

CHARTER OF COMMON AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND
TOWN COUNCILS OF: ABERTILLERY AND LLANHILLETH; BRYNMAWR;
NANTYGLO; AND BLAINA AND TREDEGAR

WITH

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Preface

This is the Charter for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council working together with the Community and Town Councils of Abertillery & Llanhilleth, Brynmawr, Nantyglo & Blaina, and Tredegar as Partners.

It is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and common priority of putting citizens at the centre.

The Charter has been reviewed in 2019 to reflect the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and is based upon the principles of the 5 Ways of Working as set out in the Act. It is a set of guiding principles for how we will work together towards our long-term goals in a collaborative, preventative and integrated way.

Partners to the Charter

Partners as referred to in this document are defined as:-

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council;
Brynmawr Town Council;
Nantyglo and Blaina Town Council;
Tredegar Town Council; and
any newly established CTC(s) since the inception of this Charter

with

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

ETHICS

Partners will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and codes of conduct in an ethical partnership working environment. We accept the legitimacy and benefits of partnership working whilst at the same time recognising and respecting each other's roles. We aim to work together as a partnership of equals rather than tiers.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
The appointed Monitoring Officer will remain a point of contact for community and town councils in the consideration of matters relating to the application of the Members Code of Conduct where relevant.	Councillors shall act in an appropriate manner under the Code of Conduct and will provide all such information as required by the Ombudsman or Monitoring Officer to enable them to carry out their role effectively.
Aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising and retaining our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.	Aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising and retaining our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE & INFORMATION

All Partners to the Charter will be clear about the expectations that they have of each other and the expectations placed upon them in order to facilitate good working relationships. We will define the way in which we interact with each other and clear about the role of councillors at all levels in the relationship and in community leadership. Timely, clear, relevant information and communication fosters good relationships and better joint working for the benefit of local people.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Facilitate quarterly community and town council liaison meetings and ensure that copies of agendas, minutes and reports are circulated to Clerks.	Contribute towards the agenda for Quarterly Liaison Committee meetings through the agreed Agenda Item Request Form
The Leader, Deputy Leader and Executive Members will attend the quarterly liaison meetings along with any relevant BGCBC officers	Nominate three Councillor representatives from each council to attend the Quarterly Liaison Committee meetings in addition to the Clerks.
Will provide the names and contact details for all County Borough Councillors, Wider Corporate Leadership Team and the community and town council liaison officer(s).	Will provide the names and contact details for all community and town council Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Councillors, and Clerks.
BGCBC Councillors and/or officers to be invited to attend joint committee of community and town council meetings as relevant.	Facilitate a joint committee of community and town councils including representatives of each community and town council to consider local issues, and invite BGCBC councillors / officers to be invited to attend as relevant.
Make community and town councils aware of where public copies of committee agenda papers, minutes and dates are available on the council website.	Make BGCBC aware of where public copies of council reports and minutes are available on the community and town council websites.

CONSULTATION

All Partners recognise the importance of meaningful consultation.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will undertake duty to consult community and town councils on statutory matters as directed in the specific legislation relating to county borough consultation.	Will respond to statutory consultations in a timely manner through the agreed processes, addressing the key issues clearly.
Will consult community and town councils on significant place-based issues that impact on their specific geographical area.	Will respond to consultation opportunities relating to specific place-based issues that might impact upon the local area in a timely manner through the agreed processes, addressing the key issues clearly.
Provide a written explanation on request if consultation is not possible or has not taken place in exceptional circumstances	Acknowledge that in some circumstances the timescales for responding to certain consultations will be imposed on BGCBC externally so consultation periods may occasionally be very short or in rare cases unfeasible.

WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

Effective partnership working brings benefits and includes responsibilities for all those involved. Local government at both tiers should work together to promote the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of our area in ways that are sustainable for current and future generations.

This can be achieved by embedding the 5 Ways of Working set out in the Act into this Charter:

- **Collaboration** – acting collaboratively with partners to help each other promote wellbeing objectives
- **Long-Term** – the importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
- **Involvement** – the importance of involving each other in achieving wellbeing goals, ensuring that those represented reflect the diversity of the area
- **Prevention** – understanding how acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse can help public bodies meet wellbeing objectives
- **Integration** – considering how public bodies' wellbeing objectives may impact on their other objectives and the objectives of other public bodies.

Partners recognise the importance of the 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' Wellbeing Plan as the overarching strategic vision for the social, economic, environmental wellbeing of the area. Partners also recognise that the Plan can only be implemented effectively through partnership working and being informed by grass roots experiences from within our local communities.

The five objectives of the Wellbeing Plan developed through extensive engagement with local communities to reflect the Blaenau Gwent We Want:

- The best start in life for everyone;
- Safe and friendly communities;
- To look after and protect the natural environment;
- To forge new pathways to prosperity;
- To encourage healthy lifestyles.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will commit to embed the 5 Ways of Working into joint working arrangements with community and town councils.	Will commit to embed the 5 Ways of Working into joint working arrangements with BGCBC.
Will involve community and town councils in the engagement and involvement work in supporting the development and implementation of the Wellbeing Plan.	Will consider opportunities for developing local community and town council wellbeing action plans where relevant and support the objectives in line with the BG Wellbeing Plan.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will share the annual progress report of the Blaenau Gwent We Want Plan.	Where possible, will provide any information as relevant to inform the annual Wellbeing Plan progress report and engage with their communities regarding how local programmes could align with the delivery of the BG Wellbeing Plan.
Will work with community and town councils to protect local biodiversity and the natural environment through sustainable practices	Will work with BGCBC to protect local biodiversity and the natural environment through sustainable practices

LAND USE PLANNING

Community and town councils know and understand their local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. BGCBC takes an overview of the needs of the whole local area and makes strategic decisions, taking local views into account.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will uphold its statutory duty to consult with community and town councils on all planning applications in their communities	Will make appropriate responses to BGCBC recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Will invite representatives from community and town councils to attend (without voting rights) Planning Committee and fact-finding meetings relating to planning applications in their area.	Will ensure that Councillors receive adequate training on planning law and policy.
Will ensure that community and town councils receive copies of decisions relating to planning applications in their area on request.	Will progress any further clarification on planning decisions with relevant BGCBC council staff, whilst maintaining an objective approach to planning matters at all times.

BUDGET SETTING

Partners recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national, regional and local priorities will be taken into account.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
In setting the council's budget, will consult CTCs by holding a special Liaison Committee meeting focussing on the budget setting process	Will participate in BGCBC's budget setting consultation process and share the community and town council annual precepts once set.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Partners should ensure that all elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need in order to carry out their roles effectively.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will explore options for the provision of training, development and shared learning to benefit all Partners, including through One Voice Wales and others where relevant.	Will explore options for the provision of training, development and shared learning to benefit all Partners, including through One Voice Wales and others where relevant.
Support the development of a network for CTC Clerks with appropriate Terms of Reference.	Support the development of a network for CTC Clerks with appropriate Terms of Reference.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Charter will be reviewed by all Partners once during each Council term, or more often as appropriate if deemed necessary. The Partners will conduct this review and develop an annual progress report against the commitments within the Charter.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will arrange for the Charter to be reviewed by the community and town councils liaison committee when appropriate.	Will actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
Will facilitate the development of an annual progress report against the commitments within the Charter.	Will actively contribute to the development of an annual progress report against the commitments within the Charter.

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BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council _____ Leader

Abertillery & Llanhilleth
Community Council _____ Chair

Brynmawr Town Council _____ Mayor

Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council _____ Mayor

Tredegar Town Council _____ Mayor

Dated: