

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council



Annual Scrutiny Report 2022-23

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Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report 2022/23 which gives an overview of work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee. This year has seen significant changes to Elected Members following the local elections in May 2022 and a new committee structure agreed at the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2022.

Both returning and newly elected Members have effectively challenged and influenced the Council's decision-making process and added value to a wide range of activity, in order to deliver effective outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent, some of this work is highlighted in the following sections of this report.

Following changes to the democratic structure in 2022, Blaenau Gwent now has four scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council, and the new structure continues to allow non-Cabinet members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve and effectively challenge Cabinet on the decisions it makes.

The Council's Scrutiny function is made up of non-Cabinet Members. The non-Cabinet Members are appointed to sit on the Scrutiny Committees to support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

The Committees have no decision-making powers, however, they act as a check and balance on the powers exercised and decisions taken by the Cabinet.

Introduction (continued)

The Scrutiny Committees allow non-Cabinet Members to have a greater say in Council matters by:

- ◆ Assisting the Cabinet in the development of policy;
- ◆ Monitoring performance of the Council and its partners;
- ◆ Examining the impact and implementation of Cabinet decisions and policies;
- ◆ Holding the Leader, Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team to account;
- ◆ Listening to the views of the public and make sure the public voice is heard; and
- ◆ Scrutinising external organisations who provide services to our residents.

Scrutiny is most effective when it is focussed on a limited number of in-depth topics and priorities. When considering agenda items, Scrutiny Committees should have regard to the likely value and impact gained for any report or review. This will need to be carefully balanced against the time and resources required to undertake the activity.

Other items of interest or information required to enhance the Members knowledge and skills in a particular area, can be provided to Members via Member Briefing Sessions, Directorate Briefing Sessions and Member Training and Development.

All Democratic Meetings are arranged as hybrid meetings, i.e. Committee Members and Officers can attend virtually via Microsoft Teams or physically attend the meeting in the General Offices. Members of the public are also able to attend the meetings either virtually or physically.

All Democratic Meetings are recorded and uploaded onto the Blaenau Gwent website.

Changes to the Democratic Structure

During 2021/22 we undertook a comprehensive desk top research exercise to consider where the democratic function of the Council could be strengthened and modernised. The research has included:

- ◆ Evaluation comments received from both officers and members;
- ◆ Data analysis;
- ◆ Network meeting discussions;
- ◆ Chairs and Vice Chair meetings;
- ◆ Consideration of processes in other areas; and
- ◆ Comparative data analysis.

Owing to changes made by the Boundary Commission Blaenau Gwent reduced from 16 to 14 Wards and the number of Elected Members reducing from 42 to 33. Following the reduction and the research a number of findings and proposals were considered and agreed by Council for implementation during 2022/23 municipal year.

As part the changes to the democratic structure, Blaenau Gwent now has four scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council.

Further changes agreed in 2022 were:

- The number of Elected Members sitting on Scrutiny Committees was reduced from 15 to 9
- More focussed and succinct scrutiny agenda — with a maximum of two items, in the categories of Pre-decision and high level performance monitoring
- Minutes of committee meetings — minutes to include: attendance, apologies, declarations of interest and decisions or recommendations (the full meetings can be viewed via the recording on the Blaenau Gwent website).

We have also established recommendation pro formas as part of the scrutiny process. This enables recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet / Council to be easily accessed via the relevant committee meeting page.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent

The Four scrutiny committees of the Council are:

- ◆ Corporate Overview and Performance
- ◆ Partnership
- ◆ People
- ◆ Places

As agreed at the May 2022 AGM, each scrutiny committees is made of 9 Elected Members.

Each scrutiny committee has a specific remit. Full details of the areas covered by each scrutiny committee are highlighted later in this report.

The new scrutiny agenda structure, has ensured members undertake in-depth challenge for each item under discussion. The reduction in the number of items for scrutiny has also ensured that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is not being overburdened with monitoring items.

Expert witnesses / invitees have been invited and contributed to scrutiny meetings, including the Education Achievement Service (EAS), the Aneurin Leisure Trust (ALT) and the Shared Resource Service (SRS). Cabinet members have also attended by invitation to answer questions on specific topics.

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and developed their knowledge and understanding of specific topics. Feedback from officers has also supported the new way of working, officers reported that they had received better member engagement in these sessions.

Members have also undertaken a number of site visits, e.g. Housing Advice Centre, Social Services Residential provision and Silent Valley.

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny meetings are held quarterly to discuss and review the operational activity of Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent to contribute to improvements, and ensure consistency of practice where appropriate.

Directorate briefings are also held quarterly with individual Directorates, to which all Members are invited. These closely focussed sessions provide information and detail on service areas to raise the interest and enthusiasm of Members.

Forward Work Programmes

Work to develop the **Forward Work Programmes (FWPs) for 2022/23** began in April 2022, work included:

- Meeting with service areas to consider topics for inclusion in the Draft Scrutiny, Council and Cabinet draft Forward Work Programmes.
- Following the Annual General meeting, met with the new Chairs and Vice-Chairs to discuss the Scrutiny FWPs and with Cabinet Members to discuss the draft Cabinet and Council draft FWPs.
- The FWPs were formally signed off by each of the Committees in September 2022, then translated and made available for public view on the BG website.
- The Forward Work Programmes being fluid documents, were regularly reviewed by Chairs and Vice-Chairs and officers at Agenda Management meetings and by all committee members at each scrutiny committee meeting.
- The Forward Work Programmes are available on the Blaenau Gwent Council website, links to individual Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes can be found in the relevant Scrutiny Committee pages below.

Blaenau Gwent Scrutiny in Figures 2022/23



21 Pre Decision Scrutiny Agenda Items



236 Unique Views of Committee Meetings Online



75 Member Briefings Sessions held



87% of Members attended Scrutiny Committee meetings



3 Number of expert witnesses / invitees invited and contributed to scrutiny meetings



Places Scrutiny Committee
Most Viewed Scrutiny Committee Meeting on **14th March 2023**.



24 Formal Scrutiny Committee Meetings held



4 Number of meetings attended by Cabinet Member

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The Corporate and Performance scrutiny has had a productive year, holding 9 meetings.

The members of this committee (some of which are new to the role of councillor) have continued to develop and learn and provide appropriate challenge to reports. There has been a really good level of questioning and debate and the committee has made use of action sheets and the forward work programme.

My thanks must be expressed to all members of the committee for their excellent attendance and valuable input over the year. Special thanks to the Vice-Chair, Cllr J Thomas for her support and to all officers for their comprehensive reports, participation, help and guidance.

To see the items that have been scrutinised during the year, the Forward Work Programmes can be accessed on the following link [Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23](#)



Cllr Joanna Wilkins

***Chair, Corporate Overview and
Performance Scrutiny Committee.***

Member Attendance at Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Joanna Wilkins (9 of 9 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Jacqueline Thomas (9 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Carl Bainton (8 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Malcolm Day (8 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor George Humphries (9 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Ellen Jones (8 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (8 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Chris Smith (9 of 9 meetings attended)

Councillor Tommy Smith (7 of 9 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Council as a whole; and Organisational Development, Communication and Marketing, Equalities, Customers and Citizens, Welsh Language, Medium Term Financial Strategy. In addition, this new committee also monitor the financial management of the Council.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme

Activity

A report was presented requesting support for funding provided by Welsh Government to enable councils to provide support under a discretionary scheme to help households in need of assistance with their living costs. The Committee were asked to supporting a payment of £100 to eligible households. As part of the scheme, the committee was also asked to support the Council in making a contribution of £100k to the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank and £50k to Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Outcome

The committee supported the £150 payment to eligible households and also the £50k contribution to CAB, however, the committee recommended an amendment to the Scheme, that £30k be provided to BG Foodbank as the main recipient and a discretionary fund of £70k be established to allow other local food distribution groups / organisations to apply for funding from the council to assist in delivery work within their respective communities.

At the Council meeting in September 2022, members considered and agreed the scrutiny recommendation.

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Cost of Living Discretionary Scheme
- ◆ Welsh Language Promotion Strategy
- ◆ Workforce Strategy Review and Year 2 Action Plan
- ◆ Driving at Work Policy
- ◆ Commissioning and Procurement Strategy
- ◆ Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24
- ◆ Capital Strategy Review
- ◆ Review of the Agile Working Policy

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring
- ◆ Sickness Absence Performance 2021/22
- ◆ Annual Assessment of Council's Performance 2021/22
- ◆ Treasury Management 2021/22
- ◆ Joint Finance and Performance report
- ◆ Strategic Equality Plan Annual report

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ The Work of the Corporate Services Directorate
- ◆ Council Constitution
- ◆ Managing Social Media and the Media
- ◆ Local Government Finance
- ◆ Council Budget 2023/24
- ◆ Financial Monitoring
- ◆ Equalities & Diversity / Welsh Language
- ◆ Sickness Absence Performance

People Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The People Scrutiny Committee has continued its work to scrutinise and challenge across a wide-ranging work programme, with committee members using skills and experience to put forward recommendations to Cabinet for consideration.

In Children's Services, the Committee has examined critical areas such as The Childcare Offer, National Adoption Service, Corporate Parenting, and regular reporting of the safe reduction of children looked after.

A notable development has been the introduction of a four-bed children's residential home and further four-bed emergency accommodation in the Tredegar area; the Committee felt that it was vital to establish new ventures such as this and take advantage of additional Welsh Government capital funding in a time of diminishing council budgets. Members felt that the project would allow children looked after to live within their communities for education purposes and to live as close to friends and family as possible while in the care of Blaenau Gwent. They also welcomed the opportunity that the home could bring in helping to reduce revenue funding in a critical area.

In Adult services the committee has examined critical areas such as the Integrated Care Fund, Living Independently.

In Education, the Committee have scrutinised reports and made recommendations to the Cabinet in areas that include home-to-school transport, ALN provision and strategies, Education and safeguarding, schools' admissions policy and the improving schools' programme. Members also scrutinised a report on the Estyn Inspection and deliberated on an end-of-year report from the Director of Education.

The Committee agreed that both departments have responded well to external audits and developed solid action plans to address the recommendations received.

To see the items that have been scrutinised during the year, the Forward Work Programmes can be accessed on the following link [People Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23](#)



Cllr Tommy Smith

Chair, People Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance at People Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Tommy Smith (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Jen Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Carl Bainton (6 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Keith Chaplin (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Gareth A Davies (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Godfrey Thomas (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor David Wilkshire (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **People Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Education and Social Services Directorates and Corporate Safeguarding.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Financial Liabilities of the Regional Integration Fund (RIF)

Activity

The committee was presented with a report to consider the financial liabilities and implications of the Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.

The committee was asked to consider and make recommendations to Council, as to whether the council accepts or rejects the liabilities and to provide its response to the Gwent Regional Partnership Board via the Assistant Director of Partnership and Integration in Health.

Outcome

The committee considered the report and presentation and discussed the financial implications and the risks in relation to the projects both in Children's and Adult Services that are support by RIF funding and recommended that Council provided a response to the Gwent Regional Partnership Board stating that it does not accept the financial liabilities and implications of the new Regional Integration Fund and its tapered funding model.

Council considered the report and the Scrutiny Committee recommendation and unanimously agreed that the Council not accept the financial liabilities of the new RIF and its tapered funding model.

People Scrutiny Committee

The People Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy
- ◆ Proposal to Explore and develop a Business Case for Children’s Residential Provision in Blaenau Gwent
- ◆ ALN Policies and Strategies
- ◆ Schools Admissions Policy for Nursery and Statutory Education

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Annual report of the Director of Social Services 2021/22 and Half yearly report
- ◆ Safeguarding Performance Education and Social Services
- ◆ Improving Schools Programme
- ◆ Half Yearly and End of Year —Director of Education reporting
- ◆ Summary Self-Evaluation Report 2022
- ◆ Response to Estyn LGES Inspection

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Estyn Preparedness
- ◆ Gwent and Regional Market Position Statement
- ◆ Flying Start Expansion
- ◆ Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone—Post 16 Results
- ◆ Youth Service
- ◆ Fostering and Adoption
- ◆ Youth Offending Service
- ◆ Proposed Children’s Home in Blaenau Gwent
- ◆ Early Years Integration Transformation Programme Pilot / Flying Start Expansion
- ◆ Estyn Feedback

Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

The Place Scrutiny Committee brought together two former committees, Community Services Scrutiny Committee and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. The main areas of responsibility of the Place Scrutiny Committee includes the Community Services and Regeneration Directorates, Decarbonisation and Climate Change, and Community Safety including CCTV.

The committee met four times throughout 2022/23 and provided consideration and recommendations on a number of reports, such as providing considerations to the Cabinet on:

- The options for highways works across the borough;
- Placemaking Plans for Tredegar and Brynmawr;
- Prioritisation of funding streams from the Shared Prosperity Fund; and
- The replacement Local Development Plan.

The members have also attended a number of interesting and informative briefing sessions, covering a wider remit of areas.

Members have been engaging and have asked a number of probing and challenging questions to ensure a full understanding of the reports presented.

We look forward to continuing the work of this committee into 2023/24 and the consideration of various reports such as the Place Making Plans for Abertillery and Blaina and the new Highways Maintenance Plan.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their attendance and constructive input over the year. Special recognition and thanks must go to the Vice-Chair, Cllr Ross Leadbeater for his support throughout the year.



Cllr Malcolm Cross

Chair, Place Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance at Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Malcolm Cross (4 of 5 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (4 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (4 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor Sonia Behr (5 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor John Hill (4 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (5 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor Jules Gardner (3 of 5 meetings attended)

Councillor John P Morgan (4 of 5 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Place Scrutiny Committee** is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Community Services and Regeneration Directorate, Decarbonisation and Climate Change, and Community Safety including CCTV.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Waste Management and Recycling Strategy Review

Activity

The committee was presented with an update of the progress made to date and were also asked to consider and suggest improvements to the three-year review of the Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-25.

Outcome

The committee acknowledged the progress made to date and suggested amendments to the three-year review of the strategy:

- To review the receptacles provided to residents to ensure they are fit for purpose; and where appropriate and practical for litter pickers to separate waste they collect for recycling; and
- That a programme of targeted engagement activity be undertaken to reach the 70% recycling target.

Cabinet received the report at its meeting in January 2023 and wholly agreed the scrutiny committee's recommendations.

Place Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Waste and Recycling Strategy Review
- ◆ Replacement Local Development Plan
- ◆ Highways Capital Works Programme
- ◆ Public Space Protection Order
- ◆ Tredegar Placemaking Plan
- ◆ Public Protection and Environment Enforcement Services—Revised Enforcement Policy
- ◆ Replacement Local Development Plan
- ◆ Brynmawr Placemaking Plan

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Community Services and Regeneration Directorate Performance

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Local Development Plan
- ◆ Regional Wood Facility
- ◆ Civil Parking Enforcement
- ◆ Biodiversity and Ecosystem Resilience Forward Plan
- ◆ Winter Maintenance
- ◆ Energy Prospectus
- ◆ Homelessness and Bed & Breakfast Accommodation
- ◆ Public Transport

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Chair's Overview

2022 saw the establishment of a new Scrutiny Committee, with a focus on Partnerships. The Committee focused on those Partnerships which the Council has an interest in and is delivering public services on our behalf.

The Committee has looked to scrutinise the main areas of oversight and governance arrangement of Partners so that they are adequate and effective, covering off the principles of good governance namely Accountability; Leadership; Integrity; Stewardship and Transparency.

The main Partners scrutinised included:

- The Regional Partnership Board
- SRS
- Aneurin Leisure Trust
- Education Achievement Service

Recommendations were made to Cabinet regarding the Education Partnership Agreement, the Gwent Well-being Plan, the National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services and the EAS Business Plan.

Performance monitoring was conducted on Aneurin Leisure Trust, the Welsh Public Library Standards and the SRS.

Outside of the formal scrutiny committee, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been informative and further developed our knowledge and understanding of specific topics.

Members of this new committee worked well together and provided constructive challenge, assisted the Cabinet in the development of Policy as well as monitoring the performance of Partners.

To see the items that have been scrutinised during the year, the Forward Work Programmes can be accessed on the following link

[Partnership Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2022/23](#)



Cllr Wayne Hodgins

Chair, Partnership Scrutiny Committee.

Member Attendance at Place Scrutiny Committee

Chair:

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair:

Councillor Peter Baldwin (3 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Keith Chaplin (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor David C Davies (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Ellen Jones (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Lee Parsons (3 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Chris Smith (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Lisa Winnett (4 of 4 meetings attended)

Councillor Dean Woods (1 of 4 meetings attended)

Remit of the Committee:

The main areas of responsibility of the **Partnership Scrutiny Committee** is to monitor the oversight and governance arrangements of identified partners: Aneurin Leisure Trust, Shared Resource Service and Education Achievement Service. The Committee also received updates from the Regional Partnership Board.

Scrutiny Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: EAS Business Plan 2023-25—Consultation

Activity

The Committee were asked to consider the plan and provide comments on the draft Plan. Any feedback from the committee would be taken into consideration when completing the final version of the Business Plan.

Outcome

The committee considered the draft Business Plan and raised concerns regarding the reduction in funding provided to the EAS across all Gwent LAs. Members were assured that the Business Plan had been constructed with a view to protecting front line services to schools and settings for 2023/24. Members, therefore, accepted the report and Business Plan.

Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The Place Scrutiny Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below:

Policies, Plans and Strategies



- ◆ Statutory Maintained Schools Partnership Agreement
- ◆ Gwent Well-being Plan
- ◆ National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services
- ◆ Education Achievement Service Business Plan 2022/23

High Level Performance Monitoring



- ◆ Regional Partnership Board update
- ◆ Shared Resource Service
- ◆ Aneurin Leisure Trust

Member Briefing Sessions



- ◆ Working with the Education Achievement Service
- ◆ Shared Resource Service
- ◆ Aneurin Leisure Trust SLA Partnership Agreement
- ◆ CCRC / Tech Valleys
- ◆ South Wales Fire and Rescue

Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees

	Total Members to Attend Sept 22 - Apr 23	Actual Attendance Sept 22 -Apr 23	% of Attendance Sept 22-Apr 23	Number of Meetings Held Sept 22-Apr 23	* Committee Structure June 21– Mar 22	% of Attendance June 21– Mar 22	Number of Meetings Held June 21 - Mar 22
Corporate Overview and Performance	81	75	92	9	Corporate Overview	81	7
People	54	45	83	6	Education and Learning	94	7
					Social Services	82	4
Place	45	37	82	5	Community Services	89	6
					Regeneration	90	7
**Partnership	36	31	86	4	-	-	-
Overall Total	216	188	87	24		85	31

* New committee structure as from September 2022

** New committee, no comparison to previous years.

How the public can get involved in the Scrutiny Process

Members of the public are welcome to attend any Committee meeting to observe proceedings (unless there is an exempt item), agenda are published one week in advance of the meeting, on the Council's website. However, during 2022/23 owing to changes being made to the Democratic Hub at the General Offices, meetings have been held virtually via Microsoft Teams and recorded and uploaded to the council website, normally by the following day, to enable members of the public to view the meetings online. Nevertheless, should a member of the public request to attend the General Offices to observe a meeting, provisions would be put in place to enable the committee meeting to be viewed.

In the new municipal year 2023/24, Members of the public will be able to observe meetings virtually or physically at the General Offices.

The Council is currently preparing a Participation Strategy to include ways in which members of the public can engage in the democratic process.

Agendas, reports and minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's Website: [Councillors and Committees | Blaenau Gwent CBC](#)

Members of the public can suggest items for the Scrutiny Committees either by writing, emailing or phoning the Democratic Team. Information can also be found on the Council's Website: [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Get Involved with Democracy \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](#)

All contact information can be found at the end of this document.

Legislation

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains a number of provisions to promote diversity, involvement and participation in council democratic arrangements. Some of these provisions include:

- Encouraging local people to participate in decision making
- Development of a Participation Strategy
- The electronic broadcasting of meetings and multi location meetings
- A review of the council's petition scheme
- Job sharing for members of the Executive.

The Council is looking to implement the required areas from the Act and has included this within an implementation plan which in future can be monitored by the Democratic Services Committee as appropriate.

The Act has enabled councils to operate multi-location meetings, whereby Elected Members, Officers and the public and press are

given the opportunity to attend meetings physically at the General Offices in Ebbw Vale or virtually via Microsoft Teams. Councils may not mandate physical attendance at meetings. Blaenau Gwent Council approved its Multi-Location Meetings Policy in September 2022.

Decarbonisation

The Welsh Government published its Net Zero Carbon Status by 2030: Public Sector Road Map in July 2021. The document provided a strategic overview of the key priority areas for action and milestones needed for the Welsh public sector to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Blaenau Gwent Council adopted its Decarbonisation Plan in September 2021. The Plan sets out how Blaenau Gwent would deliver its commitment to the ambition of the Welsh Public Sector to achieve net Zero by 2030.

The democratic corporate reporting template requires officers to consider how the report topic impacts on the Council's Decarbonisation Plan.

Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG) Act

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out sustainable development - the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, ensuring that all our service areas are giving it due consideration so that the services we provide meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council as a designated public body under the WBFG Act, therefore, has a duty to ensure it is giving due consideration to the act.

The democratic corporate reporting template requires officers to consider how the report topic supports the WBFG Act.

This led to a new Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process being developed which incorporated wider policy considerations beyond equality and socio-economics:

- ◆ Well-being of Future Generation Act Goals
- ◆ New Corporate Objectives
- ◆ Armed forces (new national duties)
- ◆ Community Safety considerations

The Policy Team continues to provide on-going support, advice and guidance to those completing the IIA process.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

As a defined public body in Wales, the Council must fulfil a specific duty for the assessment of impact. This relates to the likely impact of any new or existing (when reviewed) policies or practices. There is a key focus when assessing impact on the ability to meet the Council's three general duties under the Act, including assessing any positive or negative impact on groups covered by the nine protected characteristics.

Where it has been deemed there is a substantial (or likely) negative impact the Council must report this accordingly, outlining any decisions taken with any mitigations considered/ actioned.

A review of the way the Council carries out impact assessments was undertaken in 2021/22 . This fell in-line with new legal expectations from the Act, the Socio-Economic Duty.

The process was also strengthened to ensure all equality and socio-economic factors were fully considered when making decisions, reviewing existing or developing new policies. The requirement to carry out and report on impact assessing continued to be expected in corporate reporting templates for decision making.

Future Planned Developments

- The Council is currently preparing a Participation Strategy to include ways in which members of the public can engage in the democratic process.
- Live broadcasting of full Council meetings will commence within the 2023/24 cycle. This may be expanded to other Democratic meetings dependent on Welsh Government guidance.
- Identifying young persons to support the scrutiny process, e.g. attending formal committee meetings, committee task and finish groups, consultations and member briefing sessions.
- Undertake a review of the remits and arrangements for the Partnership Scrutiny Committee.
- Co-ordinate and manage the development of the Gwent Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee.
- Supporting members with the research function.
- Undertake annual review of the Multi Location Meetings Policy.

Contact Information

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

Head of Democratic Services, Governance and Partnerships	Service Manager Performance and Democratic	Scrutiny and Democratic Officer (Committee Adviser)
Sarah King	Gemma Wasley	Elizabeth Thomas
Tel: 07870 402616	Tel: 07977158983	Tel: (01495) 354795
Email: Sarah.king@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk	Email: Gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk	Email: Liz.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

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

Contact details for Councillors can be found on our website at [Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

Address:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
General Offices
Steelworks Road
Tyllwyn
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6AA

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

Additional documents which may be of interest to you can be found on our website.

Council Minutes, Agendas and Reports

[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Council Minutes, Agendas & Reports \(blaenau-gwent.gov.uk\)](http://Blaenau Gwent CBC: Council Minutes, Agendas & Reports (blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))

Council's Constitution Blaenau Gwent CBC: The Council Constitution

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 [Local Government and Election \(Wales\) Act 2021](http://Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021)

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

Scrutiny Evaluations Report

Evaluation is an important part of the Scrutiny process. Regular evaluation of our scrutiny processes helps us to reflect on existing practice and performance and will support us in continuing to develop and enhance the scrutiny processes in Blaenau Gwent.

In Blaenau Gwent an evaluation session is held after every meeting and evaluation forms are circulated to all those members who attended following every meeting. The aim is to obtain positive feedback as well as constructive comments on areas for further improvement.

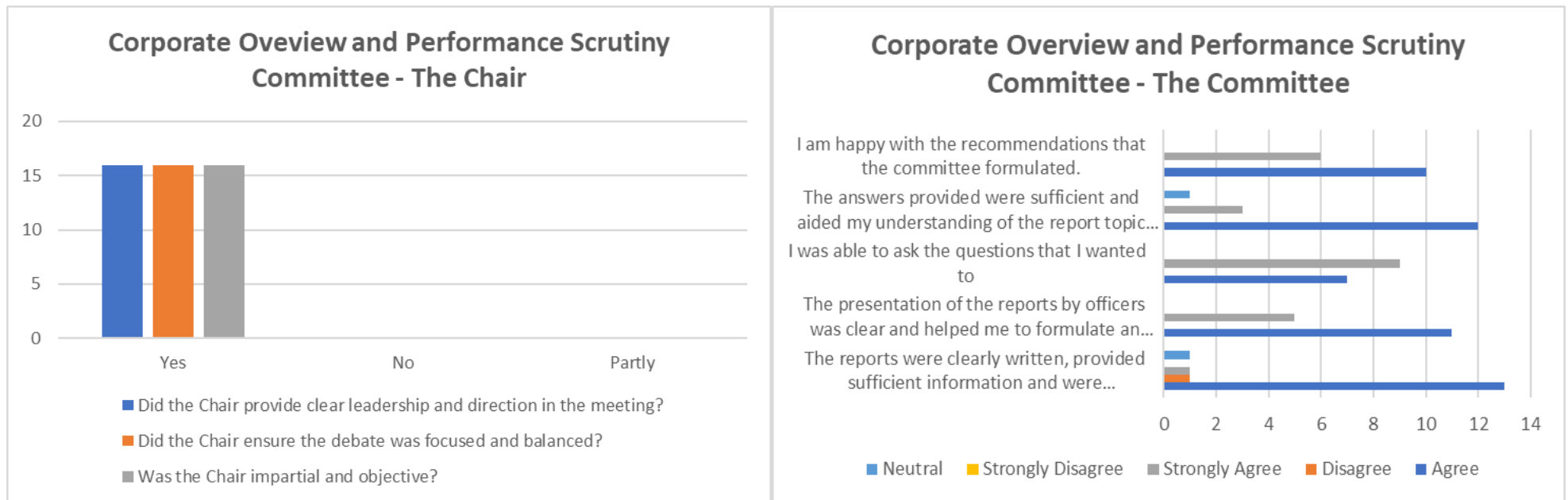
The report is split by Member and officer evaluation.

Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

The information is gathered from meetings held during the period September 2023 to April 2023, encompassing 9 Scrutiny Committee meetings in total.

Committee Member Feedback:

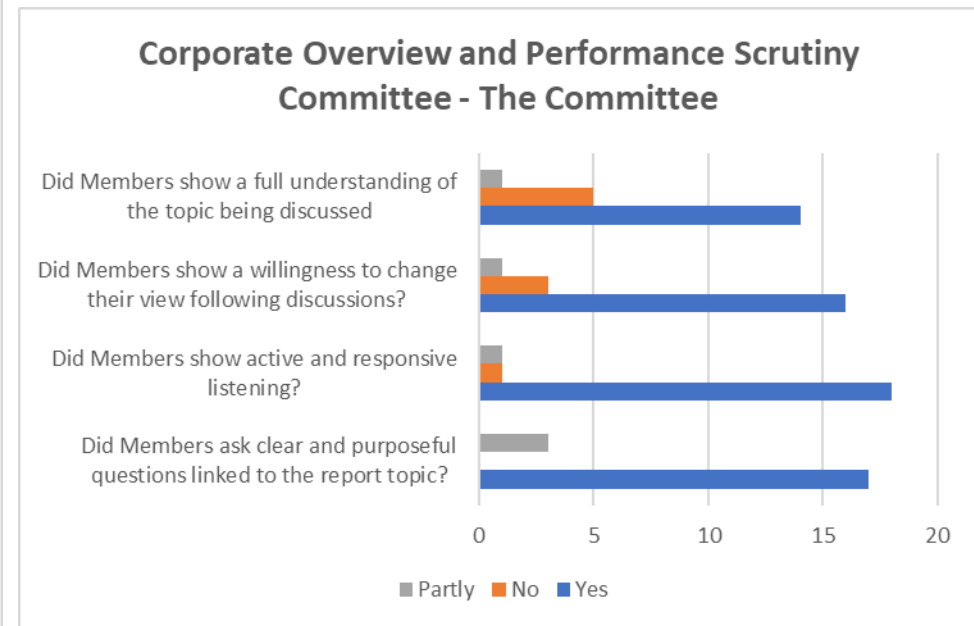
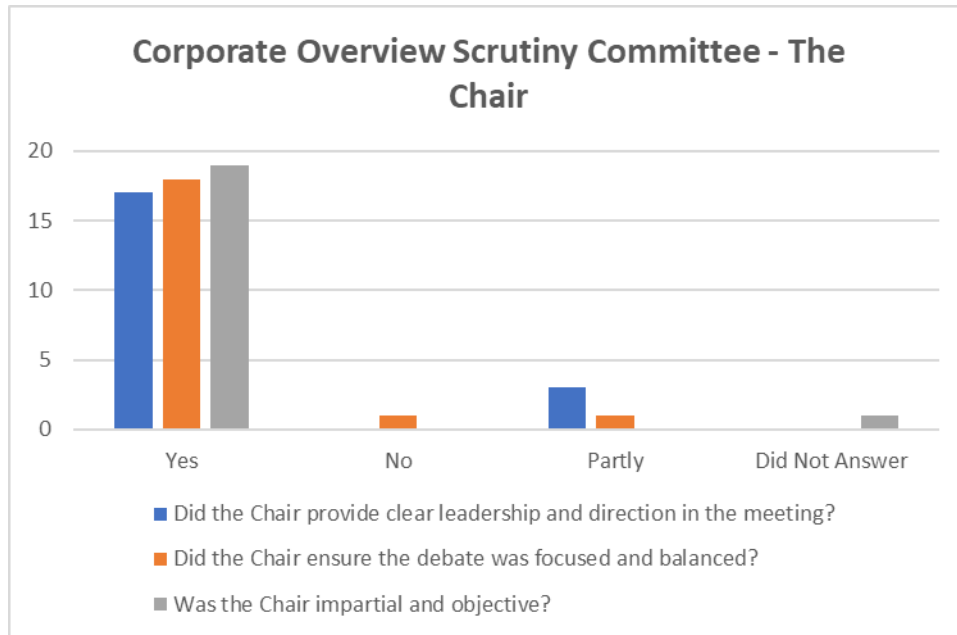
Of the 76 evaluations sent out over the nine meetings: 16 evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:



Corporate Overview and Performance Scrutiny Committee

Officer Feedback:

Of the **74** evaluations sent out over the nine meetings: **20** evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:

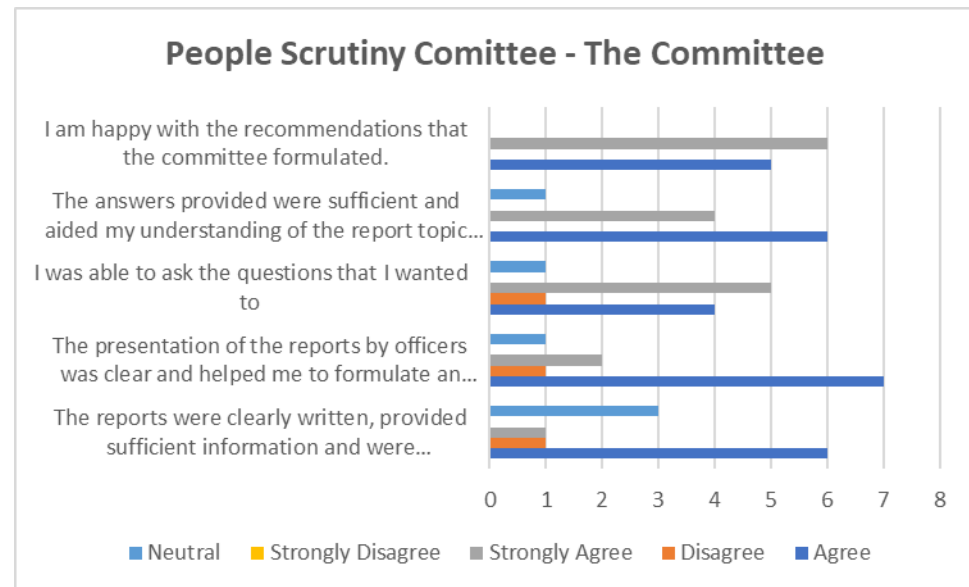
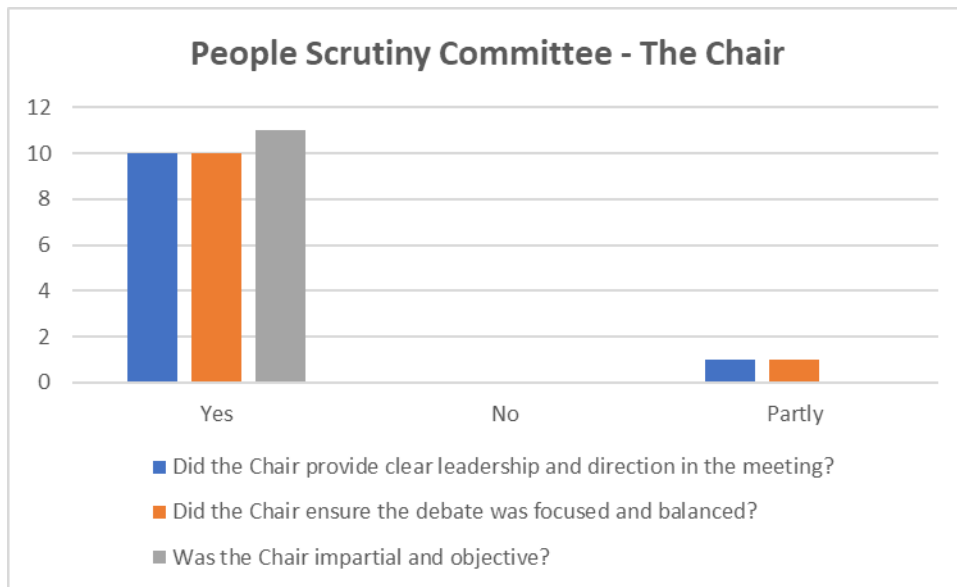


People Scrutiny Committee

The information is gathered from meetings held during the period September 2023 to April 2023, encompassing 6 Scrutiny Committee meetings in total.

Committee Member Feedback:

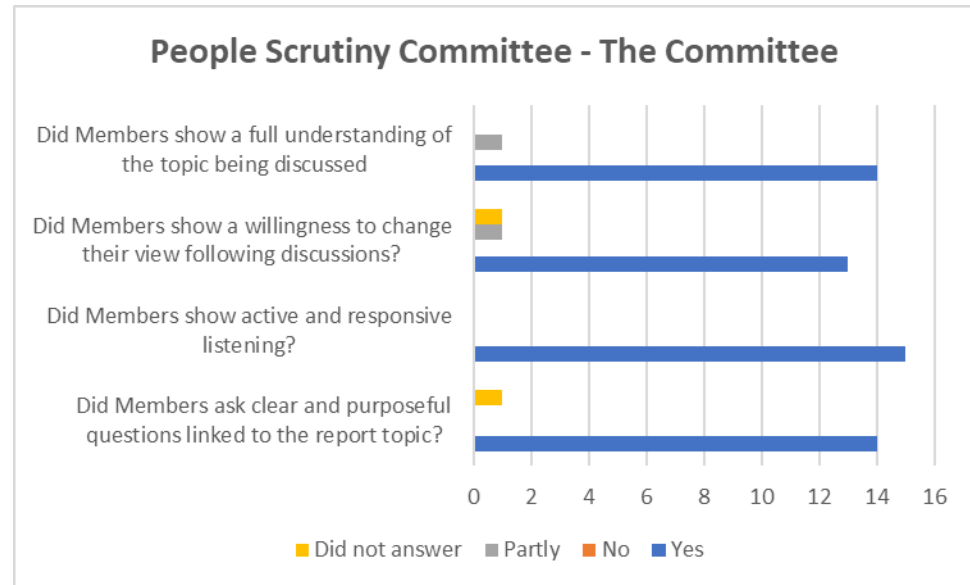
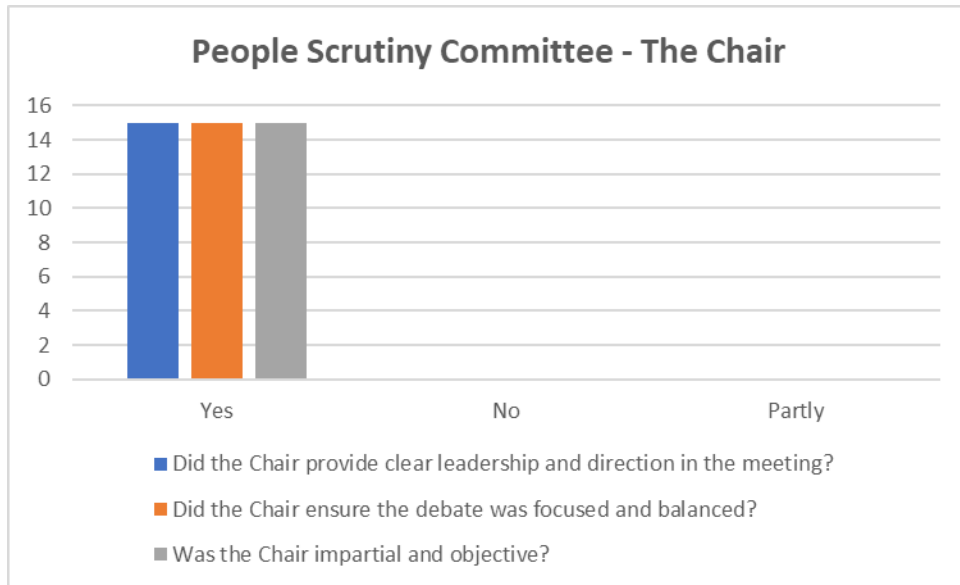
Of the 37 evaluations sent out over the six meetings: 16 evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:



People Scrutiny Committee

Officer Feedback:

Of the **38** evaluations sent out over the six meetings: **18** evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:

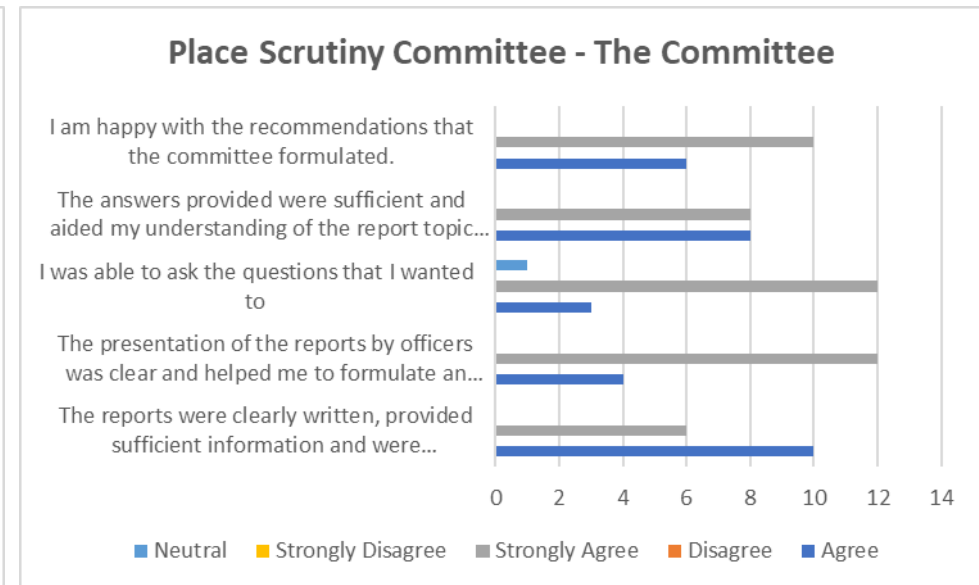
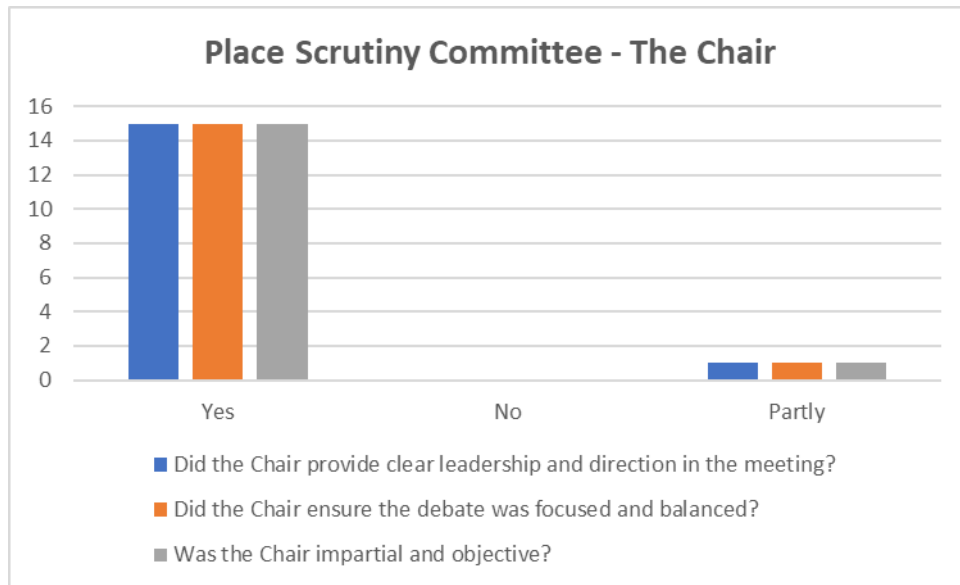


Place Scrutiny Committee

The information is gathered from meetings held during the period September 2023 to April 2023, encompassing 5 Scrutiny Committee meetings in total.

Committee Member Feedback:

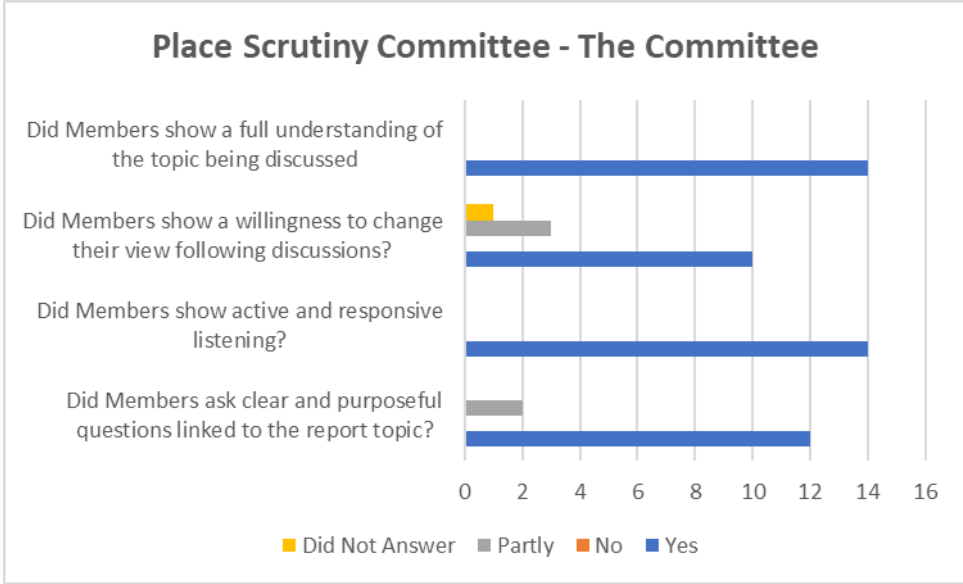
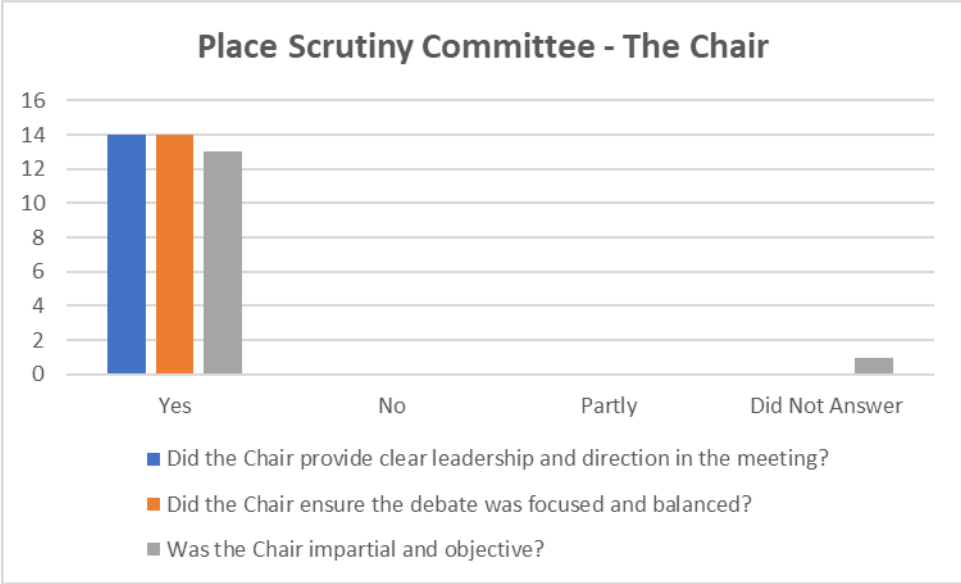
Of the 38 evaluations sent out over the six meetings: 16 evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:



Place Scrutiny Committee

Officer Feedback:

Of the **43** evaluations sent out over the five meetings: **14** evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:

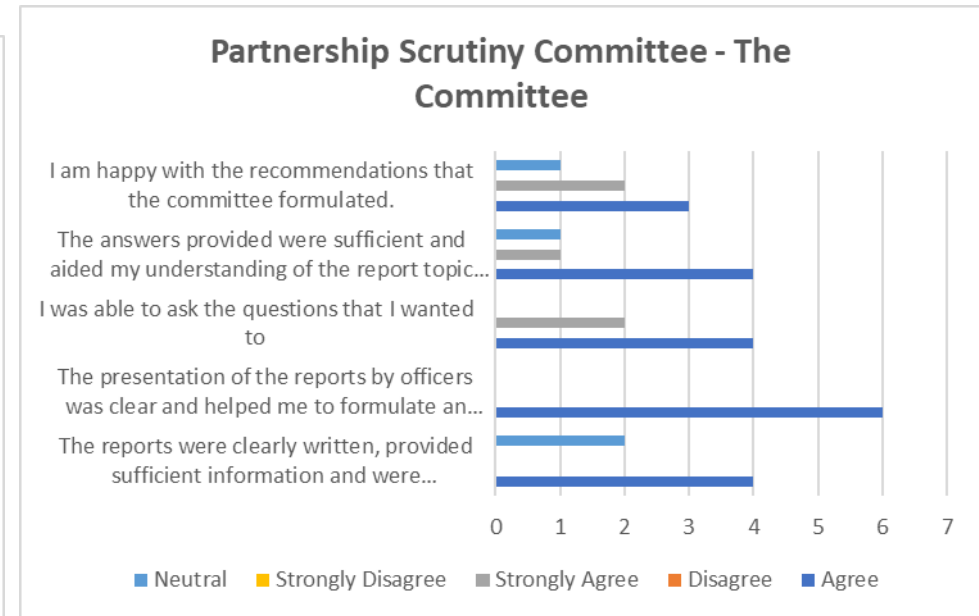
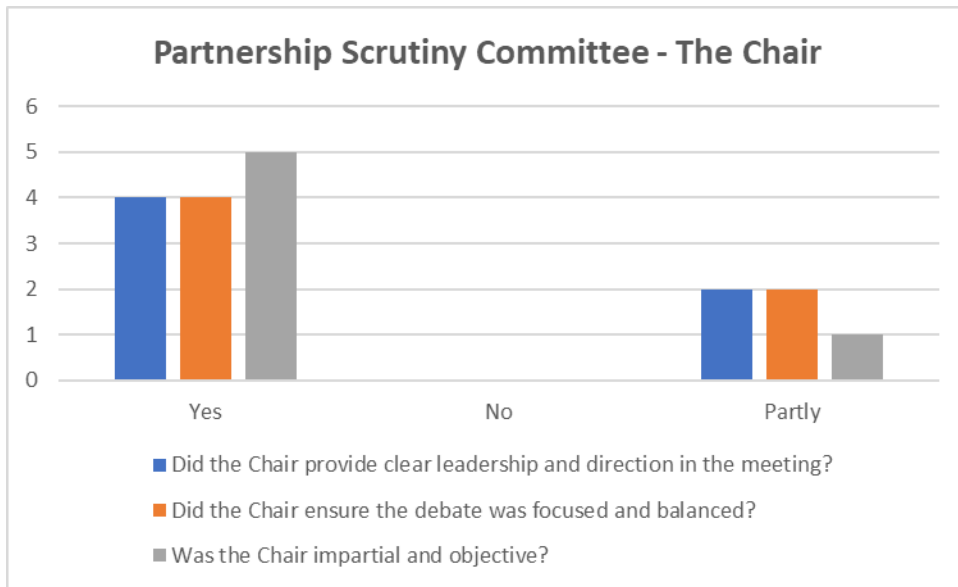


Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The information is gathered from meetings held during the period October 2023 to March 2023, encompassing **4** Scrutiny Committee meetings in total.

Committee Member Feedback:

Of the **30** evaluations sent out over the four meetings: **6** evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:



Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Officer Feedback:

Of the **17** evaluations sent out over the four meetings: **3** evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below:

