



Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

**Blaenau Gwent**

County Borough Council

**Commissioning and Procurement  
Strategy  
2023 - 2028**

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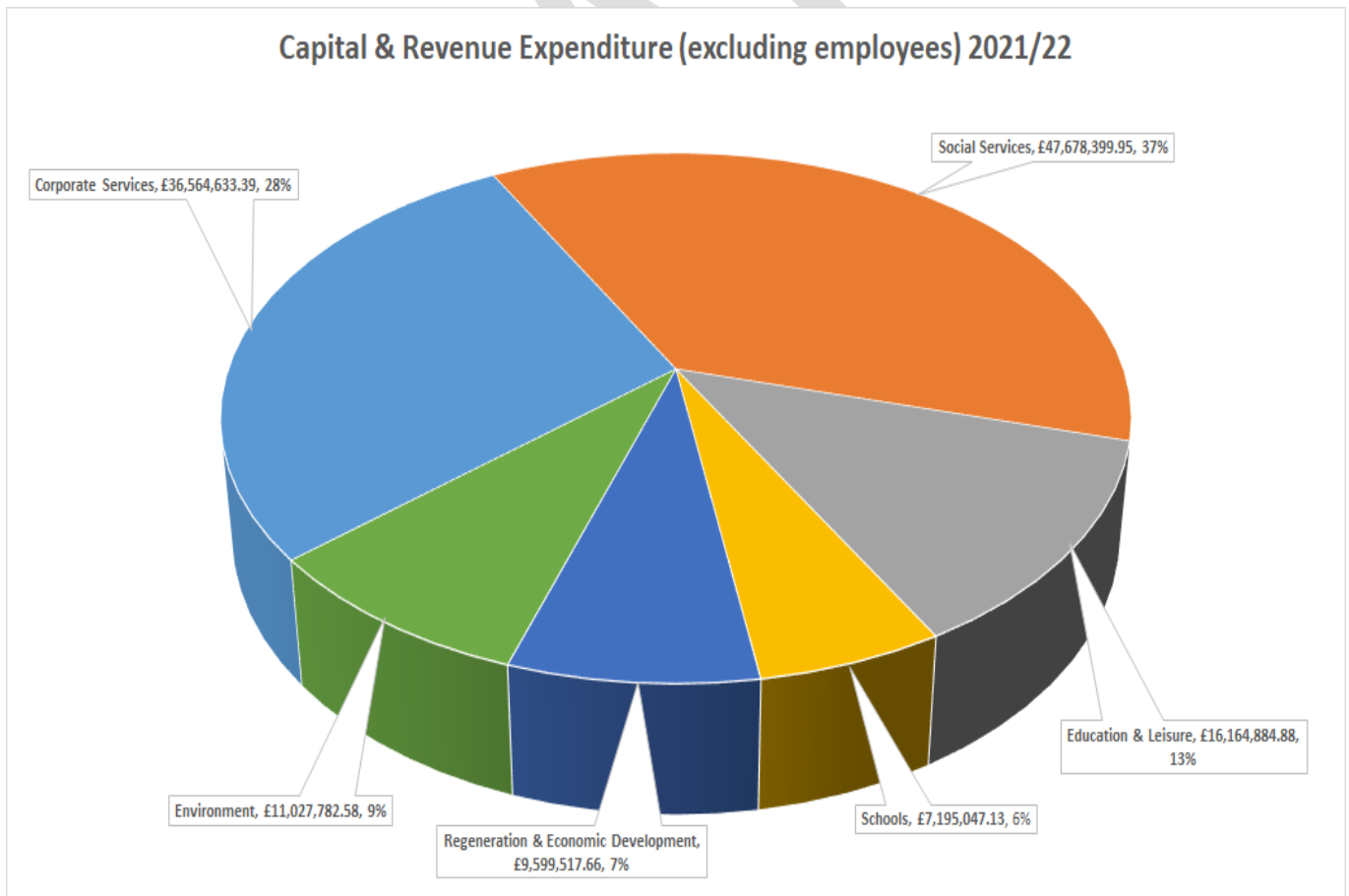
# INTRODUCTION

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys – Blaenau Gwent provides a unique environment to live, work and play. Blaenau Gwent is a place of heritage and dramatic change, with a sense of its past but its eyes firmly on the future.

Like the rest of the world, Blaenau Gwent has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. As we look to recover from the impacts of Covid-19, we want to utilise the Council’s annual spend of approximately £130m to support the local and regional economy. Our first Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy puts delivering economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being at the heart of what we do. The Council recognises that procurement will be one of the key tools that enables the Council to deliver its strategic priorities and in ensuring that the Council buys the right thing at the right time for the right price.

Our Procurement Strategy for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (2023-2027), contributes to the Welsh national vision for procurement, the main principles of which are set out in the [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) and also supports the Council’s [Corporate Plan 2022-2027](#) and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## Procurement Spend



## Purpose of the Strategy

### “Maximising the Socially Responsible Blaenau Gwent Pound £”

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council currently spends in the region of £130 million a year with other public, private and third sector organisations on the goods, services and works needed to deliver public services. It is the Council’s responsibility to manage this money efficiently and effectively to achieve Council objectives. The purpose of this strategy is to set out how we are undertaking procurement and commissioning within the Council and to provide the vision and strategic direction necessary to better achieve our objectives.

This strategy is aimed at promoting effective commissioning and procurement across the whole organisation. It will assist all internal officers who are involved in commissioning and procurement to better understand their role in supporting the delivery of this strategy. It also provides a basis for interaction with other key stakeholder groups; primarily our suppliers, the wider public and elected members.

The strategy has been developed with a full appreciation of the complex regulatory framework within which procurement and commissioning operates. It also recognises that it is an area with high risks – with potentially significant impacts on service delivery, financial management and legal compliance, as well as the overall reputation of the Council.

This strategy sets out key principles which are there to help guide all our procurement and commissioning activity and ensure that it is undertaken legally, fairly and transparently, with a proper understanding of the impact on our local communities – now and into the future – and in accordance with the Council’s ethical principles.

### Our Vision

We are committed to transforming the procurement of goods, services and works to maximise its contribution to the delivery of social value, and the development of the local and national foundational economies. Through focused commissioning and procurement, we will help to make Blaenau Gwent a community which maximises learning and skills for all, embraces environmental change, supports economic business growth, works in partnership to provide high quality services to meet local needs and improves the quality of life and well-being within the community.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to support the Council in the effective delivery of its Corporate Plan and Wales National Procurement Policy, by focusing on the delivery of professional commissioning and procurement activities to help make Blaenau Gwent a better place in which to live, work and play.

## SCOPE & DEFINITION

### What is Procurement?

For the purposes of this strategy, we have used the same definition of procurement as detailed in the Wales Procurement Policy Statement:

***“The process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment”***

And acknowledge that:

***“Welsh public sector procurement is a powerful lever with ability to affect sustained change to achieve social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes for the well-being of Wales”***

Accordingly, a key part of our procurement & commissioning activities will be to ensure that when sourcing goods, services and works the Council supports its suppliers to:

- reduce their carbon emissions
- deliver social value
- adopt sound ethical working practices
- comply with employment best practice and legislation; and
- recognises Trade Unions

and

- discourages and seeks to eliminate any illegal practices such as modern slavery and people trafficking

## What is Commissioning?

Commissioning of public services is about public sector agencies working with purchasers, providers and most importantly, communities, to identify and understand end users’ needs so that services can be designed to meet them. This is done by working within a structured and planned process called the commissioning cycle (see below), which ensures services are improved and developed against past experience and current community need.

## The Commissioning Cycle



Good commissioning is underpinned by the following principles:

1. Understand the needs of those using the service
2. Consult provider organisations when setting priorities
3. Put outcomes for users at the heart of the process
4. Map the fullest practical range of providers
5. Consider investing in the provider base
6. Ensure contract processes are transparent and fair
7. Ensure long-term contracts
8. Seek feedback to review effectiveness of the commissioning process

Where Council services directly impact upon communities and influence the day to day lives of citizens, such as in the field of social care, service areas will use the commissioning cycle to develop specific strategies and plans which adhere to the eight principles of good commissioning.

## Progressive Procurement

The Procurement landscape in the public sector has changed dramatically over the last 2 years. A Welsh Government report published in March 2021 acknowledges that despite the unprecedented challenges facing the Welsh public sector through Brexit and Covid-19, Procurement has risen to the challenge and through effective leadership and collaborative working has accelerated its progress in the [Procurement Evolution](#) journey in Wales. Brexit has had a significant impact on the supply chain and the economy in which our Procurement will be constantly reviewed. During the coming years, Procurement decisions will be further impacted by Welsh Government reforming the procurement legislation in Wales. The Covid-19 crisis has required public bodies including Blaenau Gwent to increase its collaborative efforts to ensure that effective and efficient procurement delivers value for money and that vital supplies are provided in a timely manner.

The Commercial Service Team have reflected on the following policies and practices to lead to the development of this strategy.

- The [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the refreshed [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) remain important drivers to deliver further well-being benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent through the supplier selection and award of contracts.
- The Welsh Government are proposing the introduction of legislation on [Social Partnership and Procurement](#) to ensure fair work outcomes for all by delivering socially responsible Procurement.
- The [Social Service Wellbeing Act 2014](#) provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales.
- The Council's pledge of a [Climate Emergency](#) has placed additional responsibility on the role of procurement within the Council and in delivering on these important agendas.
- The principles of [Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy](#) will ensure a greener, fairer and more prosperous community.
- The [Foundational Economy](#) directs public bodies in Wales to focus on services and products that keep us safe, sound, and civilised.
- Public bodies in Wales are expected to commit to Welsh Government's Ethical Procurement with reference to the [Code of Practice](#). Which includes obligations under Modern Slavery Act. Full account will be taken of the Welsh Language Act when procuring and delivering services.

- There is an ongoing consultation period by Welsh Government on the impact of the pending [Procurement Reform Bill](#) that will replace the existing Public Contract Regulations 2015. The Bill, which is expected to come into force during 2023/24, is intended to create a simpler and more flexible sourcing system, that brings greater transparency thought out the commissioning cycle and opens up public procurement to new entrants, small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) and social enterprises.









- Collaborative Working underpins future progress in public service procurement and delivery. Local Authorities are encouraged to seek collaborative opportunities with other members of the Welsh Local Government Association [WLGGA](#) network and to embrace regional working where it makes economic sense to do so.

## BLAENAU GWENT’S CORPORATE PLAN 2022-2027

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

The Council’s Corporate Plan 2022/27, sets out an ambitious programme of activity for the Council over the next five years and beyond. The priorities, also referred to as Well-being Objectives, have been developed in order to support our communities to thrive. The people of Blaenau Gwent are at the heart of all that we do and the Corporate Plan is the Council’s commitment to the communities of Blaenau Gwent to provide modern and high quality services which support economic growth and well-being.

The Plan sets out the Council’s four priorities and detailed sub-priorities for action:

Priority		Outcome
 	<b>Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent</b>	An increase in the resilience of the community, providing high quality educational and skills opportunities to create a thriving economy from birth onwards, minimising dependence and maximising independence
 	<b>Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities</b>	Blaenau Gwent Council greatly reduces its carbon emissions, provides an environment which supports growth and well-being and connects communities
 	<b>An ambitious and innovative council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place</b>	Blaenau Gwent Council works in partnership to provide high quality services to meet local need, and improve the quality of life and well-being within the community
 	<b>Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient</b>	An increase in the resilience of Communities, where everyone is welcome and safe and which minimises dependency and maximises independence

How effectively we spend our money will have a direct impact on our ability to deliver our ambition and priorities. Thus, the Council recognises that an effective commissioning and procurement strategy is fundamental to achieving organisational success and is instrumental in the delivery of the Corporate Plan, as it will:

- have a direct impact on overall spend, savings, value for money and the cost of service provision to the people of Blaenau Gwent;
- help shape the delivery of services to meet the needs of citizens, communities and customers;
- contribute to the achievement of corporate and service objectives; and
- be part of the process of delivering key policy objectives.

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## Ambitions and Delivery

### How Commissioning and Procurement will support the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2027

The Council's four (4) Organisational Procurement Priorities set out how the Council's procurement activity will contribute towards improving local economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the important role that procurement has in delivering well-being goals. The draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill states that the Council "*must set and publish objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the socially responsible procurement goals.*"

### Embedding Social Value

- We actively seek to address the seven Well-being Goals and Five Ways of Working from the [Well-Being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).
- We will embrace the opportunity presented in the refreshed [Wales Procurement Policy Statement 2021](#) to deliver further well-being benefits for the people of Blaenau Gwent through the supplier selection and award of contracts.
- The Council's pledge of a [Climate Emergency](#) has placed additional responsibility on the role of Procurement within the Council and in delivering on these important agendas.
- We will start to include the principles of [Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy](#) which will ensure a greener, fairer and more prosperous community in Blaenau Gwent.
- We support the development of the [Foundational Economy](#) in Blaenau Gwent which encourages us to develop new and existing supply chains to bid and to be successful in future council contracts.
- We will ensure as many of our suppliers and providers commit to Welsh Government's Ethical Procurement with reference to the [Code of Practice](#).
- We will continue to consult with Welsh Government on the proposed introduction of legislation on [Social Partnership](#) to ensure fair work outcomes for all and in our ongoing aim to deliver socially responsible Procurement.
- We will continue to consult with Welsh Government on the potential [Procurement Reform](#) to minimise the impact on our local supply chains.
- We will ensure [Community Benefits and/or Social Value](#) Themes Outcomes and Measures (**TOMs**) are considered within all sourcing strategies to maximise the delivery of social value for our local communities.



## Objective 1: Ensuring legal compliance and robust and transparent governance



### Aim

- Ensure Council staff have awareness of, and comply with, relevant legislation and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

### We will do this by

- Ensuring staff involved in the procurement process have the required skills, knowledge and tools to work effectively.
- Learning and development of Procurement staff and wider staff across the Council to ensure upskilling in commercial awareness and understanding and implementing new policies, procedures and regulations.
- Regularly reviewing and updating procurement documentation to ensure they reflect best practice.
- Ensuring procurement documentation, processes and controls are in place to ensure compliance.
- Regularly reporting on procurement activity and non-compliance to the Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board.
- Developing arrangements that will be needed to deliver an annual report that complies with the requirements placed upon us by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill

### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Publishing an annual Procurement Report.

## Objective 2: Promoting socially responsible procurement activities and processes

### 2.1 Increasing community and social value benefits delivered by suppliers



Welsh Procurement Policy Note [WPPN 01/20](#) advises public bodies such as Blaenau Gwent Council of Welsh Government's overarching policy objectives and how to report the outcomes in relation to social value clauses and community benefits.

Community Benefits and Social Value will be considered in all projects of more than £25k in value and mandated where contracts exceed £1m with the following policy objectives being measured and reported on:

- Training & recruitment of economically inactive people
- Supply chain initiatives
- Environmental initiatives
- Cultural initiatives
- Educational initiatives
- Community initiatives
- Retention & training of existing workforce
- Working with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector

#### Aim

- To increase the value of community and social benefits delivered through Council contracts.

#### We will do this by

- Considering the inclusion of Community and Social benefits on all procurements over £25,000
- Making the 'community benefit offer' of the successful tenders a contractual commitment and contract managing delivery.
- Raising awareness of community benefits internally to address any organisational culture barriers.
- Encouraging tenderers to provide employment, training and work placement opportunities.
- Reviewing community benefit implementation and adapting the approach as required. Including the use of Welsh Social Value Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) as they become more embedded.

#### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Increasing the volume and value of community benefits delivered through Council Contracts.

## 2.2 Contributing to the Council's aim to be a Net Zero Council by 2030



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council declared a [Climate Emergency](#) on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020. This included an ambition to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero, which is in line with the Welsh public sector target of 2030.

### Aim

- Embed a procurement processes that addresses climate change and a circular economy approach.

### We will do this by

- Support initiatives that raise the awareness on climate change and circular economy – both internally and with suppliers.
- Consider circular procurement when scoping requirements to minimise waste and energy demand.
- Increasingly use a whole life costing approach in tender evaluations.
- Allow for and encourage innovation in tender specifications to enable decarbonisation.
- Gain a better understanding of markets to have an insight of carbon usage and impact within supply chains
- Carry out deep dives into categories of opportunity and prioritisation, meaning the Council can purchase more sustainably and efficiently.
- Work with service areas to help the Council meet the Welsh Government targets for decarbonisation.
- Endeavour to include proxy measures and targets reductions within contracts that reflect carbon reductions.

### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Reporting on carbon reduction through the SCCB & the Decarbonisation Board.

## 2.3 Improving Fair Work & Safeguarding practices within our supply chain



### Aim

- To ensure that fair work principles are promoted across the Council and procurement processes increase fair work practices that help tackle poverty and inequality.

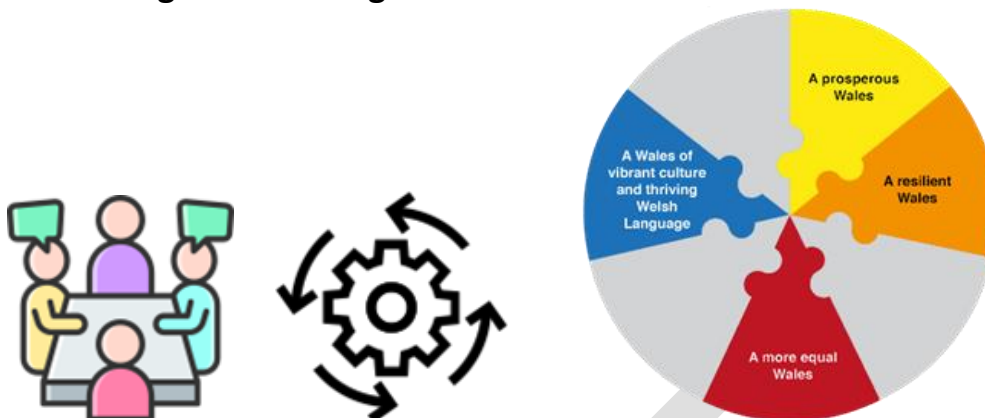
### We will do this by

- Working towards the Welsh Government Fair Work Guidance including the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains.
- Applying Fair Work criteria in all tenders and applying appropriate weightings.
- Encouraging contractors to provide equality training.
- Ensuring contractors know how to identify and report safeguarding concerns.

### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Delivering against the 11 principles of the Code of Practice: Ethical Employment in Supply Chains.

## Objective 3: Securing value for money and managing demand through effective and robust contract management arrangements



### Aim

- Ensure the achievement of value for money in terms of whole life costs and quality and that we operate efficiently.

### We will do this by

- Managing procurement demand across the Council and develop and promote a 'Buying Responsibly' campaign.
- Utilising regional and national framework agreements where they represent value for money.
- Embedding a robust and proportional contract management approach.
- Working with Directorates to review their spend procurement data and Contract Forward Plan to identify opportunities to manage demand and/or drive efficiencies.

### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Ongoing contract management for the delivery of supplies, services or works will continue to be managed by each individual service with advice, guidance and support from the Commercial Procurement Team.
- Reporting of procurement's contribution to SCCB and via the democratic process.

### 3.1 Making procurement spend more accessible to local small businesses and third sector



#### Aim

- To ensure that procurement decisions consider how local market can best be supported.

#### We will do this by

- Working with partner organisations to support the development of businesses in Blaenau Gwent. This will include regular meet the buyer and training & development events; Business Wales will be engaged as a key partner in the delivery of any new contracts to provide support to local companies to give them a better chance of winning public sector contracts.
- Developing and then publicising a Selling to Council Guide to local businesses so they are clear about how to do business with the Council.
- Publish our Corporate Contracts Register on the Council's website so businesses are aware of the likely procurement opportunities.
- Simplifying our Procurement process to be more inclusive and assist smaller businesses and local suppliers to bid for contracts.
- Ensuring that lotting strategies that support SMEs are used.
- We will advertise appropriately to ensure competition, value for money and to target local interest.
- Undertaking market analysis so that informed procurement decisions can be made.
- Analyse spend data and business directories to identify opportunities to increase local supply.
- Ensure that the Council applies prompt payment for SMEs.

#### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Increasing the number of business accessing and being successful when tendering for Council opportunities.
- Increasing the spend with local businesses.

## Objective 4: Promoting innovative & best practice solutions



### Aim

- Encourage and utilise innovation where it can reduce costs and /or improve effectiveness.

### We will do this by

- Reviewing the procurement forward pipeline to identify innovation opportunities.
- Ensuring early and ongoing Directorate engagement to scope and deliver their requirements.
- Challenging Directorates over existing procurement arrangements.
- Seeking examples of market innovations and best practice.

### We will demonstrate delivery by

- Reporting and developing case studies to highlight best practice.



## **Governance and Leadership**

Leadership and governance play a key part of the organisation and requires openness, transparency and integrity, performance orientation and effective collaboration. The structure for Procurement within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is as follows:

Leadership through Cabinet Members, the Leader and Portfolio Member for Corporate Overview and Performance and Chief Officer Commercial and customer;

A Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB), which is an officer board, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by Corporate Leadership Team. The Board provides strategic guidance to the Commissioning and Procurement community and assesses major commercial and procurement projects. The goal of the SCCB is to ensure shared ownership for the realisation of desired outcomes and efficiencies across the Council and to ensure that commercial activities become an enabling function and that fully supports Council priorities. The SCCB will oversee the delivery of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

A Commercial Procurement Team, which sits within the Commercial Services Division of Corporate Services;

A qualified Professional Lead for Procurement who oversees Procurement activities, reporting to the Chief Officer Commercial & Customer;

Clearly defined processes and procedures along with delegation of authority in respect of procurement activities embodied in the Council's Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules;

Directorate Annual Procurement Plans – All directorates are required to produce annual procurement plans to inform the Council's pipeline of commissioning and procurement activity. The information is collated and allows early consideration of sourcing strategies to support the Council's social and commercial aspirations as well as informing the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

All Procurement and commissioning activity over £25,000 is managed via the Council's E-tender system and/or the National Procurement Website (Sell2Wales). All procurements under £25,000 are devolved to service areas for efficiency of process.

## **Reporting and Monitoring**

The Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board will oversee the delivery of this Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy.

The Council will publish an annual procurement report at the end of each financial year. The report will include:

- A progress report on the implementation of the Socially Responsible Procurement Strategy Delivery Plan.
- A summary of the contracts awarded above PCRs 2015 Thresholds.
- A summary of the extent to which Council contracts contributed to improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent.
- A statement of the how the Council intends to further improve the delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
- A summary of the procurement the Council expects to carry out in the next two financial years.