to how the contribution to costs of care and personal assistance is publicised.

Other comments mentioned the need to encourage “green” travel and one queried the need for payments to be made for senior positions.

The Panel considered these responses and agreed to reiterate the policy on individual opt outs in the Final Report and to provide a link to helpful HMRC websites.

The Panel will continue to work with stakeholders to improve support and advice to Community and Town Councils.

Determination 5: Payments to National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities

No representations were made in relation to payments to members of National Parks Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities.

In addition, as part of the consultation process, stakeholders were invited to answer five questions via an online survey or by return email. A total of 89 responses were received online, whilst 48 were submitted by email to the IRP Mailbox.

Question 1

The Panel has continued to use the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) published by the Office for National Statistics as the benchmark for setting the basic salary of elected members of principal councils. There is a corresponding proportionate increase proposed for the members of National Park and Fire and Rescue Authorities. The Panel has continued to refer to the last published ASHE which was 2021. Do you agree that the basic salary element should be referenced to the [ASHE 2021](#) data.

Responses

90% of those who answered this question agreed that the Panel should reference the basic salary element to the ASHE 2021 data. 3% did not agree whilst 7% had no opinion on this question

Question 2

The Panel has made changes to the payment of costs and expenses of members of community and town councils. Do you agree with the addition of the “consumables” element?

Responses

72% agreed to the addition of the ‘consumables’ element, whilst 25% did not agree to this additional payment.

The most common theme in the answers given to question two was whether this payment was now mandatory or if the payment was optional and that Councillors had the choice to forgo. The same question was asked of the £156 payment.

Question 3

The Panel will gather evidence from principal councils to explore whether and how the workload of elected members has changed to inform future Determinations. Are you content that the Panel should build this review into its future work plan and build the evidence base to support decisions?

Responses

97% of those who responded to this question agreed.

The majority of the answers highlighted the additional work that elected members now undertook in their role.

Community and town councils welcomed this as it would recognise the amount of work that the sector does.

Question 4

We have significantly reduced the size of the report this year to concentrate on key decisions made and intend to make more use of the website to provide easy to use guidance to users. This approach is also in line with our efforts to respect the challenges facing us in protecting our planet.

How would you like to access information and guidance from the Panel? (choose all that apply)

Responses

Summary report with links to detailed guidance	84
Easy to use guidance notes	71
Frequently asked questions	49
Website	54
Social media	16
Information events	25
Other	14

If other, please specify:

The proposed summary report, detailed guidance notes and frequently asked questions were welcomed. Other answers included seminars, online meetings and an information event.

Have you experienced any challenges accessing or understanding our guidance and information through our website? Please let us know how we can make it easier for you?

A simplified report and separate guidance document will help stakeholders find the information they require.

No stakeholders experienced any challenges accessing or understanding the guidance and information through the website

Question 5

The Panel intend to undertake a series of engagements with all relevant stakeholders over the next year as part of the development of its forward planning and building of its evidence and research strategy.

Have you any comments that would help the Panel shape this engagement?

For example, a preference for online polls, the holding of engagement events, virtual or face to face, which groups should be involved, how do we engage with prospective candidates etc.

Responses

The most popular answers given to this question were:

- online polls
- Virtual meetings
- Face to face meetings

There was a mixture of support for both online and in-person events. Some responses proposed that the Panel held regional engagement events so that several Councils could attend at the same time. Other comments received suggested these events would help to discuss any issues with the Panel in depth and for the Panel to receive a broader viewpoint and more comprehensive feedback on any proposals.

One Voice Wales offered support to the Panel in arranging any events in the Community and Town Council sector.

Summary of Determinations:

Determination 1:

The basic level of salary for elected members of principal councils will set at £17,600.

Determination 2:

The salary of a leader of the largest (Group A) council will be £66,000. All other payments have been decided in reference to this and are set out in Table 1.

Determination 3:

The salary of a chair of a Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be £8,800.

The salary of vice-chair will be £4,400.

Determination 4:

Members of Community and Town Councils will be paid £156 a year (equivalent to £3 a week) towards the extra household expenses (including heating, lighting, power and broadband) of working from home. And councils must either pay their members £52 a year for the cost of office consumables required to carry out their role, or alternatively councils must enable members to claim full reimbursement for the cost of their office consumables.

Determination 5:

The basic pay of members of National Park Authorities and Fire and Rescue Authorities has been increased by 4.76%. All payments are set out in Table 3.

Determination 6:

All other Determinations set out in the 2022 to 2023 [Annual Report](#) of the Panel remain valid and should be applied.

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The Report and other information about the Panel and its work are available on our website at:

[Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales](#)

Agenda Item 6

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of meeting: **27th March 2023**
Report Subject: **Annual Report of the Head of Democratic Services**
Portfolio Holder: **Cabinet Member Corporate/Leader of the Council**
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	16/03/23			27/03/23			30/03/23	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the annual report of the Head of Democratic Services for 2022-23 and to confirm the level of support being provided to Elected Members is appropriate.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 The annual report outlines the comprehensive range of arrangements in place to support Elected Members to enable them to fulfil their roles in an effective and compliant manner.

3. Options for Recommendation

- 3.1 Option 1 – Democratic Services Committee to consider the report and recommend it to Council for approval.

Option 2 – Democratic Services Committee to consider the report and make specific recommendations to Council, for consideration prior to approval.

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

The role of the Head of Democratic Services is set out in the Council's Constitution.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

The Council must provide the Head of Democratic Services with resources that, in its opinion, are sufficient to allow the function of the role set out in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 to be discharged.

The Member Development Budget for 2022-23 was £6260.00.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

There are potential risks if the levels of support arrangements for Elected Members are deemed by Council to be not sufficient. The Democratic Services Committee can recommend to Council a review of resources and/or support, if appropriate.

5.3 **Legal**

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires the Council to designate an officer to the post of Head of Democratic Services. The role is set out in the Council's Constitution as a statutory function.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The Head of Governance & Partnerships is the appointed Head of Democratic Services.

The role of the Head of Democratic Services is to:-

- carry out the Local Authority's function of designated Head of Democratic Services
- keep under review the adequacy of provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to discharge the democratic services functions of the Authority
- make reports, at least annually, to the full Council in relation to these matters.

The Head of Democratic Services is able to make recommendations including with regard to the appointment, organisation and management of staff discharging democratic functions. They may arrange for the discharge of democratic functions by staff and can delegate functions to staff as they feel appropriate.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

A summary of the key areas and main changes to existing support arrangements for Elected Members which have been implemented in 2022-23 is below.

a) May 2023 Elections

Information provided for all newly elected Councillors at the Election Count – including details and times for the Orientation Day at the General Offices where Members collected ICT equipment and mobile phones; copies of the new Members Handbook and the Members Induction Programme.

An ICT Drop In session was put in place to provide support and guidance for Members on the set up, access and usage of their Council ICT equipment.

b) Member Induction/Development Programme

A comprehensive Induction Programme was implemented for all new and returning Members covering all the essential information and knowledge needed to fulfil the role of Councillor in an effective and compliant way. Sessions were delivered by a mix of Council Officers and/or external providers, where appropriate. Positive feedback has received from Members and external organisations on the Programme.

We have collated statistics on attendance against the Induction Programme and formal Committee meetings and in future, to be consistent with other authorities

across Wales and to improve transparency, we will look to publish that data. Overall, engagement from Members has been good with the Induction Programme and this continues with the ongoing Development Programme. The Member Development Programme seeks to build up additional knowledge and skills for Members in key areas of Council business.

c) New Democratic & Governance Structure

As a result of the reduction in Elected Members from 42 to 33, we carried out a comprehensive desk top research exercise to consider where the democratic function of the Council could be strengthened and modernised.

From the research a number of findings and proposals were put forward and a new approach agreed by Council in May 2023 for implementation for the 2022 cycle, which included:-

- the establishment of a **Presiding Member** position (based on the role set out in the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013
- a change to the **number of and remit of Scrutiny Committees** – People, Place, Partnerships and Corporate & Performance
- a reduction in the **number of Members sitting on committees**
- a change to **Scrutiny agendas** with a maximum of two items for either Pre-decision or Performance
- a change in the **production of minutes** to record only decisions and/or recommendations due to the statutory requirement to record meetings
- a **timings of meetings** survey was undertaken to determine the Council diary, in line with the requirement for this to be once a term
- re-established the meetings of the **Chairs & Vice Chairs** of Scrutiny Committees

Formal evaluation is undertaken after each Scrutiny Committee meeting and any issues raised at the Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting. A wider evaluation is also underway of the changes made to the democratic and governance structure as was previously agreed, to see if any further changes and/or improvements could be made.

d) Member Briefings

Due to the more succinct and focused agendas for Scrutiny Committees, we have seen an increase in the amount of Member Briefings. However, all of them are appropriate and we have had positive feedback in terms of the level of information and questioning being provided to Members through these sessions. Each directorate also has quarterly all Member briefing sessions diarised which they are using for updates on key portfolio information.

e) Members Library

All sessions as part of the Member Induction and Member Development programmes and all Member Briefing sessions have been recorded. The recordings have been uploaded onto the Members Library for ease of reference

and for those who may have been absent. In addition, all of the online training from WLGA has also been deposited in the Library.

f) Informal Wellbeing Sessions

As a result of Members' wellbeing being raised as part of the Health and Safety induction session, a decision was taken to implement informal Wellbeing meetings for Members on a quarterly basis, for those who wish to attend. The initial meeting was well attended and Members wanted to see a Wellbeing Champion role added as part of the Committee Report – this was agreed by Council.

g) Member Development Programme

A suite of Member Development policies have been reviewed and updated including the following:-

- Member Development Strategy
- Members Mentoring Framework
- Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework

We will be working with Members from 2023-24 to fully implement these policies to further improve their skills, knowledge and competencies.

h) Cabinet/CLT Improvement and Development

External resources were commissioned and funded through the WLGA to work collectively with the new Cabinet and the Corporate Leadership Team on the development of the Corporate Plan 2022-27. Further external resources have been commissioned and funded through the WLGA to start work on a longer term programme of improvement and development.

6.2 *Expected outcome for the public*

By providing a democratic function with sufficient support and resources means Elected Members are provided with the support, guidance and training needed to operate effectively and compliantly. In addition, this will support them in their role within the community and representing their ward.

6.3 *Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)*

Opportunities to maximise engagement by Elected Members in the range of training and support available to them will assist in meeting current and future demands of their roles.

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

Any changes or improvements made to Elected Member support arrangements are done with a view to them being sustainable in the longer term and in recognition of the increasing complexity of the roles Members undertake.

6.5 *Preventative focus*

The content of the Member Induction programme is aimed to give them a solid grounding in preparing them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in an effective

and compliant way. The ongoing Member Development programme then builds additional skills and knowledge across the Council.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Member Development Programme and individual Member Briefings should encompass all of the local, regional and national collaborations and partnerships in place, in which the Council has an interest. Blaenau Gwent Members sit on many outside bodies with other Councillors from across Wales to service these partnerships/bodies.

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

All Council services are involved with the democratic functions of the Council. Forward Work Programmes and agendas are developed jointly with Elected Members and Officers. The change in the remit of the Scrutiny Committees to be more cross-cutting has also helped to facilitate this.

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

The modernisation of the democratic arrangements enables Members and officers to attend meetings without the need for travelling.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***

No assessment is required for this report.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Head of Democratic Services presents an annual report to Democratic Services Committee and Council.

Evaluation is undertaken after each formal Scrutiny Committee meetings and any can be raised formally at the Chairs and Vice Chairs meetings.

Regular meetings also take place between the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Head of Democratic Services to assess and consider the existing arrangements for Elected Members and any issues of improvement and/or compliance.

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Agenda Item 7

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of meeting: **27th March 2023**
Report Subject: **Diverse Council Action Plan Update**
Portfolio Holder: **Leader / Cabinet Member Corporate and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships**
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	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02/03/23			24/03/23			30/03/23	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 To provide a progress update on the Diverse Council Action Plan.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 Providing opportunities to become a more diverse Council can lead to better engagement with individuals and communities, in turn leading to greater levels of confidence and trust and better decision making informed by a wider range of perspectives and lived experiences.
 - 2.2 The evidence base, barriers and challenges to attracting more diverse councillors have been identified as:
 - Time-commitment and meeting times;
 - Political and organisational culture;
 - Childcare and other caring responsibilities;
 - Public criticism and online abuse;
 - Remuneration and impact on employment; and
 - Lack of diverse role models and incumbency.
 - 2.3 On 29th July 2021, Blaenau Gwent Council signed up to becoming a diverse Council in order to:
 - Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
 - Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
 - Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and
 - Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
 - 2.4 As part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 there are a number of expectations on Councils to support diversity in the democratic process and also for political parties to support the process of becoming a councillor and supporting councillors once they become elected.

- 2.5 In order to progress the requirements and promote diversity in democracy, a Diverse Council Action Plan was established and agreed by Council in September 2021.
- 2.6 The agreed action plan, including progress updates is attached at appendix 1.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 The report and action plan were considered by CLT at their meeting on 2nd March 2023.
- 3.2.1 **Option 1**
For Democratic Services Committee to be satisfied with the action taken to date, identified in appendix 1, and not make any amendments to future actions.
- 3.2.2 **Option 2**
For Democratic Services Committee to consider the action plan, attached at appendix 1, and provide comment for amendment before submission to Council.
4. **Evidence of how this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**
- 4.1 The Council has a responsibility to support more diverse Councils and to work with partners and the community to encourage people from underrepresented groups to stand for election. Political parties across Wales are also encouraged to support this process.
- 4.2 Being a diverse Council supports the Corporate Plan Objective, '*An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place*'.
5. **Implications Against Each Option**
- 5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***
There are no direct financial implications from implementing the Diverse Council Action Plan and all activity will be undertaken within current resources.
- 5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***
There is a reputational risk to the Council if it does not support actions to becoming a diverse Council.
- 5.3 ***Legal***
There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.4 ***Human Resources***
The WLGA is working with the Welsh Government and Councils on promoting and supporting greater diversity.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The action plan identified 30 actions, of these:

- 19 are completed; and
- 11 are in progress.

Appendix 1 provides information on the activity undertaken to date.

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

It is widely acknowledged that equal representation is not only an issue of representational fairness but essential for the quality of policy development and decision making. Decisions will be better when they are taken by people with lived experience of an issue. The 'right person for the job' of councillor needs to be a member of the community they serve, in order to fully and consistently understand the lives and needs of that community.

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

6.3.1 The implementation of the Action Plan is to be undertaken across a number of teams, including partners.

6.3.2 The Engagement and Participation Strategy will be key in the implementation and achievement of the action plan and it will outline how we, as a Council, will work with the community to promote and encourage a diverse Council.

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

By supporting a more representative approach to democracy the Council will be supporting long term thinking.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

By supporting a more representative approach to democracy the Council will be able to make decisions that support all aspects of the community. Decisions will be made to positively impact any underrepresented groups in the community.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council will work alongside the Welsh Government, WLGA and other Local Authorities to support diverse Councils.

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

In order to effectively implement the action plan actions have been allocated to a number of teams supporting the council to become more diverse.

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

The action plan supports the promotion and delivery of holding remote committee meetings and using IT rather than paper to support a reduction in travel and printing.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***

6.9.1 The Professional Lead for Engagement, Equalities & Welsh Language has been involved in the development of this action plan.

6.9.2 The action plan looks to support those from all underrepresented backgrounds.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The action plan will form part of the Forward Work Programme for the Democratic Services Committee and Council.

7.1.1 The plan will be kept under review with additional actions considered during the life of the plan.

7.1.2 Actions will be included within the relevant business plans.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 Diverse Council Action Plan*

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

Requirement	Blaenau Gwent Action	Lead/s	Status
<p>Increase engagement with the public and support communication and awareness to potential candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to raise awareness of the role and activities of the Council • to provide clarity about how the public can better inform local decision making • building greater community cohesion through a greater presence at community events • creating and building upon community networks 	<p>1. Promote national marketing materials on becoming a Councillor including communication and awareness, training and development, remuneration, safe and flexible work and targeted support on the Council’s website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a Councillor website https://www.beacouncillor.wales/ • WLGA online Councillors Guide to be developed for Councillors for the 2022 elections. • National Competency framework for elected members is now being developed prior to the 2022 • LGA have produced a tool to enable women, parents and carers to become councillors https://www.local.gov.uk/twenty-first-century-councils 	Election Team Communications	Complete
	<p>2. Promote national marketing materials on becoming a Councillor and how to vote with local engagement forums (Citizens Panel, BG Youth Network and Youth Forum, 50+ Forum, Democracy Box)</p>	Engagement Team	Complete
	<p>3. Develop Public Participation Strategy Scheme (for compliance with duty under the 2021 Act). Encouraging people to participate in decision making and promoting awareness of how to become a Member, what membership entails, promoting / facilitating processes.</p>	Engagement Team Democratic Team Election Team Communications	In progress
	<p>4. Recommend for Political Groups to identify Diversity Champions.</p>	Group Leaders	Complete
	<p>5. Develop a BG election plan in line with any regional or national approaches</p>	Election Team	Complete
	<p>6. Dissemination and promotion of Welsh Government guidance / materials / educational resources for 16 and 17 year olds regarding Democracy in Wales.</p>	Engagement Team Education	Complete
	<p>7. Publication of Council’s Constitution on the Council’s website.</p>	Monitoring Officer	Complete
	<p>8. Development of a Constitution guide and inclusion on the website (a requirement under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021).</p>	Monitoring Officer	In progress
	<p>9. Improve awareness of opportunities to participate – promote the options available via local groups, the website and various social media platforms.</p>	Communications Democratic Team Engagement Team	In progress

