










# Assessment of Performance

2018 / 2019



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# Foreword

Blaenau Gwent is a place like no other. At the head of the Gwent Valleys Blaenau Gwent provides a unique and lofty environment to live, work and play. With a heritage that is firmly based on an industrial past, we are a place that is changing to respond to new economic opportunities.

The Tech Valleys Vision, Valleys Regional Park and Cardiff Capital Regional City Deal combined with new transport links including the soon to be completed Heads of the Valley Road and rail routes to Cardiff bring a bright future. Together with the amazing location and surrounding parkland our people and communities make Blaenau Gwent great. Our people have influenced on the local, national and international stage in art, sport and politics for many generations – putting Blaenau Gwent on the map for all the right reasons.

The role of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and its partners is to maximise on the assets we have, doing more with less and doing it better. It is right that we recognise the challenges we face. The decline of heavy industry

continues to impact on employment prospects and intergenerational opportunities. We face issues with health and wealth inequality, the rise of online shopping and the impact on our town centres and social issues affecting our families and young people.

As a Council we face increasing demand for some of our services with reductions to our budgets. But we are tackling these issues head on with our partners, businesses and the local community. We are looking at how we spend our money to achieve the best outcomes for our residents, we are supporting new and existing businesses, we are looking at our assets to achieve new income streams and we are removing barriers to enable residents to access what they need. All in all we are looking forward to a positive future.

Blaenau Gwent Vision-

**Proud Heritage**  
**Strong Communities**  
**Brighter Future**

**Proud Heritage** The Ebbw Fach Trail links together fourteen community green spaces that offer a variety of amenities from Beaufort Hill Woodlands in the North to Llanhilleth in the South - a total of almost 16 kilometres. For 2018/19 the footfall counters are showing a 195% increase in use. <http://ebbwfachtrail.org.uk/>

**Strong Communities** The Council is working together with the community to create a better Blaenau Gwent for future generations. Since summer 2016 we have talked with over 2,000 people across Blaenau Gwent, from all types of backgrounds, young and old, to find out the things that matter most to local people.

**Brighter Future** Monitoring and promotion of the involvement of all groups of students is highly important in our schools. The recently established SENEDD consists of students from all groups to ensure that every group is represented and that all groups have a voice. In addition to our Senedd, we also have a large number of student right ambassadors. These ambassadors try to ensure that there is a strong sense of children's rights and responsibilities in our school regarding equality, diversity, Welsh values & community cohesion.

# Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of the Council and Michelle Morris, Managing Director Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, A Year in Summary 2018/19

The Council is embracing the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (known as the 'Act') and is starting to adapt the way that it works.

As part of this, we are working collectively to adapt the culture of the organisation and embed the ethos of the Act into all that we do.

As part of this process we have considered the information as contained within the Commissioner's Report, 'Well-being in Wales the Journey so far'. It is recognised however that we are still in the early years of implementing the Act and there is still more to do over the coming years.

This Assessment of Performance 2018/19 provides a self-reflection of not only our year 1 implementation of the Council's Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives,

but also implementation of the Act. We have started to adapt practices and case studies and examples have been provided throughout the document to showcase the positive work that we are starting to undertake as a Council.

As part of the Council's improvement activities and in order to provide transparency to the public, the Council has produced an overview of the activity that has taken place during year 1 of implementing the Plan.

Notable service activity from the year 2018/19 is identified throughout this document. However, it is important to highlight some of the key areas of activity as well as the more innovative and outcome focussed work we have undertaken as a Council.



**Below pulls out some highlights from the year under each of the Council's Well-being Objectives:**



## Efficient Council

Council unanimously approved the Corporate Plan 2018/22. The Corporate Plan is a very important strategic document for the Council which clearly sets out our priorities for the next four years and how we will target our limited resources in order to support these objectives.

The Plan was drawn up following a series of check and challenge sessions with members and senior officers of the Council, during which they came up with an agreed set of Well-being Objectives for the areas we will focus on over the next few years. The priority areas going forward are Education; Social Services; Strong & Environmentally Smart Communities; Economic Development & Regeneration and being an Efficient Council.



Corporate Plan 2018 - 2022



The core vision of the Corporate Plan is:

- Proud Heritage
- Strong Communities
- Brighter Future

Members wanted a vision that reflects both the rich heritage and past industry of the area, of which our communities are fiercely proud, but which also shows our commitment to moving forward by embracing new and emerging technologies that will better equip our communities and in turn lead to a more prosperous future for Blaenau Gwent.

The political leadership are keen that the priorities in the plan align with what local people have told us is important to them during public engagement events, in particular that they want strong and clean communities and they want to see our economy grow for the wellbeing of our future generations. Education and Social Services continue to be priorities as we work to improve standards in our schools so that all children and young people reach their full potential and we continue to look after the most vulnerable people in our communities against increasing demand for these services.

In December the Council started its Budget Consultation, which included:

- Public Engagement Programme – we asked local people what they thought the spending priorities for the Council should be going forward and their views on Council Tax.
- Trade Unions – the Corporate Leadership Team met with the Trade Unions to update them on the budget planning.
- Headteachers – similarly meetings were held with Headteachers to update them and commence consultation on the budget and its impact on school budgets.

This year we have celebrated the inauguration of Blaenau Gwent's new Youth Mayor Elisha Parsons and Deputy Youth Mayor Charlotte Clark. Both young ladies spoke passionately about their new roles and their aspirations for the mayoral year. Outgoing Mayor Samuel Taylor also spoke about the highlights of his year.



We have an amazing role model and ambassador in Samuel Taylor, the former Youth Mayor for Blaenau Gwent. At such an early point in his career he has been a member of the UK Youth Parliament, making two speeches in the House of Commons lowering the voting age and cuts to the NHS. His speech on voting

His speech on voting won the Paul Boskett Award. He has also been Chair of the Young Wales Project Board and as part of this travelled to the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva to make a speech. Samuel is passionate about making sure young people have a say in the decisions which affect them and is hoping to pursue a political career. Samuel's journey started as a member of the Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum, facilitated by the Council.



## Social Services

This year we received recognition from the Welsh Government for our commitment to delivering the Childcare Offer in Blaenau Gwent. This scheme offers working families up to 30 hours of funded childcare a week and we were one of a handful of Welsh councils chosen to pilot this back in 2017.

Over 300 children and families have benefitted from the scheme in the borough. Welsh Government praised the commitment that our Early Years Team has put into delivering the offer and supporting families. We are already hearing what a positive impact the offer has had on Blaenau Gwent families, enabling some parents to return to work.



## Education

Congratulations to our key stage 4 and college pupils who picked up their A-Level & GCSE results during the year. Pupils at the Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone achieved a 98.72% overall pass rate at A-Level, the highest of the Coleg Gwent campuses, whilst in terms of GCSE's it was fantastic to see all our secondary schools record improved results. This improving picture puts us in a strong position for the future and to deliver on our priority for improved outcomes and raised aspirations for all our children and young people in Blaenau Gwent.

Bethany Paull, a pupil at Pen-y-Cwm Special School in Ebbw Vale had great success in the Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi. Not only was Bethany a flag bearer at the games for the British Team but also competed in five Gymnastics disciplines and swept the board – returning with a clutch of Gold & Silver medals.





## Environmentally Smart Communities

The Council and its residents have worked extremely hard to implement the recycling initiatives that are needed in order to support the recycling targets that have been placed on all local authorities by Welsh Government. In 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent was successful in exceeding the recycling target for the year by recycling 59.28% of its waste. This was recognised by Welsh Government who agreed to waive the £135,000 fine that the Council received the previous year 2017/18.

Engagement with the community has shown that residents want to live in an area that they are proud of and that it clean and tidy. In response to this, the Council has invested specifically into this area of work and has been successful in seeing performance increase from 88.3% for streets of a high or acceptable standard to 94.1%.



## Economic Development and Regeneration

The Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Ken Skates AM announced £25million funding for Blaenau Gwent as part of the Tech Valleys Project. This funding is part of the £100million committed to Blaenau Gwent over the next 10 years. The aim of the project is to bring 1,500 jobs into the area.

The investment will stimulate job creation and leverage public and private sector investment in the area whilst accelerating the development of high value, advanced technologies that support cutting edge industry.

Other exciting news this year has been the establishment of a National Digital Exploitation Centre (NDEC) in Ebbw Vale. This is a centre for excellence for digital and cyber security, located at the heart of the Tech Valleys project. Global technology company, Thales, which provides solutions for the aerospace, defence, transportation, space and security markets, is supportive of the centre.

Thales is working with the Welsh Government, the Council and the University of South Wales in establishing a centre to act as a catalyst for digital and cyber educational training and research facilities.



Together with Durham County Council, we submitted a joint application and secured funding



for the first phase of a UK Government competition to find innovative solutions to providing effective public services in times of reducing budgets. We are looking to work with Durham and technology companies to look at using existing vehicles, such as recycling lorries, to collect high quality intelligent data on journeys that they are already making. This could be identifying potholes to infrastructure problems and parking violations, all designed to make public services more efficient and effective.



Some other notable activity from the year includes:

### Freedom of the Borough - Congratulations Mark Williams MBE

Three times world snooker champion Mark Williams MBE was officially awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Blaenau Gwent.

Mark, who was born in Cwm and still lives locally, has had an illustrious sporting career which has included winning the Snooker World Title three times, in 2000, 2003 and 2018.

He is also one of only three players to win the 'Triple Crown' in the same season. This is the name given to the three most prestigious snooker tournaments - UK Championship, Masters and World Championships.

Mark was presented with the honour by the Chairwoman of Blaenau Gwent Council, Cllr Mandy Moore. He is the first sportsman from the area to receive this accolade.

Mark is a great role model for our children and young people here in Blaenau Gwent and shows that if you work hard and believe in yourself you can achieve your dreams.





## International Women's Day 2019

This year saw the launch a new period equity scheme in Blaenau Gwent. It has become apparent that even in 2019 some women are finding it difficult to access basic feminine hygiene products, mainly due to financial circumstances. The Council, working in partnership with the Aneurin Bevan Local Health Board, is currently working to establish the extent of the issue across Gwent and work to address this.

Our Education department is already working with schools in the area and the Youth Service to ensure that free products are soon available in all our schools; youth centres and through the youth outreach service. This is being made possible thanks to funding from the Welsh Government.

This is purely a snapshot of the good work that has been undertaken throughout the year. Additional information is provided throughout this document and on the Council's website.



The future is certainly looking bright here in Blaenau Gwent as we move forward with the support of Welsh Government to embrace emerging technologies and a new age of business.

## Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present the performance of the Council at the end of the reporting period 2018/19. This sets out the key activities and measures used to monitor our performance for year one of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22.

In 2018, the Council prioritised five areas for focus over the period 2018/22:

- Social Services;
- Education;
- Environmentally Smart Communities;
- Economic Development and Regeneration; and
- Efficient Council.

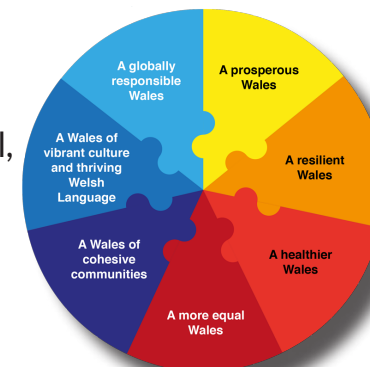
In order to meet the statutory legislative requirements the Council has implemented the following:

- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** the report uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Well-being Objectives.
- **Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009:** the report also uses the priorities within the Council's Corporate Plan as its Improvement Objectives.

All of these areas have supporting actions and measures which are monitored as part of the Council's business planning process. The Corporate Plan 2018/22 has been strategically aligned to the Public Service Boards Well-being Plan and also identifies how each area supports the progression of the Well-being Goals.

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

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is ground-breaking legislation which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The vision of this legislation is expressed in the seven National well-being goals.



The Act also puts a duty on public bodies to apply the sustainable development principle which states they 'must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. The sustainable development principle is made up of the following five ways of working, pictured below:



Integration



Long Term



Involvement



Prevention



Collaboration



## Working with the Public Service Board to improve the Well-being of Future Generations

Blaenau Gwent Public Services Board (PSB) was established in April 2016 as part of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. It is a partnership of key public bodies that, by working together, have a huge responsibility to create a place we want to live in now and in the future. As a PSB we agreed our Well-being Plan in April 2018 and it was published on Friday 4 May 2018, in-line with statutory guidance.

Our plan was the result of a comprehensive programme of involvement and collaborative work to develop a coherent plan for delivering well-being. It prioritises five key well-being objectives set out below, to take forward, in order to bring about positive changes for local people and communities:

1	Blaenau Gwent wants everyone to have the best start in life...	Ensuring early years of future generations are healthy, happy, free from harm and ready to succeed.
2	Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities...	Creating safer communities where people feel safe and have good social connections, are socially responsible and have a good cultural life
3	Blaenau Gwent wants to look after and protect its natural environments...	Creating a vibrant area that lives in harmony with its natural environments, using resources in a fair and sustainable way.
4	Blaenau Gwent wants to forge new pathways to prosperity...	A place where people thrive and achieve their full learning and lifelong potential.
5	Blaenau Gwent wants to encourage and enable people to make healthy lifestyle choices in the places that they live, learn, work and play	A place where people live longer with better health, a place where healthy behaviours is the 'norm'.

## Our lead role in an effective PSB for Blaenau Gwent

As the local authority for the Blaenau Gwent area, we are committed to our responsibilities to provide effective support to the PSB as set out in statutory guidance.

We actively do this by investing in dedicated staffing capacity. Our staff have played a fundamental role in ensuring the PSB effectively agreed and published a Well-being Plan by May 2018, ensuring the PSB met its statutory requirement.

The plan was developed as a result of a comprehensive programme of engagement run by the Council on behalf of the PSB. This programme, called the Blaenau Gwent We Want, focused on actively involving local people, community groups and other interested parties.

The engagement programme continued into the delivery phase of the plan in 2018/19 to ensure involvement was at the focus of the PSB action. The Council is actively leading on three specific projects identified in the Well-being Plan to help deliver the collective PSB Well-being Objectives. These are Early Years First 1,000 Days Programme, Maximising Opportunities for Prosperity, and Blaenau Gwent on the Move.



## What Next for 2019/20

The Council will continue to provide the administrative support to ensure the Blaenau Gwent PSB meets its statutory requirements, including the facilitation of the production of the PSBs first annual report.

Furthermore, Council staff will be actively involved in delivering the PSBs first annual conference in July 2019, as well as the continued support for specific projects to help deliver the collective PSB Well-being Objectives, including the recently agreed Community Safety Hub and Age Friendly Communities arrangements.



# Care leavers no longer have to pay council tax

Blaenau Gwent Placement Service hosting its annual garden party - Prizes were donated by Continental Ltd.



A bus interior advert the Placement Team ran in July 2018 as part of a targeted campaign for specialist 1-2-1 Foster Carers.

## ONE-TO-ONE FOSTERING

A new service designed to recruit a limited number of foster carers who can specialise in looking after children and young people with complex needs.

Applicants will have proven experience and/or relevant qualifications that will help them fulfil this demanding role.

### BLAENAU GWENT PLACEMENT TEAM



FOSTERING ENQUIRY LINE  
07890 312 429

BLAENAU-GWENT.GOV.UK

BLAENAU GWENT CBC

@BLAENAU GWENT CBC



## Key Activities

Rate of older people living in care homes per **1,000 population** aged 65 and over is at its **lowest level ever**

The child care offer successfully implemented with **468 children approved** and **62 providers** Signed up to deliver

**Decrease** in the number on the **Child Protection Register** and the number of **Children looked after** by the authority

## What you told us...



"OUR FUTURE"  
MORE ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

BETTER SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

BERT DENNING CENTRE IS A REAL LOCAL ASSET FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

# Social Services



Specialist foster carers will look after the most vulnerable

**Carers Engagement Service**

Do you look after a family member, friend or even a neighbour? Do you offer support to someone who without your help could not manage to live independently? Perhaps for example you support someone to maintain their own personal care needs, medication prompts, prepare and cook meals or carry out domestic/laundry tasks.

**If so, you are a Carer**

The Carers Engagement Service is able to offer informal carers **free information and advice** relating to issues experienced around caring.

**We can help you by offering:**

- Information and advice on Carers services e.g. Respite Care, Welfare Rights, Carers Rights and other relevant support agencies
- Advise on the benefits of having a Carers Assessment completed by your Local Authority
- Information about social activities, training and looking after yourself
- Information about our Carers Small Grant Scheme
- Provide a listening ear - someone to talk to

Contact the Carer Engagement Service by ringing:-  
**Blaenau Gwent Social Services IAA Team on 01495 315700**

Working in Partnership with:  
Blaenau Gwent, GIG NHS, South East Wales, carerstrust South East Wales, carerstrust South East Wales

## Headlines

### Home First

The new regional hospital discharge project, Home First, commenced at Nevill Hall Hospital. This service provides IAA advice and support at the 'front door' of the acute hospitals (A&E, medical assessment wards etc.) with the aim of avoiding hospital admissions for patients who are medically fit to return home and promoting personal outcomes.



### Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Inspection Report

The Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) published its inspection report for Blaenau Gwent Council following an inspection that took place in February and March 2018. The Inspectors looked at the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children and their families. The overall performance of the Council was positive but there is an acknowledgment of the significant challenges facing the Council in delivering the service at a time of financial and resource pressures.



### Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy

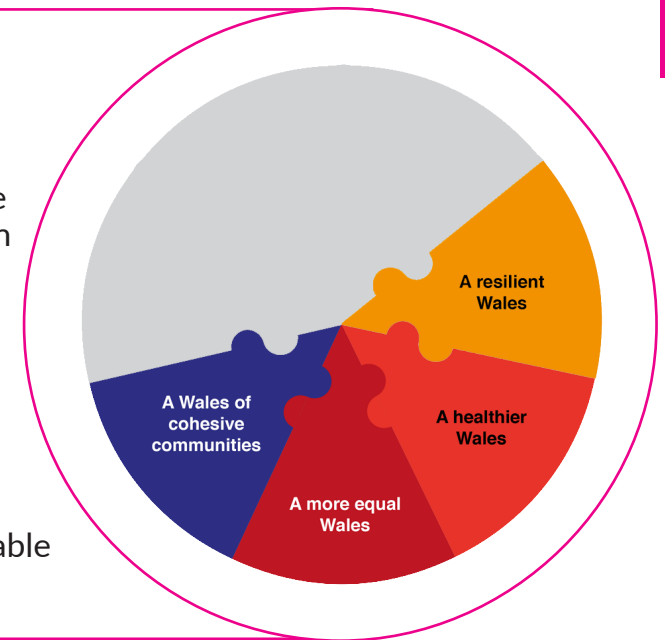
Children's Services have started to see a decrease in the numbers of children on the child protection register and in the numbers of children looked after by the Local Authority. This may be as a result of Preventative Services being targeted in the right way and implementation of the Safe Reduction of Children Looked After Strategy.



## Why this is important

We want to encourage and support people to make healthy lifestyle choices to enable children, young people and families to thrive. Research has proven people demonstrating positive health behaviours from birth through their life will lead to greater independence, and people being free from complicated health conditions later in life and reducing costs to public services. This in turn could reduce demand on services and ensure the services that are provided are high quality, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

With reduced funding and increasing demand on services the Council can no longer do everything it has done in the past. We must focus on those actions that will have the greatest impact. Safeguarding the most vulnerable people in our communities continues to be a top priority for the Council alongside transforming the aspirations of residents and valuing fairness and equality in everything we do. As a whole the aim of this Objective will be to support vulnerable people of all ages to maximise, maintain and sustain their independence.



## How we performed

Throughout 2018/19 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Social Services priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives.

By the 31st March 2019, the Council considered performance and activity against each Well-being Objective in order to identify the success of each area. In year 1 the performance of the Social Services Well-being Objective was evaluated as successful as 95% of the actions were green (on target) and 5% amber (behind target). When considering trend against the performance indicators six saw an improvement, five a decline and one remained the same.

The Social Services function remains high on the Council agenda. The Council is looking to address the areas that will have a long term benefit, ensuring that the needs of people of all ages and future generations are at the centre of service design and delivery.

## Overview 2018/19

Across Social Services good progress has been made to the way in which we deliver our provision of advice to citizens who contact our services. The Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) service for both Adults and Children have made significant progress during 2018/19, enabling our Social Care 'front door' to best meet the needs of citizens and partners which has also ensured compliance with the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.





The IAA Teams have been reviewed by the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and feedback has been positive in relation to how the team and partners have understood and embraced having the 'what matters' conversations and recognising how this helped people to work with others to achieve outcomes.

Throughout 2018/19 the number of Children Looked After (CLA) stabilised and there was also a reduction in the number of children on the child protection register. The numbers of children looked after as at 31st March 2019 was 222 compared to 233 in March 2018.

For year end 2018/19 there were 56 children on the child protection register compared to 89 last year. 100% of Child Protection Conferences were held within 15 days with 97.6% within the statutory timescale. The average length of time a child in Blaenau Gwent remained on the local authority child protection register was 277.27 days, an increase from last year when the figure was 256.61.



The Safe Reduction of CLA Strategy has been developed to support a sustained decline in the number of and further decrease the number of CLA. The Strategy has started to evidence how it is preventing problems escalating to a point which requires children to become looked after or their names going on the child protection register. Good evidence of this is the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team who has been successful in promoting early interventions to prevent problems becoming greater. The Team successfully works with children and families on the 'edge of care' and there has been evidence emerging of the impact that this is having in improving outcomes for our most vulnerable families and young people. The Supporting Change Team has been able to not only improve outcomes for citizens, but also make some savings and cost avoidance within the Social Services budget as a result of these interventions, with full year cost savings of £344,864 and up to £1,7011,000 cost avoidance.

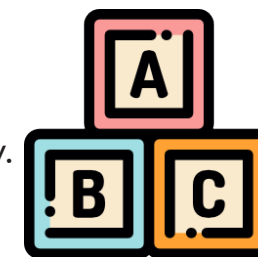


The CIW inspection report into Children's Services highlighted the considerable good work being carried out to help keep children safe and protected, especially mentioning the commitment of staff within the service. Positive feedback received included good partnership working relationships with families first, schools and other partner agencies.



The Council become an early implementer of the Welsh Governments Childcare Offer programme in September 2017 and subsequently become host authority for Torfaen County Borough Council Childcare Offer in September 2018.

On 6th February 2019 the Council was informed that an application for funding to the 'better business case model' had been successful with £4.1million being awarded for five schemes to improve or expand childcare provision and support the co-location of the childcare offer and Foundation Phase Nursery.



A significant amount of collaborative working has been undertaken over the last 12 months. The Children's Partnership Board has used Integrated Care Fund (ICF) money to establish:

A Joint MyST (My Support Team) between Blaenau Gwent and Monmouthshire;

A continuation of the roll out of the attachment training for staff; and

The skills for living programme for care leavers.

The Carers Engagement GP scheme has enabled all 11 GP surgeries across Blaenau Gwent to offer Carers support and advice at the GP surgeries. This has been developed in partnership with Carers Trust using (ICF) funding. Support provided includes:

- ▶ Initial conversation regarding their current situation;
- ▶ Giving information leaflets regarding various services available;
- ▶ Signposting to relevant organisations/ services, both in and out of borough;

- ▶ Providing initial and / or ongoing practical support;
- ▶ Providing initial and / or ongoing emotional support; and
- ▶ Making referrals to particular services on individual's behalf.

The results from the Act's citizen feedback questionnaires 2018/19, showed a positive response from adults to the question 'people reporting that they had the right information when needed and had been involved in decisions about their care and support', with 84.1% agreeing with the statement (up from 80% last year), "My social worker has been very supportive and helpful regarding my care package etc."

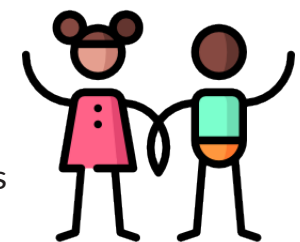
Blaenau Gwent Council, along with many other Local Authorities in Wales are facing serious financial problems and Social Services, like all Council Services, have had to make cuts to ensure the authority delivers a balanced budget for 2018/19.

The sustained increase in the number of CLA has had a detrimental impact on the budget situation with Children's Services over spending by £765,000 in 2017/18.

The Directorate received an additional £0.53 million added to the Children's Services base budget to cover this pressure within 2018/19 and, although considerable work has commenced with the implementation of the Safe Reduction of CLA strategy, the increases has resulted in an over spend in CLA budget which stood at £961K at the end of March 2019. However, Adult Services have managed to underspend resulting in an overall underspend for the Directorate of £220K.



The challenge for 2019/20 will be to continue to manage demand and to do more with less. We will undertake a number of reviews within some of the services we deliver internally. We will continue to look to explore further opportunities for collaboration where it will improve the well-being of the citizens of Blaenau Gwent and it is right to do so.





## Play Assessment



Giving people the opportunity to complete a questionnaire to assess the time and space children and young people have for playing or hanging out in their local area.

**404** children and young people completed a questionnaire with a further **234** Adults taking part

### Broad areas of response

Abertillery <b>15%</b>	Ebbw Vale <b>30%</b>
Blaina <b>10%</b>	Tredeggar <b>40%</b>
Brynmawr <b>5%</b>	Total <b>100%</b>

A 'Healthier Wales' set out a new £100 million transformational programme. It has the expectation that transformational change delivers a 'seamless system of health and social care'. Regional Partnership Boards were required to put a 'Transformational Offer' to Welsh Government setting out proposals of how the Gwent Regional Partnership Board would support the continued development of a 'seamless system' of care, support and well-being, in response to the Welsh Government's new long term plan for health and social care 'A Healthier Wales'. The offer in total for Gwent amounted to £13.4m of new limited funding over a two year period.

Four areas were selected, derived from the priority areas within the Area Plan and the considered directions of the Regional Partnership Board. These include:

- ▶ The development of early intervention and prevention services;
- ▶ The development of primary and community care services;
- ▶ The redesign of child and adolescent emotional and mental health services;
- ▶ The development of an integrated 'Home First' discharge model.



**Collaboration** All local authorities and partner agencies continue to work together on safeguarding through the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board (SEWSCB) and the Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board (GwASB). Both groups have developed a Quality Assurance Framework which will provide members of the GwASB and SEWSCB with the assurance and effectiveness of inter-agency working arrangements in the safeguarding of children and adults. The Quality Assurance framework will drive practice and service improvement and ensure work stays focused on best outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and adults across the region.



**Engagement** - information collated from our Act's citizen feedback questionnaires was positive in relation to the numbers of citizens that felt they lived within a home that supported their well-being. The response to this was very positive with 90.5% agreeing with the statement, up from 81% last year. One citizen commented, "Modifications to the bungalow such as handrails on walls and walk-in shower have made living easier. The four carers per day are essential".



**Prevention / Integration** Both IAA teams have been successful in promoting a model of prevention and integration:

- The Adult Services Team working closely with partners in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) and the Third Sector.
- Children Services have benefitting from close working across the Prevention Teams, Family Information Service and, more recently, Gwent Police.

## Case Study

# Supporting Change Team

### Personal History

Child E's family have been known to the Local Authority since 2006, due to issues of substance abuse. The Local Authority was involved with the family on both a Child in Need basis and a Child Protection basis. In August 2014 the Local Authority issued Care Proceedings.

### Situation and Current Needs

At the conclusion of the Care Proceedings in January 2015, Child E was placed with her paternal grandmother under a Special Guardianship Order with a Supervision Order for one year to enable the Department to monitor, support and offer advice. In February 2017, the Local Authority became involved again when Child E made several allegations of physical

and emotional abuse against her grandmother and paternal uncle. Following Child Protection investigations and assessment, Care Proceedings were instigated and the Local Authority was granted a Care Order in November 2017. Child E remained in foster care until October 2018 when her placement broke down.

### Support Received

Child E wanted to return home to her mother. At this point her mother had been drug free for 2 years. Therefore a parenting assessment of mother was undertaken, which proved positive. The Supporting Change Team became involved to deliver an intensive programme of parenting work and support looking at Child E's individual needs and development,

routines and boundaries, behaviour management, promoting Child E's identity and self-esteem and keep safe work. Mother also attended the Supporting Change Parenting Group where she learned strategies in behaviour management which she is able to implement. Direct work with Child E was also completed to ensure that her wishes and feeling were clearly known.

### Outcome Achieved

As a result Child E has been successfully rehabilitated home to her mum. Mother has a good understanding of Child E's needs and is able to meet them and Child E is responding positively to being at home. She has recently received an excellent school report and presents as

happy and settled. Feedback from mum is positive. She reports she has found the work helpful and the group beneficial both from an educative perspective and in giving her opportunities to meet with others in a similar situation. Child E is happy to be at home and loves being with her mum and sister. In addition to the positive outcome for the family, the savings for the Local Authority is £782.25 per week or £40,677 per year in fostering fees.

### Future Plans:

Child E and her mother will continue to be supported by the Local Authority on a long term basis under Placement with Parents Regulations.



## Case Study

# Cymru Well Wales – First 1000 Days Programme

Early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person's future well-being. The first 1000 days of a child's development sets the stage for lifelong health, learning and achievement, to relationships (including family life) and what is passed on to future generations. Therefore, making sure people have equal access to the right services at the right time is considered a key priority in ensuring that outcomes for children, young people and families are maximised.

In support of this work and working with the Public Services Board (PSB) the Council and particularly Social Services we are committed to understanding more about our early year's services, including their quality and identifying where the gaps are. Therefore, in April 2018 we joined Cymru Well Wales's - The First 1000 Days Programme (F1000D) and took steps to set up a multi-agency planning group to take forward the work.

Our work began with a F1000D Stakeholder Event being held at the General Offices, Ebbw Vale in July 2018. The event brought together over 91 passionate and enthusiastic representatives from 13 partner organisations that provide services and support to children and families.

The sessions provided insight into where the greatest service delivery improvements could be made; helped identify areas of good practice which could be adopted across Blaenau Gwent; and considered how collaboration between different early years services provision could be better planned and undertaken.

A key recommendation, outlined below, identifies what needs to be undertaken over the short, medium and long-term, in order to maximise the wider well-being outcomes for children and families:

- Early Years Development and Children's Partnership (EYDCP) to support and oversee the **development of a Community of Practice**. A bi-annual network for early years practitioners and public service organisations to support, promote and enable involvement, integration, prevention, collaboration through problem solving and the sharing of good practice.



## How 'Social Services' Performed 2018/19

As part of the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, people who use care and support services are invited to complete an annual survey in relation to the provision of care and support. This year, Adults and Carers were sent questionnaires. It was decided that, owing to the low response rate received in the past from children, that a survey not be undertaken this year. The low response rate from children is typical across Wales and has been recognised by Welsh Government as a driver for review. Therefore, the way in which Social Services engages with children and young people is to be reviewed in line with the Welsh Government's review of the Act. Consideration is being given to how best to encourage participation and to gather views in the most effective way.

### Adult Responses

In respect of Adults Services, 644 questionnaires were sent out to adults aged 18 and over with 152 responses received; this is a reduction on last year when 249 responses were received. This equates to a 23.6% response rate, which is just under the required Welsh Government expected response rate of 25%.

Of the responses:

- 90.5% of respondents reported that they lived in a home that supported their well-being which is an increase from last year when the figure was 81%. 86% reported being happy with support from family, friends and neighbours which is an increase of 4% from last year.
- 52% of respondents felt they could do the things that were important to them and 33.7% reported this sometimes, a total of 86% reported yes or sometimes. In 2017/18, this figure was 84%.
- 62.8% feel part of the community which is an improvement from last year when the figure was only 41%.
- 84% feel safe both within and outside of the home and increase of 9% from last year.
- 82.7% know who to contact about their Social Care and support, down from last year by 5.3%. 81.7% had the right information when needed and had been involved in decisions about their care and support. This was similar to last year when the figure was 80%. 84.1% are happy with the care and support they have had which is a slight decrease from last year of 1.9%.

- 97.5% are able to communicate in their preferred language; similar to last year of 98% and 92.2% felt they were treated with dignity and respect, 94% last year.
- Of those living in a residential care home, 66% responded that they chose to live there. Last year, 74% responded in this way.
- The 18-24 year olds were asked if they had the advice, help and support needed to prepare them for adulthood, 90.6% responded yes and 9.3% responded no. This is an improvement on last year when 75% responded yes and 25% responded no.

## Carers Responses

Questionnaires were sent to carers who had a joint care and support plan with the cared for person. 32 responses were received of 75 questionnaires sent. Last year, only 22 questionnaires were sent and 10 returned. 69% of carers felt that they had been involved in decisions about how the care and support of the person they care for was provided; last year this was 86%.





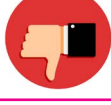
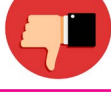

During 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent continued to implement the required cultural and operational changes that the Act requires in order to ensure that all social care services are individually shaped by the people that use them. This includes improving how the service effectively engages with service users, carers, families and partner organisations, whilst actively encouraging all to provide feedback which can be utilised to shape and improve services.

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.



**Public Accountability Measure** – Social Services indicators are not included as the Welsh Government has not yet decided to publish performance data as they are new and subject to validation checks across all authorities. This data cannot be compared across Wales.










Performance Measure	BG Performance 18/19	BG Performance 17/18	BG Performance 16/17	
The percentage of assessments completed for children within statutory timescales	74.2%	90.8%	84.5%	
The percentage of children supported to remain living within their family	61.5%	62.0%	68.4%	
The percentage of children looked after returned home from care during the year	13.2%	8.5%	13.8%	
The percentage of re-registrations of children on local authority Child Protection Registers (CPR)	1.9%	0.7%	0.0%	
The average length of time for all children who were on the CPR during the year	277.3	256.6	170.99	
The percentage of children achieving the core subject indicator at Key stage 2	55.0%	65.4%	57.5%	
The percentage of children achieving the core subject indicator at Key stage 4	10.8%	14.8%	16.7%	

*^Measure is included within the Corporate Plan*

*\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.*







*\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)*

Performance Measure	BG Performance 18/19	BG Performance 17/18	BG Performance 16/17	
The percentage of children seen by a registered dentist within 3 months of becoming looked after	55.3%	34.7%	54.0%	
The percentage of children looked after registered with a GP	74.6%	60.6%	70.0%	
The percentage of children looked after who have experienced 1 or more changes of school, during a period or periods of being looked after, which were not due to transitional arrangements, in the year to 31 March	10.5%	6.0%	23.6%	
The percentage of children looked after on 31 March who have had three or more placements during the year	8.6%	9.9%	12.3%	
The percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 12 months after leaving care	50.0%	68.8%	40.0%	
The percentage of all care leavers who are in education, training or employment at 24 months after leaving care	76.9%	80.0%	40.0%	
The percentage of care leavers who have experienced homelessness during the year	14.1%	6.1%	27.0%	

<sup>^</sup>Measure is included within the Corporate Plan

\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.

\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)

Performance Measure	BG Performance 18/19	BG Performance 17/18	BG Performance 16/17	
The percentage of adult protection enquiries completed within statutory timescales	93.30%	90.47%	100.0%	
The rate of delayed transfers of care for social care reasons per 1,000 population aged 75 or over	1.16	2.55	1.38	
The percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have a reduced package of care and support 6 months later	72.55%	93.33%	80.95%	
The percentage of adults who completed a period of reablement and have no package of care and support 6 months later	91.26%	76.04%	69.81%	
The average length of time older people (aged 65 or over) are supported in residential care homes (days)	830.67	904.02	806.03	
The average age of adults entering residential care homes	84.48	84.49	82.15 years	-
The percentage of adults who have received support from the information, advice and assistance service and have not contacted the service again during the year	83.44%	83.66%	89.95%	

<sup>^</sup>Measure is included within the Corporate Plan

\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.

\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)



## Corporate Plan Measures

27.7% of proportionate assessments led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support, down from last year when the amount was 43%.

12.2% of children's services referrals were signposted to preventative services

The proportion of children's services cases supported by preventative services increased from 57% last year to 61.3% this year.

Number of children looked after has reduced by 11 to 222

Number on the Child Protection Register has reduced by 33 to 56

The percentage of proportionate assessments that led to a more comprehensive assessment for care and support for adults has increased from 58% to 64.2%

There has been a reduction in the percentage of adults reporting that they are happy with care and support they receive from 86.8% to 84.5%.

As identified above, the percentage of children happy with the care and support they receive has not been monitored this year owing to the low response rate received in the past from children. The low response rate from children is typical across Wales and has been recognised by Welsh Government as a driver for review.

67.9% of carers felt able to continue in their caring role compared to 80% last year

7.4% of adult services referrals were signposted to preventative services compared to 8.7% last year

The proportion of adult services cases supported by preventative services was 31.2% compared to 29.4% last year

The Rate of Delayed Transfers of Care has improved from 2.55 last year to 1.16 this year

93.30% of adult protection enquiries were completed within statutory timescales compared to 90.47% last year

Percentage of people (adults 16+) living in households in deprivation in Blaenau Gwent in 2017/18 was 18% which is an improvement from last year when the figure was 19%.

A performance indicator to identify the number of collaborative and partnership arrangements within Social Services has not yet been developed.

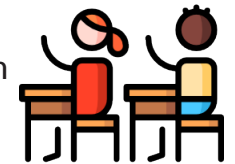
*^Measure is included within the Corporate Plan*

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*\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)*

## Key Activity since April 2019

Increased Service Manager Capacity since April 2019 has enabled in depth scrutiny of procedures and processes within the IAA team. This scrutiny identified the need to change the way in which referrals were classified and a new process has been put in place.



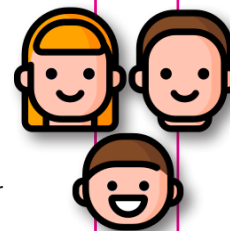
Partnership work continues with the Police under the Early Action Together programme. Early indications are that this is having a positive impact on timeliness of undertaking Child Protection processes and ensuring that information is collated and considered in all decision making. Further plans are currently underway to consider if education should have a role in the IAA service.

An internal audit will commence in September 2019 within the Safeguarding Service with the theme being 'Voice of the Child'. The audit will be completed with a view to helping the department understand the level of participation of children and young people in their CLA statutory reviews and using the information to direct any changes required to ensure children's voices are heard and acted on.



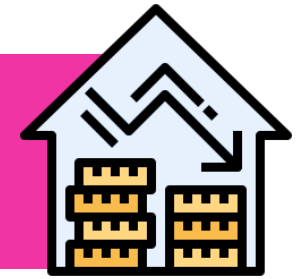
The Safe Children Looked After strategy has started to evidence how it is preventing problems faced by children and families escalating to a point which requires children becoming looked after or their names going onto the child protection register. Good evidence of this is the work undertaken by the Supporting Change Team. A full external evaluation of the teams work has been undertaken which recommended the establishment of the team on a long term basis. The evaluation showed evidence that the team is making a real difference to the children and families of Blaenau Gwent.

Also as part of the Safe Children Looked After Strategy the My Support Team (MyST) has been established with the aim of bringing children back to the local areas from residential placements to foster placements. The team are currently working with three Blaenau Gwent children and have a further three on their waiting list. The children on the waiting list are those who are in residential care at the moment with a plan to move to foster care, however an appropriate foster placement is yet to be found.



The Care Inspectorate Wales action plan, established in June 2018, contained nine areas for improvement and a great deal of work has been undertaken to address these areas. Three areas have been fully addressed. The other six areas are progressing well and should be completed by the end of quarter 2 2019.

New housing developments across Blaenau Gwent are being considered to support Care Leavers and children looked after. These developments include one bedroom flats in the homeless hostel in Tredegar and one bedroom flats in Ebbw Vale. In October 2018 Council agreed for all Care Leavers in Blaenau Gwent to be exempt from paying Council Tax.



Throughout the year wider strategic developments, sponsored by the Integrated Partnership Board have been identified for priority during 2019/20. These include:

- ▶ The development of an integrated Health and Social Care IAA team. A commencement of the Compassionate Communities work stream as part of the integrated approaches to IAA within our GP surgeries.
- ▶ Confirmation and embedding of an enhanced advocacy programme (Gwent region) - this will be finalised and launched during early 2019/20.
- ▶ Final review of hospital discharge service including the potential expansion of Home First and regional approach to discharge - a Gwent workshop has been arranged for July 2019.

- ▶ Continuation of cultural changes through initiatives across Adult Service such as new quality assurance processes and a new senior practitioner post in IAA to influence care management processes.
- ▶ Finalising of the Prevention Strategy and the reconfiguration of the IAA / Prevention Teams. This work has commenced during quarter 1 with the review of current IAA staffing structure, appointment of additional support worker staff and links to the Compassionate Communities work streams.
- ▶ Commissioning of a new domiciliary care service in conjunction with Caerphilly County Borough Council, the expected implementation will be in September 2019.
- ▶ Gwent partnership working in place to develop a Gwent wide approach to the commissioning of care home placements. This will include a Section 33 agreement and pooled budget arrangements.





### Aspire Awards 2019

Winner Declan Hughes, Apprentice of the year. Company: Continental Teves; Presented by Eluned Morgan AM, Welsh Government.

Over the past 3 years the Employment Liaison Services has created

**111 jobs** in **Blaenau Gwent**

for manufacturing, engineering, construction and internal

Number of apprentices going through the **Aspire programme** is increasing

The percentage of occupied floor space of all available Council business units has improved, with

**90%** utilised

## What you told us...



Global technology company Thales is setting up a £20m research and development centre in Ebbw Vale. Find out more: [bit.ly/2Rqk4PE](https://bit.ly/2Rqk4PE) @thalesgro #Thales #TechValleyProject #TechCentre #WelshGovernment @bgeffect #investinbg #EbbwVale #BGCBC @UniSouthWales @WalesBusiness



# Regeneration and Economic Development



**£25m will back plan to create high tech jobs**



**Plans for homes and Costa Coffee drive-through**

**Business units scheme could create 100 jobs in Ebbw Vale**



### Key Activities

**Cardiff Capital Region**  
The Council is an active partner in the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, a £1.2 billion programme working alongside the Welsh Government and 9 other local authorities. The programme is expected to deliver 25,000 new jobs across the region and leverage £4 billion of private sector investment.



### Aspire Awards Night 2018

Another great evening at the Aspire Awards attended by apprentices and employers, from the Aspire Shared Apprenticeship Programme. The Awards ceremony took place at The General Offices, Ebbw Vale on 29th November 2018 and was attended by over 120 people that included apprentices, host employers and local partners. On the evening twelve outstanding apprentices and three host employers received awards in a range of categories.



### New Homes for Blaenau Gwent

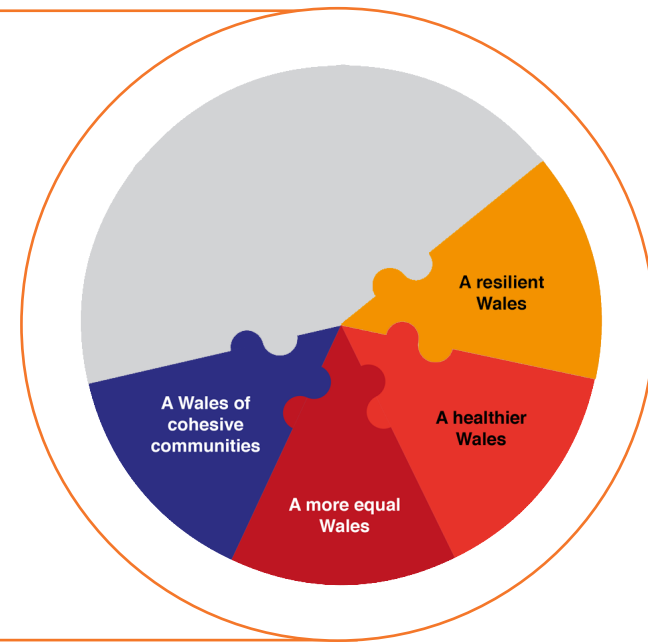
A multi-million-pound development delivering much needed affordable homes for Blaenau Gwent is due to get underway. Award winning housing association United Welsh will be creating 23 homes on the former Infants School site in Sirhowy. The development has received Welsh Government funding of just under £2.1m from the Social Housing Grant Programme. Working in partnership with Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and Pendragon, United Welsh will be developing 4 one-bedroom apartments, 2 two-bedroom apartments, 13 two-bedroom houses and 4 three-bedroom houses, at a cost of over £2.8m.



## Why this is important

We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live. We have prioritised economic development and regeneration in order to bring jobs, growth and opportunity to local people and businesses.

Increasing employability makes a fundamental contribution to reducing and tackling poverty and the economic status of the area. Supporting people to obtain and retain employment reduces reliance upon support services aligned to social well-being and poverty.



## How we performed

At the beginning of 2018/19 progress against the Economic Development and Regeneration priorities were maintained, however, with the appointment of a new Head of Service, there are plans now in place to progress the priorities over the remainder of the Corporate Plan.

By the 31st March 2019, the Council considered performance and activity against each Well-being Objective in order to identify the success of each area. In year 1 the performance for Economic Development and Regeneration was evaluated as being mainly successful as 15% were blue (completed), 46% of the actions were green (on target) and 39% were amber (behind target). When considering trend against the performance indicators two saw an improvement and two have no comparative trend.

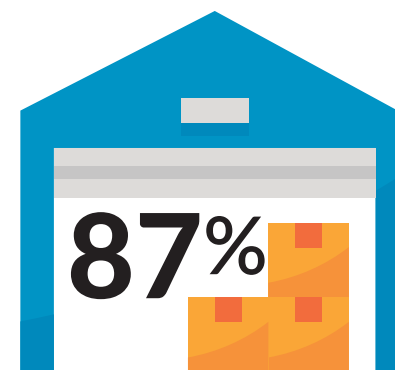
Economic Development and Regeneration supports a number of regional programmes that are taking place within the area including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, Tech Valleys and the Valleys Task Force.

## Overview 2018/19

The Council continues to strengthen the management and opportunities of a range of industrial units, office accommodation and commercial land across Blaenau Gwent with:

**26** successful property applications processed during **2018/19** supporting **170 FTE jobs**

**106** businesses currently accommodated within the portfolio with **521** Jobs accommodated



**Units currently occupied**  
**(160 of 184)**

Throughout 2018/19, Blaenau Gwent has supported three indigenous business expansions which has supported the Council's industrial property portfolio which was supported by an Inward Investment Landing Pad at the General Offices Enterprise Hub.

CITB (Construction Industry Training Board), linked with 'Aspire to Be' and 'Go Construct', have developed two new funded initiatives as a response to the construction industry workforce needs, linking directly with schools, through construction led programmes and resources. Blaenau Gwent was part of a successful pilot, delivering;

A five day Minecraft training programme for teachers to develop and embed school based learning leading to a series of inter school competitions at a local, regional and national level.

A STEAM focus day provided schools with free training and introduced a range of contextualised lesson plans and resources to teachers. All resources will be linked to the new curriculum but will have a focus on careers within the construction sector.



The inaugural Blaenau Gwent Business Awards was hosted in May 2018. The aim of the Awards was to recognise the achievements of the entrepreneurial individuals and Small Medium Enterprise (SME's) based within Blaenau Gwent. The Awards was well received by businesses with 54 applications submitted across the following categories with 22 businesses identified as finalists (the number shortlisted per category identified in brackets):

- Business Start- up of the Year (3)
- Small Medium Business of the Year (5)

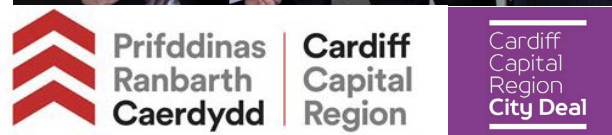


- Social Enterprise of the Year (3)
- Excellence in Innovation & Technology (3)
- Manufacturing Business of the Year (3)
- Excellence in International Trade (2)
- Retail or Service Business of the Year (3)
- Blaenau Gwent Business of the Year

The evening was commended by local businesses and the Welsh Government, including the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, sponsors and other stakeholders. The event was extremely successful in raising the profile of Blaenau Gwent businesses locally and regionally.

The SAP apprenticeship programme has been successful in delivering:

- 4 cohorts since September 2015, with 67 apprentices across a range of businesses;
- 100% of those who have left the programme have been employed, 64% of which by host employers;
- 83% have completed frameworks and 55% progressed onto HNC;
- Cohort 5 proposal submitted to Welsh Government; and
- Continued engagement is undertaken within schools.



The Council has been working on developing an Employment and Skills Plan which will be subject to approval in 2019/20, following full stakeholder engagement and consultation. The Plan recognises that a passionate and collaborative approach is critical to delivering success. Aligned to current national and regional policy, along with significant investment opportunities such as City Deal and Tech Valleys, the plan proposes five priority areas, from which a detailed action plan will be developed with key stakeholders:

- ▶ Business and Employers;
- ▶ Skills and Further Education;
- ▶ Employability and Social Inclusion;
- ▶ Education and Schools; and
- ▶ Development and Infrastructure.

The plan aims to position Blaenau Gwent in meeting the needs of key sectors including Advanced Material and Manufacturing, Financial and Professional Services, Construction, Information and Communication Technology and Human Foundational Economy.



Within the identified priority areas, specific interventions that will address demands in STEM and Technology and Automation will be developed; not least opportunities to upskill in the workplace and promote apprenticeships as an alternative and credible route to employment.





Between 2016 and 2019 there has been substantial inward investment and business expansion projects made across Blaenau Gwent. This has included 21 inward investments, including Thales (£20m investment), and 11 indigenous business expansions being supported. In order to further support businesses, Blaenau Gwent has launched a 'Business Hub' which is a free online support service for businesses. The Council also looks to engage businesses by holding events and workshops. In 2018/19, 8 events were held with over 400 businesses engaged.



2018/19 saw 19 successful approvals from the BG Effect Fund which offers support to new business during 2018/19. These approvals are predicted to create 28 jobs in Blaenau Gwent. The Kick Start Plus Fund made 8 approvals during 2018/19 with 8 jobs created and another 12 jobs safeguarded. The Employment Liaison Project has supported 21 companies with engaging employment opportunities. This has included 103 new individuals identified and 54 placed directly into jobs.



Boxworks - 23 modified shipping containers will act as a technical hub for knowledge-based businesses in the creative industries, digital technologies, research and development, energy, technical and professional business services. These 'Enterprise pods' will be unique, innovative and reflect a change in the Council's product offering, compared to traditional industrial workshops/units and office accommodation. The units will act as a hub for businesses to develop and then graduate into the higher value office provision.



**2018/19**  
has seen the successful delivery of the Social Housing Grant Programme totalling  
**£3,525,565.46**  
Contributing to the development costs of **six schemes** that will deliver **163 affordable homes**

- ▶ The Social Housing Grant Programme includes a commitment to the Golwg Y Bryn Development at Brynserth, bringing forward **100 homes (30 affordable)**

In 2018/19 the Housing Prospectus was approved and a launch event is planned for quarter 1 2019/20 in order to engage land buyers and prospective house builders and promote the opportunities available.

The Council has a commitment to managing a well-planned housing delivery programme to allow a good supply of suitable accommodation for future generations, with the aim of:

**In order to address the Housing Delivery Programme there are a range of measures in place to meet these key challenges:**

- ▶ Launching the Local Housing Prospectus, as a tool for housing sector engagement and seeks to highlight the many benefits to developing within Blaenau Gwent, including capitalising on the wider regeneration opportunities such as Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, transport infrastructure through METRO and Heads of the Valleys dualling, Enterprise Zone, Tech Valleys and Valleys Task Force.
- ▶ Managing a Social Housing Grant Programme, to support delivery of affordable housing provision.
- ▶ Exploring collaborative working opportunities to stimulate development opportunities, including new development, self build opportunity and empty properties.
- ▶ Reviewing the Housing Strategy and developing a delivery plan outlining the strategic focus and development opportunities going forward.

Meeting the needs of vulnerable households

Improving the quality and standards of homes

Improving the supply of new homes to buy and rent

## Active Travel



Giving people the opportunity to comment on proposed and current active travel (walking, running and cycling) routes around the Borough

**25** Engagement events  
**292** public surveys received  
**224** online  
**68** paper surveys & **1** email

### Broad areas of response

Abertillery <b>18%</b>	Nantyglo & Blaina <b>6%</b>
Brynawr <b>14%</b>	Tredegar <b>22%</b>
Ebbw Vale <b>36%</b>	Live outside BG <b>3%</b>

## Case Study

# Inspiring STEM Students

In February 2019, the Council, in partnership with Careers Wales and additional sponsorship from Celtic Horizons, Linc Cymru, Tai Calon and United Welsh held a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) Inspiration event, to highlight and showcase the wide range of STEM career routes available to today's young people, assisting in informing subject choices.

Over 400 Year 8 and 9 students from across Blaenau Gwent attended the interactive STEM activities aligned to known career opportunities and delivered by 38 businesses and employers.

The students who attended the Inspiration event found it beneficial for improving their knowledge about future STEM career opportunities withing Blaenau Gwent and across Wales.

The links between STEM subjects and industry were clearly demonstrated throughout the event, which also highlighted the benefit of apprenticeships as an alternative to Higher Education. Moving forward opportunities to expand the event are being explored.



## How 'Economic Development and Regeneration' Performed 2018/19

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

*\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)*

*\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.*

### National Public Accountability Measures

**13th in Wales** for bringing empty private properties back into use, this is an improvement of 3 rankings compared to last year



**21st in Wales** for the average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)



**3rd in Wales** for determining planning applications within required time periods. Performed well for the second year running, comfortably above the Welsh average.



**14th in Wales** for Percentage of appeals against planning application decisions dismissed, compared to ranking 6th in Wales last year. Very low number of appeals (11 this year) makes this figure fluctuate easily.



### Corporate Plan Measures

73 House building completions this year (65 houses and 8 flats) compared to 50 last year (48 houses and 2 flats)



The council supported 19 business start-ups this year compared to 14 in 2017/18



Council business units occupied floor space has increased to 93% this year, an additional 8% compared to last year.





## Corporate Plan Measures

73 House building completions this year (65 houses and 8 flats) compared to 50 last year (48 houses and 2 flats)

The council supported 19 business start-ups this year compared to 14 in 2017/18

Council business units occupied floor space has increased to 93% this year, an additional 8% compared to last year.

In Blaenau Gwent 73.5% (32,700) were Economically Active which is an improvement on last year when the figure was 71% (31,700)

Male 74.9% (16,700)

Female 74.9% (16,700)

The average annual income in Blaenau Gwent is £25,116

Full time workers weekly earnings £483.20

Full time workers hourly earnings £12.03

Source: NOMIS Official Labour Market Statistics

Percentage of supported business start-ups that remain trading after 12 months 87.5%

31 affordable housing units were delivered in 2018/19

10 apprenticeships started a learning programme in 2018

Total number of apprenticeships that are currently in learning at March 2019 was 56

Percentage of apprentices that have completed a framework from Cohort 1 was 89%

Percentage of apprentices from cohort 1 that are employed 78%

Percentage of apprentices that have progressed onto a higher framework of learning was 50%

An indicator on inward investment will be considered as part of the Bridging the Gap programme

An indicator on energy efficiency will be considered as part of the Bridging the Gap programme

An indicator on digital infrastructure is under consideration moving forward

*\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)*

*\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.*

## Key Activity since April 2019

The Discover Blaenau Gwent Housing Prospectus was successfully launched in May 2019 by the Executive Member for Regeneration. The event was attended by over 20 representatives from the housing sector including Registered Social Landlords, Private Limited Companies, Small Medium Enterprises and planning consultants. The launch has generated land enquiries from perspective developers.



The Blaenau Gwent Enterprise Strategy has been drafted in partnership with the Enterprise Board (private sector). UKCI bewing have been used to measure both start up and survival rates. Support provided for start ups and businesses is being increased through partnership working with business support agencies and specialists.

The Blaenau Gwent Energy Prospectus has been drafted. This will require agreement at Council before it can be distributed out to the market to identify investment opportunities. Blaenau Gwent together with four neighbouring authorities have secured up to £450,000 of funding through the Office for Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV) for the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points across 30 sites within the five Local Authority areas. Work has also commenced on delivery of a £4.1million programme to install energy efficiency measures in buildings throughout the Council's portfolio. Buildings included within the programme are Corporate Buildings, Schools, Leisure Trust Buildings and Street Lighting.



**Collaboration** through Cardiff City Region and G10, Valleys Task Force and VRP is progressing.



**Long Term** by 2033, Blaenau Gwent's Local Development Plan will support delivery of a new network of connected sustainable, vibrant valley communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.

The Housing Prospectus provides a mechanism through which a range of available housing developments sites within Blaenau Gwent can be promoted. It is a means of engaging proactively with developers, in an effort to stimulate local housing development and address the challenges we currently face.

In 2019 the Council has been involved in undertaking substantial Social Clause Work which has included proactively identifying community benefit opportunities within Council contracts and this has included work on:



### **The Aneurin Bevan Stones:**

- One employment opportunity created - 16hr contract;
- 12 TAFFY trainees;
- Two Construction Skills Certification Scheme card (training and test);
- 12 manual handling training; and
- 10 local businesses part of the supply chain, equating to a value of £14,868.42.

### **Silent Valley:**

- Free compost to schools and community groups e.g. Cwm Primary School biodiversity sessions enhancing school grounds by creating wildflower seed beds

### **Engagement with locally operating Registered Social Landlords to deliver community benefits**

- **Linc**  
Llys Glyncoed; two new employment opportunities, two visits by Coleg Gwent to the site, five community events including two intergenerational days held with an extra care facility and local primary school; and
- **Gwaun Helyg**  
one apprentice (Y Prentis), hours volunteered to supporting Bio-diversity work, upgrades to local football grounds.

Blaenau Gwent annual stakeholder event took place in July 2019 which included a session focused on looking to the Future- Maximising opportunities for prosperity, of which Regeneration were a part. The employment and skills stakeholder event taking place in September 2019 will follow on and complement this priority and will assist in the development of a Blaenau Gwent Employment and Skills Plan.

## Key Activities

The Council has set a balanced budget for 2019/20 of

**£145m** with savings agreed of £3.4m

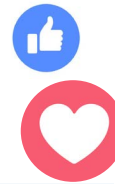
The percentage of Service Reports / Requests the Council received via digital means has increased

Over the last 12 months the Council has engaged with over **7,000** people through surveys and face to face participation

**240,956** people visited the website last year a total of **1.35m** page views

## Cuts to number of councillors given support

We are able to communicate important information with residents about changes to council services in real-time via our social media pages.



**Elisha Parsons**  
Blaenau Gwent Youth Mayor 2018-19



## What you told us...



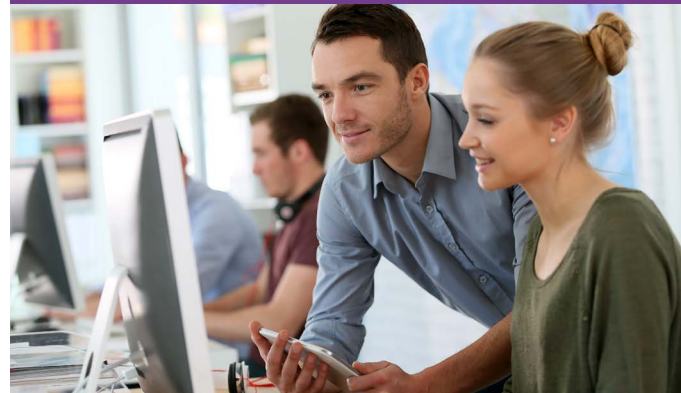
Don't forget people who don't use the internet



**Blaenau Gwent CBC @BlaenauGwentCBC · Dec 4**  
Due to emergency electrical repairs the benefits customer services at the civic centre is unavailable and the cash desk is closed until further notice. Apologies for any inconvenience. We will keep you updated when we have more information.

**Blaenau Gwent CBC @BlaenauGwentCBC · Dec 7**  
We are at Ebbw Vale Market today (10.30am – 12.30pm) and Abertillery Tesco (4.30pm – 6.30pm) to talk about the Council's Budget for 2019/20 and the no side waste enforcement scheme.

## Efficient Council



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Council award

BLAENAU Gwent Council has received an award from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) in recognition of the support it provides to councillors.

The council has met or exceeded the requirements for the award which include IT provision and support, development including training opportunities and code of conduct.

The award was presented to chairwoman Mandy Moore at a full meeting of the council on Thursday.

### Universal Credit

BLAENAU Gwent council is continuing to provide support for anyone affected by the roll-out of Universal Credit, which came to the borough on Wednesday, July 18.

Information is available at [blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/universal-credit](http://blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/universal-credit) or by calling 01495 353398 or emailing [benefits@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

## Headlines

### New Youth Mayor for Blaenau Gwent

In November the Council hosted an inauguration event to welcome the new Youth Mayor Elisha Parsons from Ebbw Vale.

### Proposed cut to number of councillors

Blaenau Gwent Council has welcomed a proposal from the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission to reduce the number of councillors and electoral wards in the county borough. If approved by Welsh Government the changes would see a reduction in elected members from 42 to 33, and in electoral wards from 16 to 14.



### Universal Credit

Universal Credit was implemented across Blaenau Gwent in July 2018, and through funding provided by DWP, the Local Authority has been able to support residents who were required to make a successful claim. The number of people supported who required Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) Assisted Digital Support (ADS) has amounted to over 500 up to 31 March 2019, far exceeding the targets anticipated.



### Council Budget

The Council agreed its Budget for 2019/20 investing in and protecting frontline services such as schools and Social Services, and switching streetlights on main roads back on until midnight. The Council's overall financial position for 2018/19 is showing an adverse variance of £71k against a total budget of £145m, this is a significant improvement compared to the previous year.



### WLGA Award For Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Council has received an award from the Welsh Local Government Association for its work around the Wales Charter for Member Support & Development. The Council has been acknowledged for the support it provides its elected members to enable them to carry out their roles effectively, and has met or exceeded the WLGA's requirements.



Universal Credit is being implemented in Blaenau Gwent on 18th July 2018  
**ARE YOU READY?**



## UC Universal Credit

<p><b>WHAT IS UNIVERSAL CREDIT?</b> Universal Credit is a new benefit for working age people who are on a low income or out of work, and replaces: Housing Benefit, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income Related Employment &amp; Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.</p>	<p><b>WHY IT AFFECTS ME?</b> You can claim Universal Credit if you are: Aged between 18 and 68 On a low income or out of work And on full time Education or Training</p>
<p><b>WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?</b> You will need to have: • Access to a computer and an email account • A bank, building society or credit union account for your payments</p>	<p><b>HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?</b> The Universal Support Team can help you set up an email account and to support you to claim Universal Credit. We can also offer you Digital Support and Personal Budgeting Support to help you make the most of your monthly income by improving your budgeting skills.</p>
<p><b>DON'T FORGET YOUR COUNCIL TAX AND YOUR FREE SCHOOL MEALS</b> You will need to make a separate claim for Council Tax Reduction AND for Free School Meals because they will NOT be covered by your Universal Credit payments. If you think that you may be entitled to help paying your Council Tax and for Free School Meals, please contact us.</p>	
<p><b>ARE YOU A PRIVATE TENANT?</b> The law now requires all landlords to be registered and agents and self-managing landlords to be licensed. If you rent your home from a private landlord, this law will impact on you. Rent Smart Wales can help you with: Property Checks, Anonymous Reporting and Tenant Guidance. To find out more, visit <a href="http://blms.wales">blms.wales</a>, <a href="http://rentsmart.wales">rentsmart.wales</a> or call 07000 932344 or contact the Housing Advice Centre, 20 Church Street, Ebbw Vale, NP23 5BU. Tel: 01455 354600</p>	

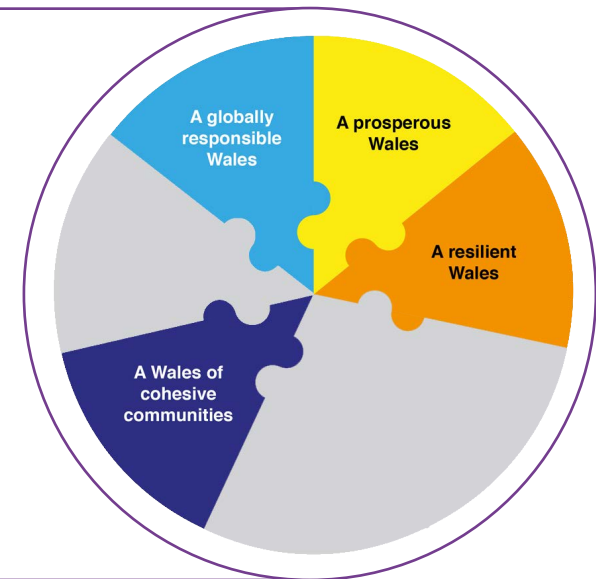
For further information please contact Rachael Davies, Claim Manager or James Shortbridge from the Universal Support Team on Tel: 01495 353398 or Email: [benefits@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

a better place to live and work - let's build it together



## Why this is important

Our Corporate Plan provides the focus for delivering really and lasting change for our Borough. It also provides the platform for transforming Blaenau Gwent into a more confident and capable Council. Our ambition is to deliver better outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent and that ambition is underpinned by solid and sustainable plans, ensuring the Council can be held to account for what it has promised to deliver. Maximising the impact of our resources to deliver those outcomes sits at the heart of this priority. This includes understanding our costs, controlling expenditure, maximising our income and aligning our resources to the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors to build a Blaenau Gwent for the future.



## How we performed

Throughout 2018/19 there has been some progress in the implementation of the Efficient Council priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives.

By the 31st March 2019, the Council considered performance and activity against each Well-being Objective in order to identify the success of each area. In year 1 the performance of Efficient Council was evaluated as being mainly successful as 67% of the actions were green (on target), 29% were amber (behind target) and 4% were red (significant concerns). When considering quarterly trend against the performance indicators 5 saw an improvement and 1 a decline.

At the centre of the Efficient Council priority is looking at an approach to working in a cost effective and efficient way across the Council. This ambitious project is called 'Bridging the Gap' and is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan. This programme of activity is looking at delivering a council that is more commercially minded in the way it delivers its services. Progress of this project will be seen over the remainder of the Corporate Plan.

The financial performance of the Council improved in 2018/19. This can be evidenced by achieving a balanced revenue budget and increasing the level of Reserves. This reflects stronger financial management across the organisation which is crucial to becoming a more efficient Council.

## Overview 2018/19

The Council has worked to strengthen its leadership by undertaking a review of Senior Management capacity. This has resulted in some changes to the management structure, including the identification of a new Chief Officer Commercial, whose role is to support the Council to become more commercially ambitious.

The Council has improved its financial management and has achieved a balanced Revenue Budget for 2018/19 and also an increase in General Reserves. Stronger financial management is now evident across all services.



Throughout 2017/18 and 2018/19 a full review of the senior management capacity and responsibilities was undertaken. This resulted in a cost saving of £500k and a reduction in senior management officers. The review also provided the opportunity to consider where priorities for the Council would be focussed in future. This led to the establishment and appointment of a Chief Officer Commercial, whose role is to support the Council to become more commercially ambitious.

The Engagement Strategy 'Our Approach to Engagement' sets out the Council's pledge to engage and support the Corporate Plan (2018-2022) including a commitment to continue a programme of public engagement.

The strategy outlines the benefits of effective engagement for both the Council and those who engage with us, grounded in the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales and driven by **6 key commitments**:

**Plan   Keep it simple   Involve   Feedback   Enable   Learn**

The development of the strategy has been informed by the findings of the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) Review undertaken in February 2018. The overall findings of the WAO review was that:

“ The Council is committed and enthusiastic about engaging with the community and recognises the scale of the challenge. ”

The inclusion of appropriate community benefits within public procurement contracts can engender significant benefits for the public sector organisation, the local economy and communities they serve. Community benefits are already a consideration as part of the Council's procurement policy; and opportunities are sought through social clauses within relevant contract documentation.

The Council has a history of securing and facilitating community benefits, particularly on large construction projects e.g. The Works and 21st Century Schools Programme.



In line with the delivery of the Council's Organisational Development Strategy an employee benefits scheme was introduced in 2018. The scheme positively contributes to the Council's employment offer and, in some circumstances, gives opportunity to make direct cost savings as a result of reduced national insurance contributions by both the employee and employer.

A survey of Council staff (excluding teachers) has been carried out to gauge views of the Council as an employer and identify areas where improvements can be made.

In 2018 the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales undertook a consultation to review the electoral arrangements across Wales. A task and finish group of the Democratic Services Committee was set up to consider the scheme and proposals.

The Council's proposal provided to the Welsh Government was to reduce the number of councillors from 42 to 34, the number of electoral wards from 16 to 14, and to amend the boundaries of the majority of the electoral wards.

The revised arrangements were based on electoral figures and gaining improved electoral parity. If formally approved the new arrangements will be implemented from 2022.

**726**

staff took part which is a **response rate of 45%** up from **33% in 2016**.



Action plans to address any identified areas will now be developed and implemented and the Managing Director will be holding a series of engagement events across the Council to discuss the findings and future progress.



The actual take up of the scheme can be measured by the amount of employees registering on the Blaenau Gwent staff Rewards website as follows:

Period	Number of registrations	% of Workforce	Running total
1st Month	1189	38.87%	38.87%
Quarter 2	354	11.57%	50.44%
Quarter 3	92	3.01%	53.45%
Total as of 31/03/2019	<b>1635</b>	-	<b>53.45%</b>

Just over an third of staff who completed the staff survey stated they use the staff benefits scheme to access discounts on shopping, restaurants and attractions with 15% of staff using it regularly (monthly). For those that have used the scheme, **71% rated it as good or excellent**.

The Children's Commissioner of Wales report "Hidden Ambitions" recommended that support should be offered to care leavers up to the age of 25. Additionally, recent reports and campaigns, in particular from the Children's Society, have identified that whilst there are a range of disadvantages care leavers uniquely experience, they have particular vulnerability in relation to council tax debt. In response to this, Council approved for the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy to be adopted which allows ongoing support to care leavers of up to 100% discretionary Council Tax.



Improving attendance remains a key priority for the Council and is linked to the need to create efficiencies and improve front line service delivery. Sickness absence has been identified as a key risk across the Council and it is acknowledged that relatively high levels of sickness absence will have a detrimental impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively. In order to address this, and Elected Member task and finish group was established. The group identified that the current policy is fit for purpose but just required some minor areas to be incorporated in to the policy. The revised Attendance Management Policy was approved in February 2019.



This year, Blaenau Gwent Council submitted an application to the WLGA for consideration of receiving the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. In August 2018, Blaenau Gwent received confirmation of being successful. In the letter the WLGA wrote:

'The WLGA would like to commend Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for your excellent submission for the renewal of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. The information and evidence provided clearly demonstrate that all the required criteria have been met or exceeded, showing that the required arrangements for member support and development are in place.'



## Budget Challenge



Giving residents which Council services are most important to them as part of the Budget setting process for 2019/20 which is presented to Council.

**7** drop-in events held in town centres across the borough

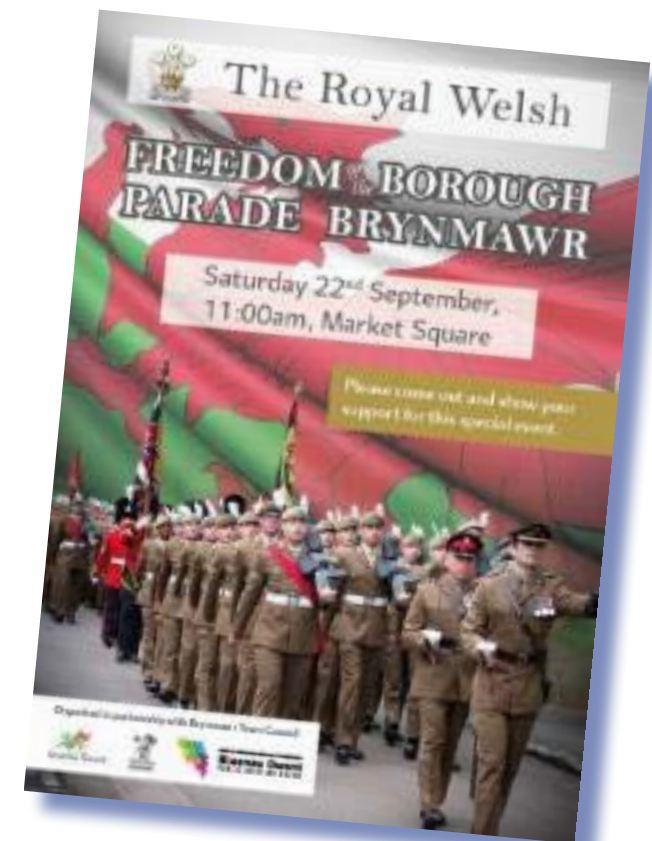
**603** People participated in the events

### Case Study

## Children's Grand Council

A special Children's Grand Council was held at Coleg Gwent, Ebbw Vale in October 2018. Two children from each of Blaenau Gwent's primary schools actively taking part in an event to mark the Centenary year of the end of the First World War.

The event, supported by the local branches of the Royal British Legion and the Royal Welsh, saw the children take part in a range of activities including a Poppy Workshop, facilitated by Coleg Gwent's Art Department, A Welsh Marching Drill and a World War One Re-enactment Workshop.



## Case Study

# Gwent Futures – Planning for our future

Blaenau Gwent Council is actively involved in a collaborative project called Gwent Futures through the Gwent Strategic Well-being Assessment Group (GSWAG). This innovative project helps to respond to the public service requirement to think in the long term.

The project, which started in 2017/18 utilises funding from Welsh Government looked to identify gaps in our knowledge on future trends and their consequences on public services in Gwent.

Following a successful tendering process, Ash Futures produced a series of case studies on future emerging trends, and considered a set of future scenarios which public

services may need to respond to in the future.

In 2018/19 the project continued, with a successful regional conference. The Blaenau Gwent Youth Major, Samuel Taylor, addressed over 80 public service professionals from across our region on the importance of involving children and young people in decision-making.

Following this, each of the five local authority areas held a local workshop with the intention of spreading the information gathered, and considers how each area may respond. Locally the focus was on maximising opportunities for prosperity, and took place in January 2019.

The workshop included a range of partners and included representation from key service areas from across the Council, including a number of staff from Community and Regeneration Services.

## What next for 2019/20

The project is continuing across the region, with each

area looking to develop a community risk register to help respond to some of the key challenges. Furthermore, the service areas from across the Council are being urged to utilise the intelligence gleaned from the project to help develop new strategies and policies, with a key example being the Local Development Plan.



## How 'Efficient Council' Performed 2018/19

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

<sup>^</sup>Measure is included within the Corporate Plan

\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.

\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)

### National Public Accountability Measures

**21st in Wales** in respect of the number of working days lost to sickness absence during the year<sup>^</sup>



### Corporate Plan Measures

There was a small overspend in the net capital expenditure this year.



An improved picture for service requests for waste and recycling, street cleansing, roads and lighting and switchboard services with 25% using digitalised self-service.



Level of General Reserves as a proportion of net revenue expenditure is 4.39% compared to 4.29% last year



Net revenue expenditure was within (0.05%) of agreed budget this year



External fees and charges as a percentage of Gross Expenditure has increased



In 2018/19 the Council received:

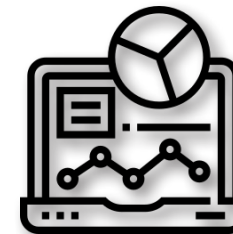
- 86 complaints
- 12.4 complaints per 10,000 population
- 59 compliments
- 8.5 compliments per 10,000 population

The Council cost per head of population is under development

A performance indicator to identify the percentage of people that agree their local council provides high quality services has not yet been developed.

## Key Activity Since April 2019

The Council recognises the challenges that it faces in the short, medium and long terms and has developed a programme of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. Based on strategic themes our Bridging the Gap Programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.



To support a balanced budget, it is also focussed on creating the conditions of a commercially minded Council fit to deliver services in the 21st Century. This includes seeking new revenue streams and ensuring resources are aligned to the strategic initiatives of the Council. This includes seeking new revenue streams and ensuring resources are aligned to the strategic initiatives of the Council. Following year on year funding reductions and the increased demand, the Council needs to redesign and reshape services in order to reduce costs and maximise income.

### The approach has a particular emphasis on:

Maximising potential of income generation and taking a clearly commercial approach where it is appropriate to do so

Exploiting the opportunity that digital transformation can provide

Making best use of our assets and property

Considering what action we can take to influence and reduce demand

Looking for opportunities to support residents to do more for themselves

Exploiting the opportunities to strengthen financial resilience by supporting growth in the area



In delivering the Organisational Development Strategy, and the commitment to promoting the health and well-being of employees, a purchasing annual leave policy was introduced during 2018/19. This policy is intended to assist employees in balancing work and home life by providing greater flexibility in respect of planned time off work.





It is early days to test the organisational benefits of the Annual Leave Purchase Scheme; however, benefits of adopting this policy may be the contribution of achieving Council cost savings, reduction in absence levels and an improvement in morale and motivation, whilst enabling Council employees to manage their work-life balance.

A fundamental review of the Code of Conduct for employees has been undertaken and was approved in May 2019. This code has been written for the effective operation of Council business and the well-being of its employees. All employees are expected to act in accordance with the Code - failure to do so may result in action in line with The Council's Disciplinary Code. The code is to be distributed across the Council throughout the year.



We continue to seek opportunities to work differently through partnership and collaboration not only across Gwent but across the Public Sector. As part of this the Council has provided a response to the Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association on the review of Strategic partnerships. Findings from the review are anticipated in early autumn and will assist in shaping the focus of local work.

The creation of the Office of the Chief Digital Officer for Welsh Government provides great opportunities for collaboration with other public agencies to push forward public sector reform. Through collaboration we are bringing learning from organisations that are digital pioneers for example DVLA, ONS and have made links with Cardiff University and National Software Academy.

In September 2019 the Council hosted an Open Data event alongside Data Cymru to promote the sharing of data across organisations as a means to improving the design of services for the public. This is an area that the Council will be looking into in the future.

There is a focus to work on aligning relevant work streams of the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board with initial discussions relating to Integrated Well-being Programme recently launched under the Transformation Fund as this Programme has a whole population focus.

A Head of Service sits on the working group supporting the drafting of statutory guidance in relation to the performance and improvement aspects of the Local Government Bill. The Head of Service is the political lead for exiting the European Union (EU) and chairs the core planning group which has an action plan and risk register and reports to Corporate Leadership Team. Exiting the EU is on the Corporate Risk Register.

WLGA funding has been provided to each local authority to support corporate planning. This has been utilised by employing a Policy Officer with relevant experience who sits on the WLGA National Coordinators Network for exiting the EU. An update report is scheduled into the democratic processes in the early autumn.



The Revenues section has formed close working links with the Citizen Advice Bureau. A High Street Rate Relief Scheme has been adopted by the Council and provisional grant funding received from Welsh Government of £310,000.00. from this, 207 potential recipients have been identified and invited to apply for the relief with 14 applications in quarter 1 2019/20.

citizens  
advice



**Long Term** the Bridging the Gap programme looks to provide a long term transformational change to the culture and financial stability of the Council.

# Residents now happier with town cleanliness

## Key Activities

The Council has invested **£160k** in **Street Cleansing** across the borough

Council approved **£2M Investment** in the highway network implemented from 2018/19

Collected less residual waste at **kerbside** and **HWRC** helping to improve recycling rates

Blaenau Gwent has exceeded the **58% recycling target** for 2018/19

After investing additional money into its street cleansing budget following feedback from local people, Blaenau Gwent Council took to the streets a year later to ask if it's been worth it.

## What you told us...

*Less litter on the streets*

*Recycling is easy for families*

*STOP FLYTIPDING*

# Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities



Blaenau Gwent Council take delivery of the first rear loading kerbside sort recycling vehicle in the UK



## Key Activities

### Highway Network

The Council approved a £2million investment in its highway network. 107151m2 of resurfacing works has been completed to date with a further 12,524m2 planned for completion in 2019.



### More people happy with cleaner town centres

After investing additional money into its street cleansing budget following feedback from local people, Blaenau Gwent Council took to the streets a year later to ask if it's been worth it. The results of a Street Scene survey showed that more people – 56% of those surveyed are now happy with the cleanliness of their local town centre and believe that this has really improved over the last year.



### No Side Waste Please - recycling increases

The first phase of the Council's 'no side waste policy' has been operating successfully in areas of Ebbw Vale since early June.

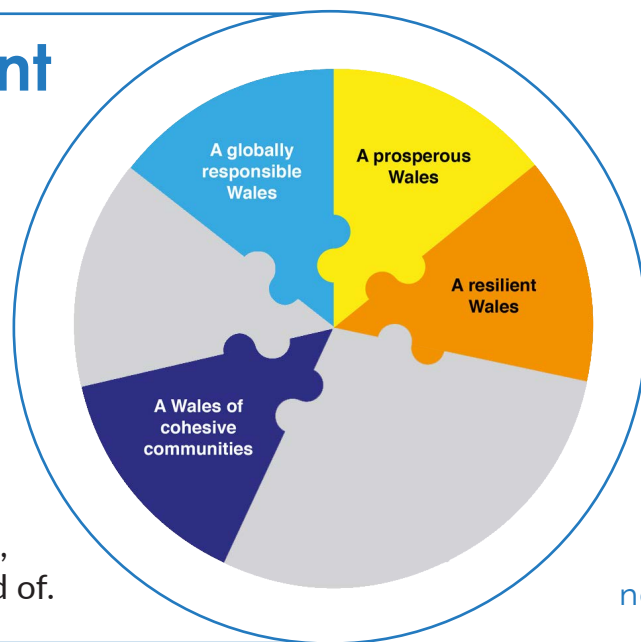
The change in policy is designed to increase recycling rates and to reduce the amount of black bag waste collected. Initial results are promising and the Council has collected almost 20% less black bag waste in the area than before the new policy started. At the same time, the percentage of material collected for recycling has gone up – an increase of 5%.

**NO Side Waste Please**



## Why this is important

Blaenau Gwent has a rich heritage and our buildings and countryside are part of Blaenau Gwent's attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit. Our local environment should be used to help improve the health and well-being of our families and communities and be enhanced for future generations to continue to enjoy. There is also a real desire to see the communities where people live kept clean, tidy and useable, creating areas that people can be proud of.



It is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives over the remainder of the Corporate Plan. The environment remains as a high priority for the community. The Council is looking to improve the area so that it is somewhere to be proud to live.

## Overview 2018/19

Work has progressed on improving and maintaining the highway infrastructure and includes:

The completion of 11.2 miles of new highway with an investment of

**£1.6M**

Improvement to the overall % of poor conditioned un-classified roads which has seen an improvement from 17% pre-commencement of work to 11.4% post work. This equates to a 5.6% reduction of poor conditioned unclassified roads.

## How we performed

Through focusing on delivering against the main priorities set out in the Corporate Plan we can begin to transform Blaenau Gwent into a more prosperous and welcoming area that celebrates its heritage and plays its part on the regional and national stage. We will continue to invest in our neighbourhoods so that they are places where people are proud to live.

By the 31st March 2019, the Council considered performance and activity against each Well-being Objective in order to identify the success of each

area. In year 1 the performance for Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities was evaluated as being mainly successful as 63% of the actions were green (on target) and 37% were amber (behind target). When considering trend against the performance indicators two saw an improvement, three a decline and three have no comparative trend.

Throughout 2018/19 there has been varied progress in the implementation of the Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities priorities.

A borough-wide householder campaign to raise awareness of side waste enforcement has been delivered to encourage householders not to put recyclables in their residual waste and to maximise recycling. Residents were liaised with to ensure that they have sufficient capacity to recycle e.g. provision of relevant containers and if not, were provided with new/additional containers.

The wardens continue to help motivate and encourage residents to participate fully with the recycling services and adhere to the 'no side waste' policy.

A phased implementation approach was undertaken but was fully in place by the end of 2018/19. Enforcement of the policy is now to be progressed 2019 onwards.





**In 2018/19**  
**Blaenau Gwent**  
 recycled **59.29%** of  
 its waste, achieving and  
 surpassing the **Welsh**  
**Government Recycling**  
 target of **58%**.

In achieving this, the Council has avoided further penalty fines and in recognition of our improvement of performance the Welsh Government agreed to waive the £135k penalty fine for 2017/18.

The statutory recycling target increases to 64% for all Welsh Local Authorities in 2019/20. Therefore, the continued support of residents and businesses is required to continue to reduce the amount of non-recyclable waste sent for disposal and increase the amount recycled in Blaenau Gwent.



Overall there has been an increase in Blaenau Gwent's recycling rate in 2018/19 and more noticeably since the introduction of side waste enforcement and black bag sorting at the Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC). Trend analysis shows that there is always a reduction of recycling in quarter 3 each year and this is mainly due to reductions in garden waste and HWRC recycling.

	2017/18	2018/19
Quarter 1	59.47%	56.58%
Quarter 2	58.25%	62.78%
Quarter 3	53.44%	58.89%
Quarter 4	52.30%	*59.26%
<b>Annual</b>	<b>56.00%</b>	<b>*59.29%</b>

The Local Authority currently pays for the treatment and disposal of black bag waste. As residents recycle more of their waste, the money spent on waste treatment and disposal will reduce and the income gained from the sale of recyclate increase. In 2018/19, approximately £320,000 has been saved on black bag waste disposal.

The savings achieved against black bag disposal has been utilised to pay for the additional resources required to introduce side waste enforcement at kerbside and the black bag sorting at the HWRC.



Through the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Scheme, approximately 90% of grounds and associated pavilions have been transferred to community groups. The Council has a long term commitment as landlord to these facilities to support community groups post transfer. The monitoring of the CAT scheme is:

- ▶ 1 complete freehold transfer;
- ▶ 21 complete – licence/ lease signed;
- ▶ 16 operating under licence;
- ▶ 6 active and working on applications;
- ▶ 1 business failed and brought back to the Authority; and
- ▶ 1 lease surrendered and returned to the Authority.

## Side Waste Enforcement



Informing people of the new 'no-side waste' policy and asking their views on the proposals. Feedback to be used to make improvements to services.

22  
3,000

Engagement events held across the borough, with over 3,000 People engaged with

245  
1500

questionnaires completed by members of the public. Over 1,500 requests to the council for new recycling/waste equipment

**Investment into street cleaning** across the borough has seen Blaenau Gwent's performance increase from 88.3% for streets of a high or acceptable standard to 94.1%. The service continues to engage with the community to help keep the borough clean and, where necessary, utilise enforcement to keep fly tipping, dog fouling and littering within control.

An all-Wales Keep Wales Tidy bid for grant funding has been successful and will be used to implement an enhanced



programme of activity to improve the environmental quality of Wales and Blaenau Gwent. To support this area of work, Blaenau Gwent currently has 98 officially registered Litter Champions. The department is developing a Litter Champion newsletter to promote the good work of the volunteers in our community.

**Blaenau Gwent has access to a multitude of green space** and the Council is continuing to move positively towards creating more accessibility to these green and open spaces. As part of this, the Council works closely with community groups as a means of understanding the access needs and required improvements needed.

We have managed in excess of 1.5 Ha of woodland habitats across the area. This included working with local community groups, such as Sirhowy Woodlands, where we secured £45k grant income via Wales Council for Voluntary Action Active Inclusion (training initiative with woodland management outcomes).



**Under our statutory responsibility for Active Travel**, the Council's Integrated Network Map has been developed and approved by Welsh Government. Following this approval the department was able to utilise £140k grant funding for network development and design.



Also under this initiative, 20km of cycle routes are benefiting from access improvements and further grant application bids are being developed for further improvements to the network (value £1.55m).

## Street Scene



Asking people if they had seen an improvement in the cleanliness of the streets in their town centres and where they live. Feedback used to target areas where improvements needed.

**7** engagement events held in town centres across the borough

**850** People engaged with

**over 300** survey questionnaires completed



**Involvement** Where relevant, the service ensures consultation, engagement and involvement with the public, elected members and interested parties have been carried out as part of the delivery requirements of the Highways Maintenance programme.



**Collaboration** Met and exceeded income targets through collaboration on professional Technical Services with neighbouring Local Authorities, allowing surplus income to support revenue budgets.

The Council has developed an **Environment Act Forward Plan** in order to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems across Blaenau Gwent by 2022. In order to create a proactive approach to meeting the duty; the Plan embeds the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into Council business planning and enables an efficient mechanism for reporting and meeting the requirement to report to Welsh Government.



## Case Study

# Climate Ready Gwent

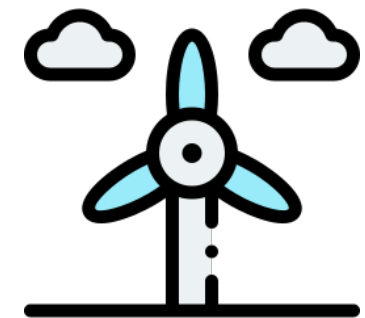
The Climate Ready Gwent – Capturing the Lived Experience Project engaged with a range of communities across Gwent to learn about people’s lived experiences of climate change. The project used a broad variety of engagement and involvement techniques to stimulate conversations and captures people’s views and feedback on climate change and climate adaptations. Within Blaenau Gwent the project engaged with the Children’s Grand Council and the 50+ Forum.

At the meeting of the Children’s Grand Council in February 2019 pupils took part in interactive activities which explored who they perceived were going to see the biggest impact from

climate change: the people; the environment; or local businesses.

Working in groups they used ‘mind mapping’ techniques to consider different climate impacts and identified what they felt were the most urgent issues. The children were then asked to imagine a positive future and to write messages to the people of Blaenau Gwent in 2050 telling them about what was done to tackle climate change.

Finally, the children were asked to write 15 word headlines on Climate Change, a call to action for decision makers now and in the future.





## Case Study

# Blaenau Gwent (BG) On The Move!

The BG on the Move project has been funded via Natural Resources Wales' Support Grant. Through the creation of a dedicated 'Ebbw Fawr Trail', an active travel route from the Sirhowy Hill Woodlands Nature Reserve to the Marine Colliery in Cwm, the project aims to help people to live healthier and more fulfilled lives by improving access to the natural environment and the outdoors through increased use of our natural assets via walking and cycling.

The BG on the Move project creates conditions to enable people of all ages to travel actively and increase levels of physical activity for recreational purposes in their daily lives. By encouraging physical activity and

maintaining both the natural and built environment, the project delivers multiple benefits for physical and social well-being through:

- Increased physical and mental health;
- Community cohesion;
- Increased levels of social interaction;
- Protecting biodiversity;
- Raising local awareness of Climate Change issues; and
- Improved local amenities and services



In order to achieve these benefits, we are increasing awareness of the Ebbw Fawr Trail route, local biodiversity and any new and improved environmental infrastructure. This is not only expected to lead to increased use of the route but also any associated green spaces that it provides a gateway for. The designs for any new imagery and installations along the route are being shaped by local people, including school children and local community groups.

Project work includes the introduction of improved pathways, street furniture, signage, and planting along the route – to be delivered jointly with local partners, businesses and residents through effective partnership

working and volunteering opportunities. Beyond green infrastructure, the project also looks to develop sustainable opportunities for people to take part in physical activities along the Ebbw Fawr Trail, such as litter picks, walking, cycling, running, and other nature activities.



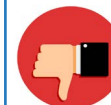
LLWYBR EBWY FAWR  
**EBBW FAWR TRAIL**

## How 'Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities' Performed 2018/19

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

### Corporate Plan Measures

Our aim is for no person to live more than 400m1 from their nearest area of green space. 2018/19 figures show that only 65% of people fit this criteria. There are 6.4 people per Ha in Blaenau Gwent.



Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted in 2018/19 has improved to 59.26%



The amount of waste generated that is not recycled, per person has decreased during 2018/19 from 52.64kg at the beginning of the year to 43.15kg at the end.



During 2018/19 there have been 20 Community Asset Transfers actively operating within Blaenau Gwent successfully for 6 months or more



The percentage of all roads in an overall poor condition has improved by 5.6% to 11.4%^








The net expenditure on the highway asset was £1,017,434^

34% of people agreed that their local streets are clean (agreed or strongly agreed)^

<sup>^</sup>Measure is included within the Corporate Plan

\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.

\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)

National Public Accountability Measures	
<b>13th in Wales</b> as 94.7% of our inspected highways were of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness. Improved by 3.2% and 6 ranking positions^	
<b>21st in Wales</b> for clearing fly tipping reported to the authority with the average timescale for Blaenau Gwent clearance being 6.2 days, which is almost 3 times higher than the Welsh Average of 2.2^	
<b>12th in Wales</b> down from 2nd for the number of visits to our local sports & leisure facilities per 1,000 population. This demonstrates a drop in sports centre visits, around 1600. This is the first time the Authority has been ranked outside of the top 3.	
<b>4th in Wales</b> for the condition of our principal A roads at 2.6%. This figure has remained static over the 2 years with the Wales average this year being 3.9%	
<b>19th in Wales</b> for the condition of our principal B roads at 5.6% with the Wales average this year being 4.5%	
<b>5th in Wales</b> for the condition of our principle C roads with a 0.6% improvement this year, almost 3 times better than the Welsh Average	
<b>22nd in Wales</b> for the percentage of food establishments which are 'broadly compliant' with food hygiene standards. This is an improvement of 0.7% but a loss of 2 ranking positions.	

^Measure is included within the Corporate Plan

\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.

\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)

## Key Activity since April 2019

Through the Council's Bridging the Gap Programme, one project has been established to consider how to effectively reduce the carbon footprint across Blaenau Gwent. As part of this, a low carbon action plan is in development by the Council, working with our partners, Natural Resources Wales, using carbon positive future. The Council has been actively involved in two important projects to consider how public services across Gwent can collaboratively work together to reduce the regions carbon footprint. The first of these projects involved a review of the fleet of vehicles each public service has across the area, and what opportunities there are to work individually and collaboratively to reduce the impact of our fleet on the environment. The second project has been looking at the opportunities across Gwent to set up electric charging points, including identifying appropriate sites and where funding is available nationally to take the project forward. Moving forward, the Council will look to work with partners to consider the findings of the carbon reduction projects and consider the individual and collective action that can be taken forward to help mitigate our carbon emissions as a public service provider.



The PSB is looking to address the **low carbon agenda** as part of the wider partnership programme.

As part of the Active Travel Programme an application was made to the Valleys Regional Park (VRP) for improved facilities at Parc Bryn Bach. It has been confirmed that funding has been awarded in the sum of **£500,000** for the redevelopment of the play area and bunkhouse at Parc Bryn Bach.

As part of the Biodiversity & Ecosystem Resilience duty, as part of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Council has identified Environmental Champions, supporting each directorate. The Environment Champions will identify key actions for their directorate to take forward that will support the enhancement and protection of the environment. These areas will then be included within the Council's business planning process so that regular monitoring can be undertaken.



**The Environment Act Forward Plan is to be approved at Council in October 2019.** One of the principles of the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources set out in the Environment Act is that we should be adaptable and plan, monitor, review and change our work as we gain a better understanding through improved evidence and our experiences. This way we can work together to ensure that with every iteration of the Forward Plan further steps can be taken to embed the duty to maintain and enhance biodiversity into every function of the Council.



A Strategic Outline Business Case has been submitted to Welsh Government to consider a second household waste recycling centre at Roseheyworth.

**Side waste enforcement** has been completed throughout Blaenau Gwent. Work will now be undertaken to consider the implementation of the policy and findings will be reported through the democratic process in due course.



The service has continued to invest in cleansing activity across the area with particular focus around grass cutting and seasonal related activities. There will be continued engagement with the public to encourage waste recycling and to discourage fly tipping.

We continue to work across the area with our community groups, internal and external partners to improve the quality of and access to green space. Funding has been secured to develop our Integrated Network Maps Active Travel Plans further over the next 12 months.



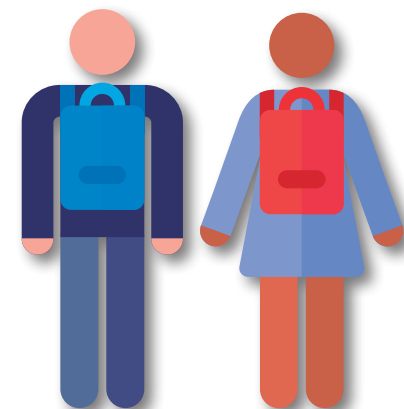
Working collaboratively with the Gwent Local Authorities two major funding applications have been developed and submitted to Welsh Government using the Enabling Natural Resources and Well-being (ENRaW) Funding. These have been approved in principle.

The Six Bells School has been completed with the occupation of the school in September 2019. Work continues with Education on the development of Band B Programme.

The majority of non operational buildings have now been disposed of or demolished. The service continues to work with the community groups who have leased buildings and grounds by offering technical advice and assistance.



**95%**  
of Grounds CATs  
have been completed.



## Key Activities

**76%** of primary and secondary schools categorised as **green or yellow** showing an improvement

**100%** of parental first preferences for a 3 year period in respect of both **nursery and secondary place allocation**

The numbers of young people not in education, employment or training are at their lowest level ever

## Quote from a Student:

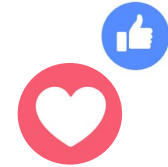
"I enjoyed the event, I felt that it was a great opportunity for us for our future and help with our options. Thank you for your help"

## What you told us...

EDUCATION OF OUR YOUNGEST IS EVERYTHING

I WANT TO BE A VET!  
I want to be a vet because I love any animal I want to be an exotic vet so that I can treat all the animals. I want good education and I will need to work very hard. I really hope I can get this great chance in my life.

I want to be a forensic Scientist



**WalesOnline** NEWS ▾ IN YOUR AREA ▾

SHARE

**GCSE in Blaenau Gwent are up**

GCSE results in Blaenau Gwent have improved this year by 3.7 percentage points on last year. Cabinet member Cllr Clive Meredith said:

“Congratulations to all our learners and everyone involved in this set of much improved results, including Governing Bodies, Headteachers, teachers, school based staff, parents and guardians. The efforts that have gone in to securing these improvements are not to be underestimated. Our young people are well prepared for the next stage of their learning journey and we wish them all the very best for their future.”

Blaenau Gwent CBC  
20 February

Deputy Youth Mayor for Blaenau Gwent, Charlotte Clark, is tackling the important issue of period poverty. She is promoting our new Period Equity Survey which will help us to understand the scale of period poverty in our area.

Please follow the link to take part: <https://bit.ly/2NfKkE> - your views make a difference. #BlaenauGwent #PeriodPoverty

Click for more

Blaenau Gwent CBC  
13 February

We would like to thank all the exhibitors and schools for making The STEM Inspiration Event 2019 such a success. This short video shows what some of the businesses had on display... look forward to seeing you all again next year.

#BlaenauGwentCBC #CareersWales #STEMinspirationBG #STEM #BlaenauGwent #BCBC #investinbg

## Council outlines £11m spend plan for schools



## Headlines

### Schools in Blaenau Gwent secure improved GCSE results in 2018

The Council is pleased to announce that GCSE results in Blaenau Gwent have improved this year. Results have increased by 3.7 percentage points on last year. This improvement in performance is set against a background of national change and education reform. The results are extremely encouraging. As in previous years there has been effective dialogue with Post-16 providers to ensure that learners are provided with appropriate pathways following results.



### No change to Home to School Transport

Blaenau Gwent Council's Executive Committee unanimously agreed not to go ahead with proposals to reduce free home to school transport provision in the county borough and not to withdraw travel grants for post-16 students. Councillors made the decision after considering a report that detailed the overwhelming lack of support for the plans from over 1,200 people who took part in the recent public consultation.



### Inspire Event

Over 400 Year 8/9 pupils from Blaenau Gwent attended an Inspiration Event, supported by 38 businesses, to help raise awareness of available career opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).



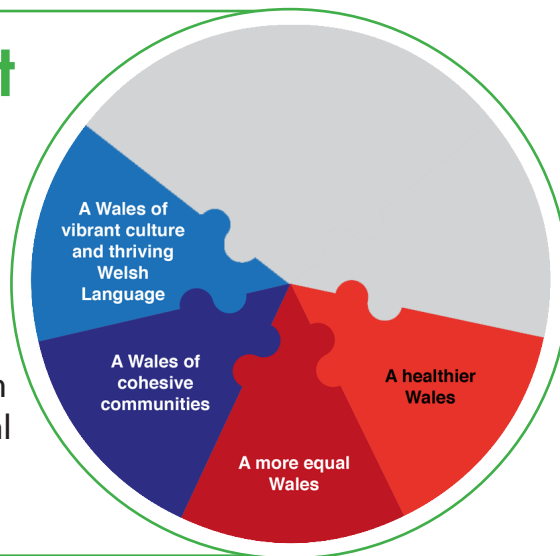
### 21st Century Schools Programme

Education, Schools and Technical Services have worked together to implement the 21st Century Schools Band A Programme which has provided £20.25m to support investment in the school estate.



## Why this is important

Improving the quality and provision of teaching and learning is vitally important to ensure we are achieving ambitious outcomes for all children and young people. We will continue to invest in our education services in order to support economic development and regeneration in order to provide opportunities for local people and businesses.



## Overview 2018/19

In Blaenau Gwent, attendance data is used as a proxy indicator for well-being and for the latest data this indicates the following:

**Primary attendance for 17/18** is 94.3%, the Wales mean is 94.5% which places Blaenau Gwent 2nd in our family of Local Authorities (Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taff).

**Unauthorised absence** places Blaenau Gwent 2nd in the family for 17/18 at 1.4%, with the Wales mean at 1.3%.

**Persistent absentees** for 17/18 is 1.6%, the Wales mean is 1.7% which places Blaenau Gwent joint 1st in the family.

**Secondary attendance** for 17/18 is 92.9%, the Wales mean is 93.8% which places Blaenau Gwent 3rd in the family from 1st in 16/17.

**Unauthorised absence** for 17/18 is 1.8%, the Wales mean is 1.6% which places Blaenau Gwent 1st in the family.

**Persistent absentees** for 17/19 is 4.1%, the Wales mean is 4.1% which places Blaenau Gwent 1st in the family.

## How we performed

Throughout 2018/19 there has been substantial progress in the implementation of the Education priorities but it is recognised that there is still further work to do to fully implement the aims and objectives.

By the 31st March 2019, the Council considered performance and activity against each Well-being Objective in order to identify the success of each area. In year 1 the performance against Education was evaluated as successful as 86% of the actions were green (on target) and 14% were amber (behind target). When considering trend against the performance indicators four saw an improvement, one a decline and one remained the same.

Education remains high on the Council agenda. The Council is looking to support the well-being agenda of both teachers and pupils as well as support improvements in attainment.

Blaenau Gwent has had its best ever school categorisation and school inspection profile; all primary schools are either categorised as green or yellow (with the exception of two who wanted to stay amber in order to receive extra days support as they had new head teachers). Our two special schools are green and yellow, our mainstream secondary schools are green and yellow with our two red schools progressing at a different pace due to the complexity of the work needing to be done, however, both are making progress.



With regards to the outcomes of our 11 and 14 year olds this continues to improve at the expected level and at a higher level for more able pupils. The performance of our 16 year olds increased in GCSE Maths (from 50.25% to 52.9%) and L2+ (from 41.1% to 44.5%). 5 A\*/A increased from 7.5% to 11.9%.

Two further schools have achieved Phase 5 accreditation during Spring Term 2019 and are now working towards the National Quality Award. In addition, two pre-school settings have become the first to complete the HSPSS in Blaenau Gwent. They have been accredited for all seven aspects of the scheme, ensuring that the setting embeds and embraces health and well-being within their day to day life.

### Blaenau Gwent is seeing the lowest ever NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training) figures for young people at the end of Year 11 at 1.5% with the

Wales average at 1.6%. To further evidence this; more young people are staying on in education post 16 from 86% to 87.6%. The Wales average is 88.2%.

No schools, inspected under the new framework, have been placed in follow-up by ESTYN with many schools demonstrating excellent practice in aspects of their work.

The Educational Transformation Achievement Service has worked in partnership to progress a number of projects. Some examples of this work include:

- ▶ The Education ICT Infrastructure and Connectivity Project formally commenced in 2018. This transformational project will realise an investment of circa £56,000 into the ICT infrastructure across the school estate.
- ▶ Development of a 3G pitch at Brynmawr Foundation School.
- ▶ The service has secured £35,915 from the Rural Schools Funding to support one school in Blaenau Gwent.
- ▶ Period Poverty – Welsh Government issued Blaenau Gwent the following funding in order to tackle period equity:

- Capital funding 2017/18 - £13,937
- Revenue funding 2018/19 & 2019/20 - £5,236

The funding has been used to secure free sanitary provision in all schools and youth settings, along with leisure centre provision which is co-located on school sites, and a pilot being undertaken in the Abertillery Ward.



Education received confirmation of an additional £47,826 of revenue funding for 2019/20, which the project group will be using to sustain and increase provision.

Blaenau Gwent have been hailed as an example of best practice by Welsh Government and PHS, in line with their project approach to period equity, which seeks to address facilities, product availability, education and awareness. The project is being delivered in partnership with ABUHB, third and private sector services/ organisations.



The Band A Programme has seen an investment of £20.25m in the school estate between 2014-19 (50/50 Welsh Government and Council funded). The current Programme status is:

### **Tredegar Comprehensive School Re-modelling Project - £2.3m**

The project has now concluded. A project closure/ evaluation workshop session with Construction Excellence Wales (CEW) was delivered in the spring-term, which deemed the project to be an example of best practice in terms of:

- ▶ value for money;
- ▶ partnership working;
- ▶ project management arrangements; and
- ▶ effective delivery on a live site.

### **Abertillery (Tillery Street Campus) New Build Primary School - £9.8m**

The closure report has been finalised in preparation for submission to Welsh Government, and a lessons learned session has taken place with the project team.



### **Ystruth Primary School Re-modelling Project - £635,900**

In November 2016, the Business Justification Case was approved by Welsh Government, resulting in an investment of £635,900 into the school, in order to remodel key areas in ensuring that the school meets the changing needs of the pupil population. The project had a specific focus on the transformation of provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, in that the resource base provision will undergo extensive remodelling works. The project commenced in October 2017 and concluded in August 2018 on programme and profile. The project is now within the 12 month defect and liability programme.

### **Six Bells New Build Primary School - £8.8m (inclusive of an additional £150,000 of funding secured from Welsh Government in January 2019)**

The project involves the development of a 360 place new build primary school, which will accommodate pupils from Queen Street and Bryngwyn Primary Campuses. The school will also host a 60 place nursery and; a nine place resource base unit.



The Cabinet Secretary for Finance announced on 16th January 2018 that £30m (100% funding, with no match requirement from Councils), would be allocated to support capital projects dedicated to growing Welsh language in education (the grant has been administered in addition to the capital allocations confirmed in Band B). Blaenau Gwent Council's Education Directorate received confirmation in October 2018, that they were successful in securing £6m from the Welsh Medium Capital Grant.

## Home to School Transport / Post 16 Travel Grants



Giving people the opportunity to comment on proposed changes to the Home to School Transport (reverting to statutory limits) and Post 16 Travel Grants (withdrawing travel grants on a phased basis) for the academic year starting September 2019

**1220** Total consultees engaged  
**12** drop in sessions took place with  
**442** attending across the borough including Blaenau Gwent Learning Zone, Blaenau Gwent Youth Forum and Schools Grand Council

**1157** questionnaires received  
**Home to School Transport 949 participants, 89%** either strongly disagreed or disagreed with reverting to statutory limits  
**Post 16 Transport – 1042 participants 95.5%** either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the Council's preferred option to withdraw travel grants on a phased basis

## Case Study Youth Service

The Youth Service was successful in being nominated and shortlisted for two awards this year. The service came second in the first ever 'Youth Work in Schools' Award as part of the National Teaching Awards in Wales. The award recognises how the service has fully embedded support into the secondary school in Ebbw Fawr, through offering one to one and group work support, transition in and out of the school, alternative curriculum support in youth centres, sexual health and relationships support and links to the evening provision.

The second nomination was for the Youth Work Excellence Award in Wales and again the top place was narrowly missed as the service came second. This award recognised Open 4 Youth Nights as a project which supports young people with their health and wellbeing. The project runs every 3 months on a Saturday night, where the Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre is closed to the public and young people take over. Youth workers run a variety of different sessions and all facilities are available.

Youth workers run a variety of different sessions and all facilities are available.

On average 250 young people attend from across Blaenau Gwent, numbers of anti-social behaviour calls are reduced for that evening and young people get to have fun, try new experiences and having access to support if they need it.



**Integration and Collaboration** - SPACE-Well-being has been established and is a single point of access for children's emotional well-being including CAMHS involvement. The Educational Psychology Service and the Youth Service represents Education at this multi-agency weekly meeting with Families First, S-CAMHS, PMHCSS, Heddlu Gwent Police, YISP, BG Youth Service and ABUHB Clinical Psychology. The meeting focuses on some of our most vulnerable pupils and works collaboratively and in an integrated way to meet pupil need.