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

			Engagement Strategy to consider how best to raise awareness of how to participate.
	10. Provide opportunities to engage on specific topics – include forward work programmes on the Council’s Website, promote ways to engage, promote that meetings are available online.	Communications Democratic Team Engagement Team	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward work programmes included on the Council’s website and advertised in the local press annually • Democratic section of the Council website • Work to be undertaken as part of the Council’s Participation and Engagement Strategy to consider how best to provide opportunities for the public to engage on topics.
	11. Include on the website and social media platforms the decisions being made by Committees.	Communications Democratic Team Engagement Team	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting recordings and papers are included on the website. • Work to be undertaken as part of the Council’s Participation and Engagement Strategy to consider how best to inform the public of the decisions being made by Committees.
	12. Work more closely with the Youth Forum to create more opportunities for young people to feed into decision making and improve the feedback loop to young people who participate	Engagement Team Democratic Team	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young Person represented on People Scrutiny. • Forward work programmes are shared with the Youth Forum • Presiding member has attended the Youth Forum and was involved in the inauguration of the Youth Mayor. Presiding Member meeting with the schools. • Engage Youth Forum in future for them to highlight the areas that they feel they would like to be included

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

			with regards to the forward work programmes.
	13. Respond to the WG Race Equality Action Plan Consultation	Democratic Team Engagement Team	Complete
Provide a comprehensive training and awareness programme available through a variety of routes available for members to support them in their role.	14. Undertake a review of the Member Development Strategy identifying areas and development available for Members.	Democratic Team	Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Development Programme has been reviewed and is to be approved at Council • The Member Development Programme and Induction Programmes are linked to forward work programmes.
	15. Review areas of training and development which can be made available online, core set of training materials which can be used for all Members.	Democratic Team	Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National e Learning modules freely available via the NHS learning@wales website • Included as part of induction programme. • Included within the members library.
	16. Development of the Members Induction Programme	Democratic Team	Complete
	17. Provide the opportunity for mentoring / shadowing for newly Elected Members.	Democratic Team	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring Process has been reviewed and is to be approved at Council.
	18. Review the Members Competency Framework.	Democratic Team	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competency Framework has been reviewed and is to be approved at Council.
	19. Undertake Personal Development Reviews for Senior Salary Holders and offer to non SRAs.	Democratic Team	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDR Process has been reviewed and is to be approved at Council.
	20. Promoting the WLGA's online "Councillor Guide" for the 2022 elections and the suite of National e-learning modules specifically developed for Members and freely available.	Democratic Team	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic copies available • Found within Member Library

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included within Induction Programme Handbook
<p>Promote health and safety with Members including, lone working, providing access to counselling services, safety and wellbeing while performing their role and taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment by members including through social networks.</p>	<p>21. Promote, as part of the Member Induction Programme, that members undertake health and safety training, lone working training, cyber security and social media training.</p>	<p>Democratic Team Health and Safety Communications</p>	<p>Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All listed training provided as part of the Induction Programme Online Councillors guide for handling intimidation https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-intimidation
	<p>22. Publish official addresses on council website rather than personal addresses for Members (where requested).</p>	<p>Communications Team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed following the election with the GO as the main address.
	<p>23. Include in the Members library the WLGA’s advice and support service to individual Members who receive online abuse.</p>	<p>Democratic Team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information included in the member’s library as well as a number of other documents.
	<p>24. Include in the Members library the “Personal Safety of Councillors” which has been developed by Swansea Council and the Welsh Local Government Association.</p>	<p>Democratic Team</p>	<p>Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information included in the member’s library as well as a number of other documents.
<p>Agrees that councils should set targets to be representative of the communities they serve at the next elections</p>	<p>25. Undertake a diversity and inclusion survey with Members which will provide a benchmark for future elections and allow the feedback to be reviewed to support / barriers that may have been experienced by a Member during their term of office.</p>	<p>Elections Team Democratic Team</p>	<p>In progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A local exit survey can be undertaken for outgoing members. The WLGA undertook an exit survey in 2022, for Blaenau Gwent, 10 members stood down and 1 member completed the survey. There is a role for the political groups to promote diversity and inclusion. Work to promote the role of an elected member will be undertaken throughout the political cycle.

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis will be undertaken to understand the diversity of the community following the release of the Census 2021.
	26. Share survey feedback with Members.	Elections Team Democratic Team	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In line with the above action.
Maximise opportunities for Members to work in ways that enable them to achieve a work / life balance which protects their welfare and wellbeing and allows them to manage any caring / dependency relationships.	27. Agree at AGM to have an August recess and for no formal meetings during school holidays. This is done every year.	Members	Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council has approved for August recess for a number of years. Council has agreed for meetings to not be scheduled during school holidays unless urgent
	28. Provide flexibility in council business by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking a review of meeting times each year with each committee at the first meeting of each cycle, including the option to stagger meeting times Encourage members, officers, public and press to attend meetings remotely. Promote job-sharing by executive leaders and other office holders. 	Members Democratic Team Organisational Development Communications	Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing of meeting survey undertaken annually and meetings scheduled as per the survey findings. Hybrid meetings offered Council has approved a multi location meeting policy Information is included within the Constitution. Well-being leaflet for members distributed Well-being meetings put in place for members
	29. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the remunerations that are available to Members on the Council website and to candidates standing for Election Promote family absence provisions. Promote the IRPW Contribution Towards Costs of Care and Personal Assistance Encourage all Members to claim any necessary allowances or expenses incurred. 	Organisational Development	Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remuneration information is reported to the relevant committees and then published online. Information is provided on the provisions available to members and promoted as part of the Report of the IRPW.

Diversity in Democracy Programme – Action Plan

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Welsh Government’s and IRPW’s commitment to explore Resettlement grants or ‘parachute payments’ payments for Members who lose their seats at election. <i>Note – this action was previously not supported by the Council however, as this is to be determined by the IRPW it is to remain for information purposes.</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information has been included in the Members Well-being leaflet
	<p>30. Hold a Member awareness raising session, as part of the induction process on members remuneration and allowances</p>		<p>Complete</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaken by OD at the orientation day.

Agenda Item 8

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of Meeting: **27th March, 2023**
Report Subject: **Council's Suite of Member Development Policies**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member
Corporate Overview and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance & Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	09/03/23			24/03/23			30/03/23	

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the following Member strategy and frameworks:

- Member Development Strategy 2022 – 2027 (Appendix 1)
- Members' Mentoring Framework 2022 – 2027 (Appendix 2)
- Elected Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework 2022 (Appendix 3)

2. Scope and Background

2.1 Elected members today face increasing challenges and are required to undertake a diverse range of roles ranging from that of community leader to specific responsibilities within the Council.

2.2 In order to aid these roles, the Council is looking to provide the best possible support to members to enable them to meet these challenges. This takes the form of skill and knowledge development, support facilities, and support services.

2.3 To coincide with the new Council term, the Performance & Democratic Team have reviewed the Council's suite of Member Development Policies for all Members to ensure they are fit for purpose going forward.

2.4 The above named documents have been reviewed and are attached to this report. For ease of reference, the following table illustrates each strategy and framework, its scope and to whom they apply to:

Policy / Procedure	Covers	Who it applies to
Member Development Strategy 2022-2027	Training and Development	All Members
Members' Mentoring Framework 2022-2027	Mentoring for Elected Members	Member mentors and mentees (member mentors can be identified from other Local Authorities)
Elected Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework 2022	Personal Development and Performance	Personal Development Reviews are held on an annual basis and are mandatory for all Senior Salary Holders. All other members will be offered to undertake a Personal Development

2.5 The Performance & Democratic Team are responsible for the development and review of all the Council's Member Development related policies. In line with the Policy Schedule, these documents were due for review.

3. **Options for recommendation**

3.1 CLT considered the Petitions Protocol at their meeting on 9th March 2023

Option 1

To consider and agree the suite of Policies as set out in the appendices prior to approval at Council:

- *Member Development Strategy 2022 – 2027 (appendix 1)*
- *Members' Mentoring Framework 2022 – 2027 (appendix 2)*
- *Elected Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework 2022 (appendix 3)*

Option 2

Consider the suite of Policies as set out in the appendices and make recommendations for amendment before approval at Council.

Option 3

Do not support the adoption and implementation of one or more of the member support policies (noting the risk implications outlined in sections 5.2 and 5.3) before consideration at Council.

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

4.1 The suite of policies ensure that the Council meets its obligations to support Elected Members as underpinned by statutory regulations.

4.2 The development of Members supports the Corporate Plan priorities:

- An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place; and
- Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

A budget to support member development is available and will be utilised to support implementation of the policies.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

The risk of not implementing the proposed policies would mean that the policies are not reflective of legislative requirements to support the development of Elected Members.

5.3 ***Legal***

The policy and frameworks have been developed to take into account the legislative requirements as outlined in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and 2011, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

5.4 **Human Resources**

The review and development of the policy and frameworks has been led by the Performance & Democratic Team who will also lead the implementation alongside Elected Members.

6 **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Each policy has been developed using internal evaluations and considering best practice from across Wales.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

The policies aim to support the development of Elected Members to ensure that they are able to operate effectively and succeed in their roles as community leaders.

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

In order to develop and review the member support policies, discussions and research has been undertaken with other Local Authorities, the WLGA and WG.

CLT have approved the suite of policies and member engagement is sought through the democratic cycle.

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

The implementation of the new suite of policies would ensure that they become well established and are in line with current best practice. They will be reviewed in line with the policy review timetable or if there are any legal or best practice changes that may arise in the meantime.

6.5 **Preventative focus**

The Council aims to work using a preventative approach wherever possible so that problems can be tackled before they are escalated. Providing support to elected members aims to provide a proactive approach to training and development to support them in their roles.

6.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

Where most appropriate, the Council will look to partners to provide training to elected members.

6.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

Where most appropriate, services across the Council will provide training to elected members.

6.8 **Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions**

The report does not directly link to decarbonisation but every effort will be made to support the reduction of carbon emissions by undertaking training, where appropriate, remotely or on a hybrid basis.

6.9 **Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)**

An integrated impact assessment is not required for the Petitions Protocol.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The strategy and frameworks have been developed to support Members with their development and learning. All documents will have a lifespan of a political cycle, currently 5 years, at which point they will be reviewed at the beginning of the new electoral term.

Each policy will have a monitoring and evaluation process in place to ensure they are delivering fully for the needs to elected members.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Member Development Strategy 2022 – 2027 (appendix 1)*
- *Members' Mentoring Framework 2022 – 2027 (appendix 2)*
- *Elected Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework 2022 (appendix 3)*

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Member Development Strategy 2022 - 2027



*Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by
working with and for our communities*

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Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities

Introduction

The work of an Elected Member is complex and challenging and the political, legislative and local landscape in which they work is changing constantly. Members need to balance the expectations of local constituents against the challenges of effectively running a local authority in maintaining and delivering services effectively, and within budget.

Nationally, there is a drive for local authorities to raise the standard of support and development opportunities provided to Members, in order to assist them in meeting the challenges of their roles. The Welsh Government's Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, emphasises the need to secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for Members.

Both new and experienced Members need appropriate support, information and professional development to undertake their complex and evolving roles. This Member Development Strategy has been developed to support all Members and aims to provide effective training and development opportunities to support Members to effectively deliver their challenging and demanding roles and to meet future challenges.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a duty to and is committed to supporting the development of its Members. Members play a pivotal role in decision making and delivering better outcomes for citizens and the Council recognises that the provision of effective training and development is critical to this and its success.

Purpose

Member development refers to any development activities or training programmes specifically designed to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of Members in their varied roles.

The Council will provide Members with flexible and responsive training and development that is based on individual and organisational needs. All elected Members regardless of length of service, party membership or post held within the political framework will have equal access to training and development opportunities.

To assist Members to identify areas for development and understand their roles within the political framework, a number of supporting mechanisms have been established in order that Members have an understanding of the expectations placed upon them and an understanding of what the Council can do to support Members in these areas. As a result, Members will be encouraged to identify their own development needs via the Personal Development Review and Competency Framework process.

To ensure Members achieve the most from the development opportunities, Blaenau Gwent Council will provide effective, planned, appropriately resourced and evaluated training.

The objectives of the Strategy are:

- To equip Members with the necessary training and development opportunities to enable them to effectively undertake their different roles, and to enable the Council to deliver its priorities.
- To support the integrity of Members when working with the public by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- An enhanced understanding and ownership of the Council's key priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022/27.
- To provide an opportunity for Members to reflect on how they have demonstrated the relevant skills, knowledge and behaviours to support their personal development.
- To provide effective, planned, appropriately resourced, monitored and evaluated training.
- To establish an environment where Member development is seen as vital to the success of the authority.
- To make training and development available and encourage its take-up by all Councillors, irrespective of seniority, length of service or political affiliation.
- For Political Groups and Political Leaders to show commitment to the delivery and promotion of the Member Development Programme and encourage their Group Members to participate in these opportunities.
- Keeping Members up to date with new legislation and changing policies
- For Members to work to the values of the Council as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2022/27 by being: **Respectful; Inclusive; Collaborative; Accountable; and Supportive**

Legislative Framework for the Strategy

The **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011** requires Local Authorities to secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its Members. The Measure does not define what constitutes reasonable training and development. However, Welsh Government guidance recommends that Local Authorities provide opportunities for what is essential for a Member to perform their role effectively.

The **Wales Programme for Improvement** places a responsibility on the Council to maintain continuous improvement in service delivery, emphasising the need to develop new and innovative ways of working to improve service outcomes. All Members have a key role in the process of challenging established patterns of service delivery.

The **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015** places a duty on public bodies, including the Council, to think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. Within this all Elected Members have a key role in providing leadership and representation within the local community.

The **Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021** requires that a leader of a political group must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Group Members. The duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their Members' as conduct must be a matter of individual responsibility. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining standards, setting an example, using their influence to promote a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues as soon as they arise.

Corporate Plan 2022/27

The Corporate Plan is the Council's roadmap setting out our vision, values and priorities. Through focusing on delivering against the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan we can begin to transform Blaenau Gwent into a more prosperous and welcoming area and this in turn plays a part on a regional and national stage. It is also a key part of building a more confident and capable Council. It is about achieving real outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent and is underpinned by solid and sustainable plans, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. The Corporate Plan identifies four priorities, known as Well-being Objectives, which set out the direction for action and agenda for change over the next five years. The ambitions set out in this Plan require for the Council, communities and partners to work in new and innovative ways to drive change and transform the area in order to have a positive impact on the lives and well-being of current and future generations.

The Corporate Plan has not been developed in isolation and alignment has been made to the Marmot Principles (to reduce health inequalities across Gwent and to work in partnership with the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) to address the social determinants of health), and the priorities from the Gwent Public Service Board Plan (PSB) Well-being Plan.

The table below highlights the links between the Corporate Plan 2022/27, the Marmot Principles and the Gwent PSB's Well-being Plan.

Corporate Plan 2022/27	Marmot Principle	Gwent Well-being Plan
Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give every child the best start in life. • Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives. • Create fair employment and good work for all. • Ensure a healthy standard of living for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to create a fair and equitable Gwent for all
Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities. • Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention. • 'Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to create a Gwent where the natural environment is protected and enhanced
An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create fair employment and good work for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to create a fair and equitable Gwent for all
Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle racism, discrimination and their outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to create a Gwent that has friendly, safe and confident communities

How the Strategy is Delivered

The training and development of Elected Members will be provided using a variety of different methods, including:

- A comprehensive **Induction and Refresher Training Programme** for all Elected Members, whether newly elected or returning this is provided at the start of each political cycle.
- The **Member Development Programme** is an ongoing and comprehensive learning and development programme to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of Elected Members in their varied roles. The programme will include topical and legislative information as well as being amended to cover identified need over the year.
- Members are provided with **Information Handbooks** to inform them of the various arrangements in place throughout the democratic processes.
- The **Personal Development Review and Competency Framework** enables a Member and the Council to mutually assess personal development needs. It is set within the context of the role of the Member, the priorities and expectations of the Council, the needs of the community and the personal aspirations the individual wishes to achieve. These will be offered to all Elected Members, however, they are only mandatory for Senior Salary Holders.
- The Council will encourage experienced Members of the Council to share their expertise and will encourage members to take advantage of any **Mentoring** arrangements offered. Arrangements can also be made to support mentees from other local authority areas or for mentors/peers in other local authorities to provide support.
- Support arrangements are in place for Elected Members who represent the Council on an **Outside Body or Organisation**. Elected Members should provide feedback on the work they have undertaken on the outside body as well as share any learning experiences.
- The establishment of **Role Descriptions and Core Competencies** as set out in the Constitution provide Members with clarity on expectations and accountability within their diverse roles.
- The **Forward Work Programmes** of Scrutiny, Governance & Audit, Cabinet and Council will be used to identify any learning and training opportunities that will support Elected Members to understand the work of the Council and its services.

- **Annual Reports for Members** - The Councillor's Annual Report is a voluntary process intended to be used as a mechanism for improving communication between Councillors and the local electorate and it helps to improve local people's knowledge and understanding of what their local councillor does, and the important role they undertake.
- **Modernising Local Government** – the Council has made a commitment to support Members to become more digitally inclusive.
- **Cost Effective** Member training and development will be sourced through the use of in-house training, cost-sharing with neighbouring authorities and outside providers.
- The Online **Member Support Library** is a dedicated area on the Council intranet which has been developed as a single point of contact for Elected Members to access in order to gain information on a wide range of areas and topics. Recordings from Member Development Sessions are also available on this portal.
- A range of **E-Learning Modules** are available to help develop Members' knowledge and understanding of local government and the broad issues that face them in their role. The modules will enable Members to undertake learning at a time that suits them, and, for some topics, will supplement the learning received through workshops and workbooks.
- The Council will **Record** all committee meetings which are open to the public. These recordings are available on the Council's website.
- The Council has available **Hybrid Meeting Options** to enable Elected Members to remote attend and participate in a meetings.
- The Council operate a number of **Mandatory Training** sessions which Elected Members are expected to attend:

For all Elected Members -

- Members Code of Conduct
- Corporate Parenting/Safeguarding Responsibilities

For Specific Elected Members -

- Licensing and Planning – for Elected Members appointed to these regulatory committees
- Appeal Committee Training - for Elected Members dealing with Dismissals

Roles and Responsibilities

In order to facilitate the effective delivery of training and development arrangements for Elected Members, support will include:

Head of Democratic Services

The Head of Democratic Services is to produce and monitor the Member Development Programme, to collate the learning and development needs of Elected Members and use these needs to inform the annual training programme and ongoing member development.

Support Arrangements under the Head of Democratic Services

The Corporate Performance Team, which includes both the Democratic Arrangements and Scrutiny functions, will support the Head of Democratic Services in the delivery of training and development for Members. Democratic Services will record attendance of Members at all training, committees and member development sessions. This ensures Elected Members can review their training and development activities.

Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee has the responsibility for ensuring the democratic element of the Council is operating correctly including ensuring sufficient staff, accommodation and resources are available to support Members in their role. The Committee oversees the Council's Member Development arrangements and monitors the delivery of the programme and periodically assesses its effectiveness.

Political Group Leaders

Group Leaders have a particular responsibility to ensure that their Members engage fully in the Member Development process; recognising and proactively seeking out training opportunities.

Political Groups

Groups should promote member development opportunities and also encourage and support Members' participation.

Elected Members

Elected Members are responsible for:

- Identifying their own development needs.
- Seeking opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their potential.
- Attending arranged learning and development opportunities.
- Participating in the Personal Development Review / Competency Framework.
- Sharing their knowledge and skills with their peers.
- Reviewing their learning and development activities.

Directorates and Departments

All departments within the Council are responsible for identifying and delivering service specific training to Elected Members.

Welsh Local Government Association

Guidance, support and expertise will be used throughout the development of the Members' Programme, including use of the e-learning modules.

Monitoring of the Strategy

Ensuring that the Strategy remains fit for purpose and continues to meet the needs of Elected Members is essential. To ensure continued development and delivery of an effective training and development programme the following arrangements are in place:

Formal Monitoring

Progress of the Strategy will be monitored by the Democratic Services Committee.

There will be a formal review of the Strategy every five years.

Informal Monitoring

A record will be kept of the attendance of Elected Members at all training and development sessions. Members will be requested to complete an evaluation of each committee, training and development session which they attend. Feedback will be provided to facilitators following each session. This will be used to inform and adapt future events to ensure their ongoing effectiveness and strengthen the Member Development Programme.

Resourcing the Strategy

The majority of training is likely to be provided in-house but there is a specific budget available to support the training and development opportunities for Members. This sum also covers the costs of Members attending conferences which are deemed to be opportunities for development.

Conclusion

This Strategy has been developed in order to support Members with their development and learning. The Strategy will have a life-span of a political cycle, currently 5 years, at which point it will be reviewed at the beginning of the new electoral term.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Members' Mentoring Framework 2022 - 2027



*Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working
with and for our communities*

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Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities

Introduction

The work of an Elected Member is complex and challenging and the political, legislative and local landscape in which they work is changing constantly. Members need to balance the expectations of local constituents against the challenges of effectively running a local authority in maintaining and delivering services effectively, and within budget.

Both new and experienced Members need appropriate support, information and professional development to undertake their complex and evolving roles.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has a duty to and is committed to supporting the development of its members. The Council recognises that the provision of effective training and development is critical to its success. Members play a pivotal role in decision making and delivering better outcomes for citizens.

The role of an elected member is a complex and challenging. All members, whether newly elected or returning, can benefit from support and development in reacting to new or personally challenging situations. All Members are provided with a range of essential support and development activities, but these cannot always cater for some of the individual and immediate needs of Member. Mentoring is an approach to support the development needs of Members.

What is Mentoring?

‘Mentoring is a confidential relationship where a mentee works with a mentor to explore issues or situations where they feel they need support or development’

Mentoring is a voluntary, confidential, one to one relationship in which an individual uses a more experienced or more senior person as a sounding board for guidance. It enables the mentee to “grow” in their role in skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour. It can be a medium, long term or ongoing relationship. It is not a prescriptive or directive relationship but rather one which allows the mentee to find their own way, assisted by the mentor and allows the mentee to apply skills, knowledge and experience to new situations to unlock future capability.

How does Mentoring work?

Although mentoring and coaching are not completely discrete from each other the approach differs in some ways. Some specific characteristics of mentoring include:

- The mentoring relationship is recognised as being self-selecting, with the mentee identifying their mentor.
- The mentees set the agenda in the main and takes responsibility for their learning within the relationship.
- Mentoring usually takes place over a longer time period, the agenda is more open, and evolves over time.
- The mentor helps the mentee learn through asking questions and sharing their experience without being too directive.
- The mentor supports the mentee's learning and helps them discover their own solutions to situations they may be finding challenging.

What does a mentor do and when can mentoring be used?

As a mentor you will form a voluntary, confidential, one to one relationship with someone who is less experienced than yourself. This person will seek to use you, your skills, knowledge and experience as a guide and support for their personal and professional development and a sounding board for their ideas and approaches.

The agenda for your discussions will be primarily set by your mentee although you may need to guide them in clarifying their goals for what they hope to achieve from the relationship. Typically, you might discuss:

- Working within the organisation: I'm new to the authority how does it all work here?
- A new role: I'm a new Scrutiny Chair, can you help me understand the role?
- Career development: Where do I go from here? How do I get there?
- Political challenges: How do I get my voice heard in the Group?

The role of mentor brings with it significant responsibilities. You have a responsibility to:

- Work within a code of practice. Before undertaking work with a mentee, the mentor will agree to act within a code of practice (attached).
- Use a mentoring contract (attached). The issues outlined in the mentoring contract should be discussed at the beginning of the relationship and both parties should agree to abide by the resulting decisions.
- Develop your mentoring skills through training.

What can a mentee expect?

As a mentee, you will form a voluntary, confidential, one to one relationship with a person who is more senior/experienced than yourself. You can use this person, their skills, knowledge and experience as a guide and support for your own personal and professional development and as a sounding board for your own ideas and approaches.

You will set the agenda for your discussions. The relationship can last for as long as both parties agree that it is helpful. Either party has the ability to dissolve the relationship when it has run its natural course or if the pairs are not compatible or productive. We encourage you to arrange to review the usefulness of the relationship with your mentor regularly.

Training and guidance

All Members acting as mentors will be provided with some basic training in the techniques and personal style required to be a mentor. This basic training will be facilitated by the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGA]. The guidance includes:

- Responsibilities of mentors.
- Techniques for mentoring.
- Protocols for the mentoring relationship.
- Tips on how to get the most out of being a mentee.

The Authority will use the WLGA's "Guidance for Member Mentors"

The Authority's Approach to Mentoring

The Authority will provide support for any member wishing to act as a mentor or be mentored by colleagues by:

- arranging for training to be provided to potential mentors.
- providing basic written guidance on mentoring techniques to mentors.
- providing information on how to make the most of mentoring opportunities to mentees.
- finding suitable mentors from within or if necessary outside the authority for members as available.
- providing mentors with ongoing support and training as required.

The Mentoring Contract

The following issues should be discussed at the beginning of the relationship and both parties should agree to abide by the resulting decisions.

Time & Place

- Both parties agree how much time they are able to give including work between meetings if necessary.
- Frequency of meetings.
- Duration of relationship (how long before a review).
- Mode of meeting – physical or virtual.
- Venues - away from the usual working environment, private, out of reach of phones and colleagues.

Scope & Context

- What will be covered?
- What might some of the learning goals, short and long term be?
- The mentee sets the agenda.

Relationships and Responsibilities

- The Mentor has a responsibility to act within a code of practice.
- The meetings are a priority - once set they should not be altered if avoidable.
- The mentee is responsible for their learning and actions.
- There is a responsibility on both sides for honesty and trust.
- Both parties need to take responsibility for suggesting the ending of the relationship when appropriate.

Confidentiality

- Agreement on confidentiality or where any information goes.
- Should notes be made? What happens to any notes during and after the arrangement?
- Will there be any discussions with the mentors' mentor/sponsors/peers.

Mentoring Contract

I (Mentee) and I(Mentor)

Agree to follow the guidance of this document in developing our mentoring partnership.

- All areas of discussion will be totally confidential and will not be discussed outside the partnership.
- The process will operate within a framework of equal opportunities and unacceptable behaviour on the part of either party should be challenged and dealt with.
- A minimum of one meeting per month will be agreed over the first six-month period.
- The Mentee will take responsibility for arranging mutually convenient meeting times.
- It is recognised that the Mentee takes responsibility for setting the agenda for the meeting, although this is likely to be informal.
- Expectations of the partnership will be agreed at the first meeting.
- Both parties will operate within the role set in this contract.
- All unwanted contact will be agreed, and any unwanted intrusion will be discussed.
- Any difficulties initially will be discussed between the partnerships, then with the scheme co-ordinator as appropriate.
- If the contract and partnership breaks down both parties will follow an agreed process of "letting go". No fault or blame will be applied to either party.

Signature (Mentee).....

Signature (Mentor).....

Code of Practice for Member Mentors

Before undertaking work with a mentee, the mentor will agree to act within this code of practice.

Throughout the relationship and after it has been concluded, the Mentor will:

Competence

- Undertake training in mentoring.
- Agree to work only within their level of competence.
- Understand and agree to work within this code.
- Seek personal support when necessary, from an appropriate mentor's mentor.

Context

- Agree to understand and operate within the political/organisational context where the relationship is taking place.
- Seek to meet the learning and development needs of the mentee.

Boundaries

- Agree to work within the boundaries of the mentoring relationship i.e. work/professional development/performance not straying into areas where they are not qualified/experienced such as counselling or psychotherapy or into an inappropriate personal relationship.
- Be prepared to refer the mentee to other sources of information/expertise or professional assistance as appropriate.

Confidentiality

- Maintain a level of confidentiality agreed with the mentee both during and after the relationship has ended.
- Disclose information only when agreed with the mentee unless the mentor believes that there is convincing evidence of serious danger to the mentee or others if the information is withheld.

Integrity and professionalism

- Act within appropriate law/policy/values of the authority e.g. equalities and HR policies.
- Consider the learning and development needs of the mentee as brought to the relationship as paramount.
- Seek to understand the needs and point of view of the mentee maintaining respect for the mentee throughout the relationship.
- Not exploit the mentee in any way or put their own interests before that of the mentee.

I the undersigned agree to work with my mentee in accordance with the above Code of Practice

Mentor's

Signature: _____

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Elected Members Personal Development Review and Competency Framework 2022

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



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Context and Overview

The **Blaenau Gwent Elected Member Personal Development Programme and Competency Framework** provides an opportunity for Members to self-reflect and consider how well things are progressing and where support is needed if things aren't going as intended.

The **Personal Development Review (PDR)** is a way for a Member and his/her Authority to mutually assess a Member's personal development needs. The review should be set within the context of the role of the Member, his/her aspirations for what s/he hopes to achieve, the purpose and aspirations of the Authority and the needs of the community.

The **Member Competency Framework** has been developed to support Elected Members in their role, both inside and outside of the Council. The Framework is a method of describing the underpinning values that shape and define the culture of Blaenau Gwent Council and is aligned to the Officer Competency Framework. It broadly outlines the skills and knowledge required by Members to perform their different roles and provides an indication of how they might carry them out effectively. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but to provide a prompt for new and existing councillors to identify areas where support may be required. This support could be in the form of information, training, facilitated workshops, coaching and mentoring, or opportunities to learn from observation. The framework is designed to be flexible, so that councillors can work with officers and colleagues to decide the most useful method.

The Framework should:

- Outline the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by Elected Members.
- Support Elected Member personal development.
- Provide an opportunity to assess progress, understand where further support would be helpful and setting future personal objectives.
- Build confidence, develop skills and knowledge and improve personal performance to contribute to the council and the community.

The Elected Member Personal Development Programme and Competency Framework can provide:

- Clarity for Members about the expectations and accountabilities placed upon them.
- Understanding of and support for the individual and collective development needs of Members.
- Support for Members in preparing for new roles (succession planning).
- An understanding and ownership of organisational goals.
- Support for improved Member performance.

The **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011** places a requirement on councils to provide all Members with an opportunity to have a personal development review to assess their development needs. The Measure states:

- A local authority must secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its Members.
- A local authority must make available to each Member of the authority an annual review of the Member's training and development needs.
- The review must include an opportunity for an interview with a person who is, in the opinion of the authority, suitably qualified to provide advice about the training and development needs of a Member of a local authority.

Process for undertaking the Elected Member Personal Development Programme and Competency Framework

- Each Senior Salary Holder is required to undertake an assessment of their performance on an annual basis. This is mandatory.
- Each non senior salary holder will be offered to undertake an assessment of their performance. This is voluntary.
- Members undertaking a review will be required to complete a template detailing the activities they have undertaken over the past year.
- A meeting will then take place to discuss the areas of success and areas for improvement.
- Note: Group Leaders will lead the discussions with their Members' and will also be supported by the Head of Democratic Services. Group Leaders will require for their reviews to be led by an external party as identified by the Council.

The purpose of the review will be to provide the Member with an opportunity to review their role generally, identify any specific tasks for the year ahead, consider the areas where they feel confident and identify areas where they will be more challenged and may need support and development. The Head of Democratic Services will detail the outcome of the review in an agreed plan which sets out any identified training and development needs.

Whilst completing this you may want to consider the following:

- The Council's Corporate Plan including its priorities, strategic vision and core values.
- The skills you require to work effectively within the Council and with constituents.
- The knowledge that is needed to work effectively within the Council and with constituents.
- What role/s do you undertake in the Council e.g., Committee Member, Member Champion, sit on an Outside Body etc.
- Being accountable and delivering results.
- Your personal responsibilities and attributes.
- Relevant legislation that impacts how you work.

Personal Development Review - Looking Back over the Past 12 Months

Please complete this pro forma and bring it to the review meeting, this form is confidential to you and the person who is conducting your review, except for the final sheet, which will be used by Democratic Services for your personal development plan and to prioritise activities for the council member development programme.

Considerations	Comments
What are my current roles and responsibilities? <i>(e.g. council, cabinet, scrutiny member, chair, member of a statutory committee, member of an outside body, a member champion and in the community, ward member/community leader)</i>	
What successes have you had this year?	
What challenges have you had to face the year?	
What aspects of the role am I confident in?	
What aspects of the role am I less confident in?	
What learning and development have I undertaken this year and what have I learnt as a result of this?	
Overall, what learning and development would be helpful for me moving forward?	

Competency Framework - Looking Back over the Past 12 Months

Competencies	Comments
<p>Delivering the Vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands where the organisation is going and why. • Communicates a compelling view of the future. • Understands how they can contribute to delivery of the vision. 	
<p>Working with Officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to assertive relationships that promote constructive challenge. • Listens to the advice provided to assist the political decision making process. • Ensures the best interests of the Council are furthered when interacting with Officers. • Establishes and continually improves positive and appropriate interaction with all Officers. 	
<p>Improvement and Change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a positive attitude to change and contributes to new ideas and improved ways of working. • Looks to continually improve service delivery. 	
<p>Communicating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates appropriately, openly and effectively. 	

Competencies	Comments
<p>Making Informed Decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures decisions are based on sound evidence and linked to improving services. • Considers implications of proposed decisions. • Ensures decisions link to continually improving performance. • Seeks clarification or challenges appropriately. • Explains decisions appropriately. 	
<p>Putting the Citizen First</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises the importance of contributions from the community to setting and achieving continually improving services. • Seeks feedback from the citizen. • Engages with the community appropriately and respectfully. • Is an ambassador for the organisation and the community it serves. 	
<p>Leading People <u>(for SRA Holders Only)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads and motivates others to continually improve performance. • Is approachable, supportive, and demonstrates integrity, fairness, and high personal and professional standards. 	
<p>Communicating the Vision <u>(for SRA Holders Only)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees the "big picture". • Proactively promotes the vision to others. • Ensures others understand how their role contributes to achieving the vision. 	

Personal Action Plan

(to be completed following the facilitated review session. A one to one session with the Head of Democratic Services will be arranged for you to agree your personal action plan)

What Action is required to support you to further develop?	Method of Achievement	How will I know I have achieved this?

Contact Details

If you require any support to complete the Member Competency Framework please contact:

Sarah King
Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships
Email: sarah.king@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Gemma Wasley
Service Manager Performance and Democratic
Deputy Head of Democratic Services
Email: gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Additional Support Documents

This Elected Member Personal Development Review and Competency Framework is not exhaustive and there are a number of other documents that support Elected Members and identify the skills and intended outcomes needed from Elected Members. These should all be available in the members online library or by asking a member of Democratic Services. Support may include but is not limited to:

- The Council's Constitution including Role descriptions for Elected Members and Code of Conduct
- Member Representation on Outside Bodies
- Data Protection
- Freedom of Information legislation
- Cabinet Committee Support booklet
- Scrutiny Committee Support booklet
- Corporate Plan 2022/27

Guidance is also provided by the WLGA:

- Guidance for councils planning to implement personal development reviews for members [Personal Development Review Schemes for Members - WLGA](#)
- A Development Framework for Councillors in Wales [Councillor Development \(competency\) Framework - WLGA](#)

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Agenda Item 9

Cabinet and Council only

Date signed off by the Monitoring Officer:

Date signed off by the Section 151 Officer:

Committee: **Democratic Services Committee**
Date of meeting: **27th March 2023**
Report Subject: **Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petitions Protocol 2023-27**
Portfolio Holder: **Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member Corporate and Performance**
Report Submitted by: **Sarah King, Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	02/03/23			24/03/23			30/03/23	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 For Democratic Services Committee to consider the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petitions Protocol 2023-27 before consideration and approval at Council.
 - 1.2 The Petitions Protocol outlines the methodology to be applied when submitting a petition, who can submit a petition, the restrictions for what can be included in a petition, as well as how the Council will respond.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on a Principal Council to make and publish a Petitions Scheme setting out how the Council intends to handle and respond to Petitions.
 - 2.2 Rule 42 of the Act 2021 states that the Council must publish a petition scheme that includes:
 - How a petition may be submitted to the Council;
 - How and by when the Council will acknowledge receipt of a petition;
 - The steps the Council may take in response to a petition received by it;
 - The circumstances (if any) in which the Council may take no further action in response to a petition;
 - How and by when the Council will make available its response to a petition to the person who submitted the petition and to the public.
 - 2.3 This Petitions Scheme will form a part of the Council's Public Participation Strategy.
 - 2.4 Petitions are documents (whether electronic or physical) that contain details of issues that are important to communities and the Blaenau Gwent area as a whole, signed by local electors who are in support of the proposed action.

- 2.5 The Council last approved its Petition Protocol in 2018, therefore, alongside the requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and the establishment of a new Council in May 2022, it felt timely to undertake a review of the Protocol.
- 2.6 This iteration of the Petitions Protocol includes the establishment of electronic petitions, known as e-petitions.
- 2.7 The Petitions Protocol will be included on the Council's website bilingually once approved.
3. **Options for Recommendation**
- 3.1 CLT considered the Petitions Protocol at their meeting on 2nd March 2023.

Option 1

Consider and agree to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petitions Protocol 2023-2027 (found at appendix 1) before approval at Council.

Option 2

Consider the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petitions Protocol 2023-2027 (found at appendix 1) and make recommendations for amendment before approval at Council.

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

- 4.1 The Council is working to embed the requirements as outlined under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
- 4.1.1 The Council is fully committed to supporting the community to engage in Council activity. This is supported by the Council's Corporate Plan priority: *An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place*
- 4.1.2 At the heart of everything the Council does is the community of Blaenau Gwent. Engagement, participation and customer experience feature as a key theme which runs across the Council in order to shape services and make decisions.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

The Petitions Protocol itself has no budgetary requirements, however, the Protocol does include detail of Petitions which will not be considered by the Council, and this includes if it would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, money or effort to prepare the answer.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a risk of follow up intervention if the Council does not implement the statutory requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales)

Act 2021 and this includes the provision of having a Petitions Protocol in place and for this to include the provision of e-petitions.

5.3 **Legal**

There is a statutory requirement for the Council to have a Petitions Protocol in place and for this to include the provision of e-petitions.

5.4 **Human Resources**

5.4.1 In receipt of a Petition there will be a requirement for staff involvement in order to consider the number of signatures and appropriateness of the Petition. Staff may also be involved should the Petition relate to a specific service area.

5.4.2 Elected members will be informed of a Petition if it relates to their Ward or if the subject matter relates to their lead role. Depending on the number of signatures received, there may be a requirement for the Petition to be considered at Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or Council.

5.4.3 As outlined in 5.1 a Protocol will not be considered if it would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, money or effort to prepare the answer.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 **Performance Information and Data**

The petitions protocol arrangements have been operating since 2018. Since that time:

- 27 petitions have been received – all received an officer response.
- 6 of these petitions were aligned to the service review of School Crossing Patrollers – so these were considered as part of that review.
- 1 petition was considered as part of the Planning protocol
- No petition has required consideration by a Committee or Council.

6.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

Petitions are one way in which individuals, community groups and organisations can express their views and concerns about something for which the Council is responsible, providing an opportunity for change.

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

The Petitions Protocol has been developed in line with the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and also considering the Protocols from a number of Local Authorities across Wales.

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

The submission of a Petition enables the community to bring about a change in Council policy which will impact over the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The submission of a Petition enables the community to bring about a change in Council policy, raise an issue or propose a different way of working which will prevent issues from getting greater.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Petitions Protocol is specifically for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council but does include provision should the topic area fall within the remit of another Local Authority or partner agency.

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

Depending on the subject area of a Petition all Council services can be involved in responding to a Petition.

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

The Petitions Protocol will have no direct impact on decarbonisation or the reduction of carbon emissions unless the Petition specifically calls for action in this area.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IAA)***

An integrated impact assessment is not required for the Petitions Protocol.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Head of Democratic Services has responsibility for the Petitions Protocol.

7.1.1 The Petitions Protocol will be reviewed every five years in line with Council elections.

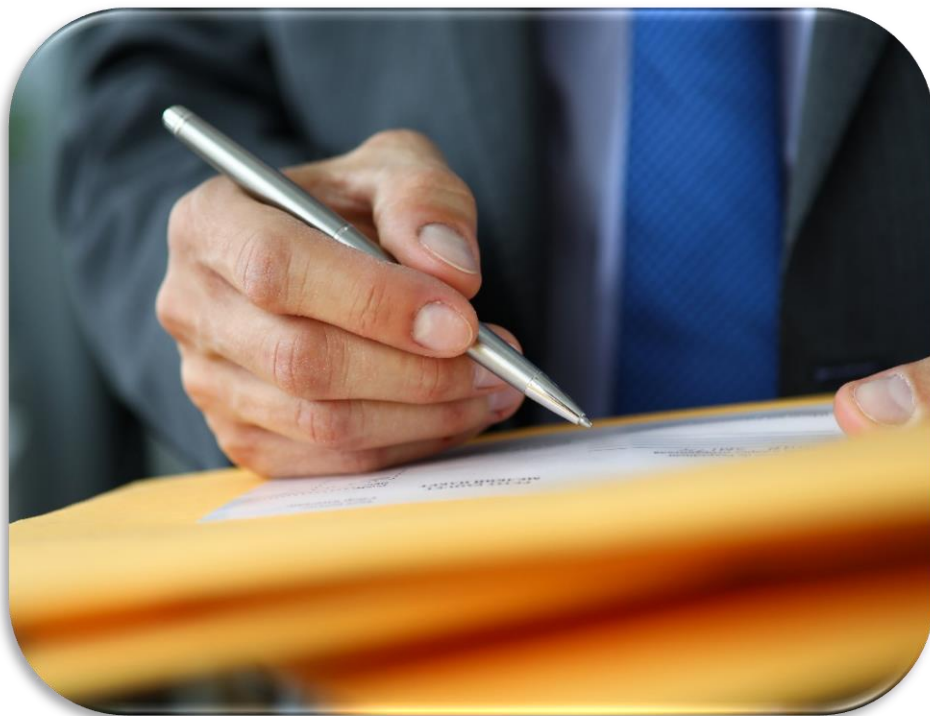
Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petitions Protocol 2023-27*



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol
Blaenau Gwent
County Borough Council

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Petition Protocol



*Blaenau Gwent – a place that is fair, open and
welcoming to all by working with and for our
communities*

Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council welcomes petitions and recognises that they are one way in which individuals, community groups and organisations can express their views and concerns about something for which the Council is responsible.

Petitions can be submitted to the Council in written form or via an e-petition, with this protocol covering both options.

Petitions will not be accepted from other on-line petition systems.

What is a petition?

Petitions are one of the most direct ways to suggest how something could change in Blaenau Gwent. Petitions can:

- Raise awareness of an issue;
- Bring about a change in Council policy or a different way of delivering services;
- Lead to, or influence, a debate in the Council;
- Prompt a Committee or individual Member of the Council to take further action themselves, for instance by asking questions.

Before submitting a Petition, residents are encouraged to:

- Contact the Council to see whether an ordinary service request would resolve the issue.
- Contact a relevant ward Member (s) to see whether they can help. Details on how to contact your local Member are available on the Council's website:
<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/councillors-and-committees/councillor-directory/>

Who can raise / sign / submit a petition?

Anyone aged 10 or above who lives, works or studies in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area can raise, submit or sign a petition.

The name and contact details of the person that started the Petition (Lead Petitioner) is required, to allow contact between the Council and the Lead Petitioner. Only the Lead Petitioner will be contacted in relation to the Petition. The contact details of the Lead Petitioner will not be placed on the website.

If the petition does not identify a Lead Petitioner the Council will contact the first signature on the petition to agree who should act as the Lead Petitioner.

Please note that you can only sign an e-petition / Petition once. The list of signatories will be checked by Officers and any duplicate signatures or inappropriate responses will be removed.

Petitions can be submitted in one of the following ways:

- E-petitions can be created, signed and submitted using the following link <https://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/ieLogon.aspx?RPID=4339227&HPID=4339227&Forms=1&LLL=0>
- To create, sign or submit a petition you will need to provide a few basic details, including a valid email address, for verification purposes.
- Petitions can also be sent via email to – Committee.services@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- Paper petitions can be sent to:
The Head of Democratic Services
Democratic Services Section
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
General Offices
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6DN

Submitting a Paper Petition - the Petition wording must be set out in full on each sheet (or side of a sheet) where signatures are asked for. The Petition will be returned if the wording is unclear. Appendix 1 sets out the "Petition Template Form". The Form provides the main information required when submitting a Petition.

The requirements of this Petition Protocol will apply to whichever of the above submissions is used. Please ensure you follow this protocol in order to submit a Petition.

What should a Petition include?

Petitions submitted to the Council must include:

- a clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition - it should state what action the petitioners wish the Council to take (or stop taking). It must relate to something the Council has responsibility for or can reasonably and proportionately influence to create an improvement in the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the local area.
- the name and address and individual signature of any person supporting the Petition.
- contact details, including an address, for the Lead Petitioner.
- If the petition has been sent to anyone else as well as the County Borough Council.

If the Council receives a Petition that does not relate to something under the Council's control or direct influence, it will be returned to the Lead Petitioner with an explanation of the decision as to why the Council cannot progress the matter further.

The minimum number of valid signatures should be at least 50 (including the petition organiser) for a petition to be accepted as valid. The petition will be considered as follows:

- 50 - 200 signatures - Response from the relevant Director / lead Member (treated as normal correspondence) .
- At least 200 signatures - Referred to the Leader / Cabinet and or Scrutiny Committee for a response.
- At least 500 signatures - Referred for a debate at a meeting of the Full Council.

What happens next?

When the Council receives a petition acknowledgment of receipt will be provided within 10 working days and this will include a link to the petition. The acknowledgment will set out what the Council plan to do in response to the petition, how you may be involved and when you can expect to hear from us again.

Your petition could result in one or a combination of the following:

- raising publicity for and awareness of an issue.
- implementing the action requested in the petition.
- considering the petition at a Full Council meeting.
- undertaking research into the matter.
- referring the matter to Cabinet, a Scrutiny Committee or other Committees.
- responding to the petition organiser setting out the council's view on the request set out in the petition.
- some other appropriate response.

When you create an ePetition, it may take 5 working days before it is published online. This is to check that the content is suitable before it is made available for signature. If it is suitable, the Council will ensure that the ePetition is displayed in Welsh & English on the website.

If it is considered that your ePetition cannot be published for any reason, the Council will contact you within this time to explain. You will be able to change and resubmit your petition if you wish. If you do not do this within 5 working days, a summary of the ePetition and the reason why it has not been accepted will be published under the 'Rejected Petitions' section of the website.

When an ePetition has closed for signature, a copy of your Petition will be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service & relevant Cabinet Member.

Where a Petition is in respect of a particular local issue affecting a specific ward(s) then the Democratic Services Team will notify the appropriate Member(s).

The Petition will be published on the Council's Petitions Register on the Council's website.

If the Council considers it can meet what the Petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm what action has been taken on the request and the Petition will be closed.

To ensure that people know what the Council are doing in response to the Petitions received, the details of all the Petitions submitted, including those pending action will be published on the Council's website.

What Petitions will not be accepted by the Council?

Petitions must be in relation to something which falls under the remit of the Council. The Head of Democratic Services will have discretion as to whether a Petition meets the criteria set out in the Petitions Protocol. No further action will be taken in response to a Petition that fails to meet the criteria.

If your petition is about something over which the Council has no direct control we will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. Where possible we will work with these partners to respond to your petition. If we are not able to do this for any reason, then we will explain this to you.

The Council recognises that petitions are also submitted in support of or to object to planning applications. For the avoidance of doubt, those petitions are not covered by this policy. Petitions submitted to the Development Management Team will continue to be a material consideration in the planning process and inform the decision whether to approve or refuse planning permission. However, they are not subject to the protocols outlined in this document.

If your petition is about something that a different Council is responsible for we will give consideration to what the best method is for responding to it. This might consist of simply forwarding the petition to the other council, but could involve other steps. In any event, we will always notify you of the action we have taken.

So that people know what we are doing in response to the petitions we receive, the details of all the petitions submitted to us will be published on our website, together with the acknowledgment and notification of the response (except in cases where this would be inappropriate).

A Petition will not be accepted by the Council if:

- It duplicates another, concurrent Petition. In this case, signatures will be added to the first such Petition to be received by the Council.
- It repeats or is substantially the same as one submitted within the previous 12 months. It is advised that details of previous Petitions are checked on the website at the start of your Petition **xxxx**
- it refers to employee matters as these will be addressed via existing internal frameworks.
- In the period immediately before an election or referendum we may need to deal with your petition differently - if this is the case we will explain the reasons and discuss the revised timescale which will apply.
- the petition does not follow the guidelines, the council may decide not to do anything further with it. In this case, we will write to you to explain the reasons.
- It is considered to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate.
- Is defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise offensive or contains false statements
- It becomes apparent that any local elector's name, address or signature has been added to the Petition without their explicit consent.
- It is not in relation to a matter for which the Council has a responsibility or which does not affect the administrative area or citizens of the Council.
- It would require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information in response.
- It relates to the personal circumstances or conduct of any officer and Member or conditions of service of employees.
- It relates to an individual, particular group or business or the petitioner's own particular circumstances.
- Names individuals or provides information where they may be easily identified and is contradictory to GDPR regulations.
- It would be unlawful for the Council to consider.

- It relates to a matter which is the subject of legal or enforcement proceedings or an appeal to a court or tribunal or to a Government Minister or the National Assembly or an investigation by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
- Relates to planning or licensing decisions and where there is an appeals procedure in place.
- Refers to a complaint about the conduct of a Member – complaints need to be made to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales [PSOW] [How to complain](#)
- It relates to the activities and aims of a political party or organisation.
- It would require the expenditure of a disproportionate amount of time, money or effort to prepare the answer.
- A Petition seeks to overturn a lawfully made decision.
- Contains advertising statements or is nonsense.
- It can be more appropriately dealt with as part of a consultation response in which case it will be referred to the appropriate Council body and included as part of the consultation documentation.
- Is either a Freedom of Information [FOI] request, a comment, compliment or complaint, in these cases the following need to be used:
- Freedom of Information Requests [Freedom of Information Requests | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Submitting comments, compliments and complaints [Compliments & Complaints | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

If a petition is considered unacceptable the petition organiser will be advised and provided with the reasons for its rejection.

If the Council rejects your Petition or you feel that the Council has not dealt with your Petition properly, please make a complaint via the Council's Corporate Complaints Process [Compliments & Complaints | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

The Council reserves the right to verify signatories as required. Petitioners should ensure that a valid address and postcode is included for all Petitioners that relates to a home address (if living in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area) or work address (if working or run a business in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area). These details will be taken into account when identifying if there are enough signatories from people who live or work in the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council area to trigger a debate.

Petitions which warrant evidence and debate at a Scrutiny Committee

If your petition contains at least 200 signatures, the relevant senior officer will give evidence at a public meeting of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee. You should be aware that the Scrutiny Committee may decide that it would be more appropriate for another officer to give evidence instead of any specific officer named in the petition – for instance if the named officer has changed jobs. The Committee may also decide to call the relevant Cabinet Member to attend the meeting.

Committee Members will ask the questions at this meeting, but we will let you know the specific arrangements for the meeting and how you may be involved. The Scrutiny

Committee will make a report on its findings which may include recommendations for action to the Cabinet, or the Council.

Petitions requiring full Council debate

If a petition is signed by more than 500 people it will be debated by the full Council (unless it is a petition asking for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting). This means that the subject raised in the petition will be discussed at a meeting which all Council Members can attend.

If the Petition has enough signatories to trigger a debate at a meeting of Council, then the acknowledgment will confirm this and advise when and where the meeting will take place. The Council will endeavour to consider the Petition at its next meeting, although on some occasions this may not be possible and consideration will then take place at the following meeting. *Petitions **will not** be considered at the Annual Meeting of Council, Extraordinary Council, Special Council or at the Budget Setting Council meeting.*

If the Lead Petitioner wishes to attend Council they will be 3 minutes to address the Council on the subject of the petition.

The relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder will then be given 3 minutes for a right of reply and the petition will then be discussed by Members. The relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder has a further right of reply, for no more than **3** minutes, at the end of the debate on the matter.

The Council will decide how to respond to the Petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the Petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant Committee.

Where the issue is one on which the Council's Cabinet are required to make the final decision, the Council will decide whether to make recommendations to inform that decision.

The Lead Petitioner will receive written confirmation of the decision as soon as practicable following the decision having been made. This confirmation will also be published on the Council's website.

Data protection and GDPR

If you create and submit an e-petition or sign an e-petition you will be asked to provide personal information. Personal information is also needed when you sign a paper petition.

The Council is the data controller for personal information collected for both e-petitions and paper petitions. The following link is to the Council website regarding Data Protection and Privacy [Data Protection & FOI | Blaenau Gwent CBC \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/Data-Protection-FOI)

Following a period of 21 days after the Council has responded formally, a paper petition will be destroyed and all e-signatories on an e-petition will be erased, unless during that period, the petition organiser has requested a review.

Appendix 1

How to submit petitions by email or in paper format. Please use this template. Additional pages should also include the petition subject at the top of the page and also the page number and total of pages for example page 7 of a 10 page petition would show the following: 7 of 10 pages.

Petition to Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Contact details of the Petition organiser

Full Name	
Address for Correspondence:	1 st line _____ 2 nd line _____ 3 rd line _____ Postcode _____
Home Telephone No.	
Mobile No.	
Email Address	
Live/Work/Service User/ Study (please indicate all that apply)	
Signature	

PETITION

Name	Address (including postcode)	Signature	Email Address (if possible)	If you are not a Blaenau Gwent resident, please supply the name and address of your place of work or place of study

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