## Case Study

# Rhos y Fedwen Primary School

At Rhos y Fedwen we believe that if schools, families and the wider community work together in equal partnership we can all succeed. We know that we cannot improve the attainment and well-being of our learners in isolation.

Our work is underpinned by our core values of respect, aspiration and, vitally, equality and equity. As with most things we do, at Rhos y Fedwen we approach equality through welcoming and developing meaningful collaboration with our families and community partners.

In working towards a more equal Wales we aim to engage with and support the most vulnerable in our school community. Although a largely monocultural school, we are lucky that some of our families and community partners have contributed to cultural workshops which reflect the heritage of our learners – haka and tribal body art from Samoa,

Diwali celebration sweets and saris from India, Polish pickles and folktales, Portuguese dancing and of course an Eisteddfod and celebration of St Dwynwen's Day.

One of the things we are currently most proud of in Rhos y Fedwen is our Intergenerational Project. We are all – staff, pupils and some parents – trained Dementia Friends. In partnership with United Welsh and volunteers, our learners have designed and started to build a dementia friendly garden.

Our Key Stage 2 learners have developed relationships with community members living in a local care home through a pen pal scheme. Groups of nursery children have weekly visits there to play games and sing songs with their new friends.

We have just received a donation from Blaenau Gwent Alzheimers Society to cover the cost of a bus for

two terms so that we can establish an intergenerational choir with a nearby older persons sheltered housing community.

For Remembrance Day, year 6 was invited to a workshop whereby they learned how to make ceramic poppies and in turn were invited to teach these skills to older people in the community. The skills and knowledge they developed that day were immeasurable.



## How 'Education' Performed 2018/19 (academic year 2017/18)

Against each Well-being Objective the Council has identified a number of performance measures to evidence how well delivery of the Well-being Objectives is going. These are split by both local and national indicators. Where possible, the Council has compared the local indicators to performance last year. The national indicators, known as Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) are submitted on an annual basis to Data Cymru by all 22 Local Authorities. This information is available publically and can be compared across Wales.

*\*Not all measures can be compared as the way they are counted can change year-on-year.*

*\*\*You can view more performance information at [www.mylocalcouncil.info](http://www.mylocalcouncil.info)*

### National Public Accountability Measures

**18th in Wales** for high pupil attendance in primary schools and 20th in Wales for pupil attendance in secondary schools.



**21st in Wales** for number of year 11 pupils achieving the average Capped 9 score



**19th in Wales** for percentage of Year 11 leavers known not be in education, training or employment (NEET)



### Corporate Plan Measures

The proportion of schools where school inspection and school categorisation judgements have placed them as yellow or green has increased this year by 6% with 76% of schools being categorised as such.



4.1% of Blaenau Gwent secondary school pupils attendance is persistently less than 80%, however this figure has improved from 4.8% last year



1.6% of Blaenau Gwent primary school pupils attendance is persistently less than 80%



Pupil outcomes and progress for Key Stage 4 Level 1 pupils has improved to 93.2%





## Key Activity since April 2019

The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme allocation of circa £19.6m (with an intervention rate of 65/35) was approved by Welsh Government Capital Panel; however, each project within the programme will be subject to a detailed business case, along with statutory processes in line with the Welsh Government School Organisation Code Version 2 (2018). The Blaenau Gwent Band B Programme spans the period 2019/24 and encompasses the following priority projects:

- ▶ **Priority 1** - Secondary School/ Phase Remodelling
- ▶ **Priority 2 (i)** -360 Place Primary Ebbw Fawr Valley
- ▶ **Priority 2 (ii)** - Primary School Refurbishment (in line with the availability of funding post creation of the new 360 place primary in the Ebbw Fawr valley).

Blaenau Gwent continues to lead on the South East Wales Consortium 21st Century Schools Programme in the region and will lead the regional group into the academic year 2019/20.

The Welsh Government (WG) re-profiling for the Band B Programme has been approved circa £1m linked to the Welsh medium proposal. The WG business case submission is underway and will be submitted by September 2019.



The £20.25m 21st Century Schools Band A programme is now fully delivered. The developments include the completion of the Six Bells Project with the occupation of the school in September 2019.

There are school re-organisation proposals that will require a statutory consultation exercise on changes to the capacity at Pen-y-Cwm Special School and potentially Welsh medium provision. The WG has recently announced that Blaenau Gwent has been successful with the Welsh medium grant and this could result in an investment of £6m that is 100% externally funded.

The revenue sustainability aspects of the Youth Service are now stable for the foreseeable future following WEFO approval for the Inspire to Achieve/Work project up to 2023/24. The service is also going to secure an additional £160,000 revenue from the WG's Youth Grant.



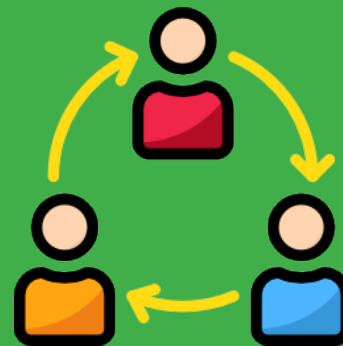
Strong regional approach to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) developed with a focus on ALN reform, aligning provision, process and policy where possible. Work commenced with school ALNCoS to consider schools provision mapping of ALN. Schools have carried out initial assessment based on Estyn guidance and a group of schools will work with the Local Authority to take this forward to ensure schools meet the requirements of Estyn with regard to ALN.



Regionally, Local Authorities are working more closely on ALN than ever before, coordinated through the SEWC ALN group which the SMfl chairs and will chair through 19/20.

Welsh Government have confirmed that the new ALN Code will be available in January. This will enable both the IS and schools, as well as other services, to have the fullest understanding of what is expected in September 2020 and provide a clear view on the progress we have made so far.

The Inclusion Team work closely with Social Services colleagues regarding the placement of CLA pupils Out Of County however there is further work required regarding clarity over responsibility for educational costs on Social Services driven placements. The SMfl sits on Complex Cases Panel and is fully involved in financial discussions relating to placements. This supports the need for both the CLA team (sitting under Social Services) and the Special Educational Needs Team (sitting within Inclusion) to have a coordinated approach. Again there are instances where cases fall outside complex cases and processes need to be tightened in this area.



The DBS Report for school governors has been finalised and shared with schools for implementation. The respect and resilience (PREVENT Extremism) action plan has been finalised and is being implemented across the Directorate. The content of the Joint Safeguarding Performance Report has been reviewed and now includes broader contextual information, which will be built upon through the year. Also, the 2019/20 Safeguarding in Education policy has been reviewed.

## How we keep track of what we are doing

The application of the sustainable development principle and the reach of the Well-being Objectives mean changing the ways in which we work. The Council has focused on seven key corporate areas as part of implementing the Act. Below provides an update against the core set of activities that are common to the corporate governance of public bodies, recognising that there is still more to do in these areas over the coming years.



### Performance management

The Council has a well established performance management framework in place which supports all aspects on service planning, delivery and improvement. As part of this the Council's Well-being Objectives, as identified within the Corporate Plan have been used to shape all service planning throughout the Council. A 'golden thread' has been developed from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation.

As part of our business planning arrangements, progression of the sustainable development principles has been included and is reported on against each Well-being Objective. For 2019/20, progression of actions relating to the Environment Act will also be included.

On a quarterly basis, the Council receives performance monitoring of the Corporate Plan as part of the Finance and Performance Report. Alongside this reporting, there are a number of other performance reports that are reported internally and through the democratic process.

### Financial Planning

The Well-being Objectives have been produced at a time of significant financial constraints and radical change within the public sector. The Council is reviewing its financial management and planning to enable it to develop a new approach to effectively demonstrate how we use resources to deliver sustainable long term outcomes to both current and future generations. This is especially difficult against a backdrop of annual resource allocations from central Government. Consequently, there will be a need to adapt to ongoing changes during the lifetime of these Objectives and further review them accordingly.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a key element within the Council's strategic planning framework. It is this financial framework which will support the Council's financial resilience and ensure it operates sustainably.

The MTFS brings together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and forms the basis for decision making. The MTFS includes a forward look over the next five years to assess the spending requirements the Council is likely to face to deliver the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and highlights the funding requirement that will need to be made to ensure the Council can set a balanced budget each year.



At this stage, the MTFs & Bridging the Gap document is a draft and proposes the approach that the Council will take to respond to the financial challenges we face over the next five year period. This will be an iterative process and one that will be developed and refined as our funding position from Wales Government becomes clearer and strategic business reviews are developed.

The Council recognises the challenges that it faces in the short, medium and long terms and has developed a programme of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. Based on strategic themes our Bridging the Gap programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.

Designed to support a balanced budget it is also focussed on creating the conditions of a commercially minded Council. This includes seeking new revenue streams and ensuring resources are aligned to the strategic imperatives of the Council. Following year on year funding reductions and the increased demand, the Council needs to redesign and reshape services in order to reduce costs and maximise income.

The approach has a particular emphasis on:

- Maximising the potential of income generation and taking a clearly commercial approach where it is appropriate to do so;
- Re-procurement and re-negotiation of contracts;
- Exploiting the opportunity that digital transformation can provide;
- Making best use of our assets and property;
- Considering what action we can take to influence and reduce demand;
- Looking for opportunities to support residents to do more for themselves;
- Exploiting the opportunities to strengthen financial resilience by supporting growth in the borough



Revenue Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 18/19	Provisional Outturn 2018/2019 £'000	Variance Favourable/(Adverse) £'000
Corporate Services & Financial Management & Strategy	14,777	14,580	197
Economy	1,558	1,457	101
Education	54,859	55,075	(216)
Environment	28,863	29,325	(462)
Licensing	71	71	0
Planning	1,115	1,029	86
Social Services	44,147	43,924	223
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>145,390</b>	<b>145,461</b>	<b>(71)</b>

**Current Budget Position:**

The provisional outturn is showing an overall adverse variance of £71,000 against the 2018/2019 budget. This is a significantly improved financial position when compared to the quarter 3 forecast budget position of £800,000.

Capital Budget			
Portfolio	Budget £'000 18/19	Provisional Outturn 2018/2019 £'000	Variance Favourable/(Adverse) £'000
Corporate Services & Strategy	1,973,621	1,987,976	(14,355)
Social Services	614,259	614,259	0
Education	5,859,437	5,859,437	0
Environment (Including Leisure)	5,414,838	5,413,441	1,396
<b>Council Total</b>	<b>13,862,155</b>	<b>13,875,113</b>	<b>(12,958)</b>

**Current Budget Position:**

The provisional outturn shows an overall adverse variance of £12,958 against the 2018/2019 programme. This is an improved financial position when compared to the quarter 3 forecast budget position of £22,167. The improved position can be attributed to forecast scaffolding costs associated with the Company Shop not materialising, coupled with a small underspend on two infrastructure projects.

**Risk Management** The Council's Risk Management Mission Statement is 'Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks to ensure that they are eliminated or managed to an acceptable level.'



To ensure that the Council meets the risk management requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, our Risk Management approach ensures that long term risks and challenges to both service delivery and our community are considered.

The Council believes that Risk Management is a vital component to ensuring that it becomes a high performance organisation. We are committed to ensuring that Risk Management is embedded throughout the Council as managing our risks will lead to more effective use of resources, direct improvements to services and to our customers and stakeholders, as well as improving corporate governance and performance.

**Procurement** Procurement activities are facilitated in compliance within existing legal obligations; predominately defined within the Public Contract Regulations (PCR's) 2015. The Council has adopted the Welsh Procurement Policy 2012 (amended 2015) and apply its principles to all commissioning and procurement requirements.



To support the implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including Community Benefits, at the outset of each procurement, the client and procurement officers determine project scope and consider opportunities for the inclusion of the Act and Community Benefits, either within the specification and contract documentation, as either core or non-core, as well as within the selection and award criterion.

**Corporate Planning** The Council has fully aligned all of its planning to the Corporate Plan which includes the Well-being Objectives. These are central to the organisation and future work planning and strategies are aligned to these areas. The Sustainable Development principles have been included within the business planning template used across all service areas. The five ways of working are also captured within the Corporate Reporting Template, this is supported by guidance which is reviewed and shared periodically.



**Workforce** The Council has recently undertaken a staff survey to capture the views of staff. There was a very positive uptake in completing the survey, up from 2016. The results of the survey are to be considered by Corporate Leadership Team and the Managing Director will be holding engagement events throughout the autumn. The sessions will be an opportunity for staff to discuss the results of the survey and to provide an update on our financial planning and how we are working to identify further savings and address gaps in funding over the next few years.



The Council acknowledges that staff are its biggest asset. In order to support staff, the Council has introduced a staff rewards scheme which will entitle employees to discounts at a wide range of high street shops and restaurants.

The Council is committed to promoting a healthier and more resilient workforce. This is evidenced recently with the Council adopting a scheme allowing individuals to request additional annual leave. The scheme supports employees to balance their work and home life by providing greater flexibility in respect of planned time off work.

**Assets** Blaenau Gwent's Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is a statutory document which sets out the Council's strategic approach to its land and property assets identifying the key drivers which impact on how property is managed and maintained.



We recognise that property represents a major asset and cost for the Authority but is also a major risk. It provides the primary spaces from which the Council's services are delivered and as such needs to be fit for purpose. The SAMP identifies the state of the portfolio and a clear way forward for the Council's approach to its strategy for property. This provides a balanced and clear approach to whether property should be retained or released and therefore guides the Council's decisions on investments in property.

As part of the Council's Community Asset Transfer (CAT) programme, an extensive programme of engagement has taken place to ensure the CAT process is fully understood. All applications are consulted upon with the local Members, Executive Member as well as Town and Community Councils – where that applies. The public have had the opportunity to make representation. This extensive programme has been put into operation to benefit the community in the longer term, ensuring sporting facilities are available locally which are community run and support the longevity of the area.

## Working with Elected Members

The Council has worked with Elected Members in order to raise awareness, understanding and build confidence in how the principles of the Act can be applied. As part of this a session was held to consider how to effectively use the Act when within Committees.

The session was open to all Scrutiny Committee Members. The interactive session used reports that had been through the Committee process and Members gave consideration to how they could frame their questions using five ways of working as set out by the Act. There was very positive feedback on the session and

members requested that a further session be held as part of their ongoing training and development programme.



A specific session with members of the PSB Scrutiny Committee was held to support them in their role, with consideration given to how to scrutinise the collective role of the PSB rather than individual bodies.

Moving forward, the five ways of working will be included as part of the Member Competency Framework introduced in 2018 and used as part of the Personal Development Review discussions.



## Welsh Language Annual Report

The Welsh Annual Report sets out the highlights and significant pieces of work undertaken to support the requirements as set out within the Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice issued in September 2015.



Following review, a number of key findings have been identified and these will be taken forward in order to further embed the Standards across service areas. The most noted findings are:

- The number of complaints received by the Council regarding the Council's compliance with the Standards has increased from 1 in 2016/17 to 3 complaints in 2017/18 with signage being an issue on all complaints.
- The Action Plan resulting from the Welsh Language Commissioner's investigation into non-compliance with Standard 84 'If you offer an education course that is open to the public, you must offer it in Welsh' has been approved.
- There is a small increase in the number of employees who are fluent in the Welsh language and over half of these employees are on permanent contracts. This will have a positive impact on resilience across the Council.
- Overall it is noted that 25% of staff have some Welsh language ability, which is a positive starting point when we are looking to build resilience and capacity.

### Case Study

Congratulations to pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Bro-Helyg who were regional winners in the Gwent Regional Urdd Eisteddfod with their 'Action Song' which told the story of the Welsh language and increasing the number of Welsh speakers. The group went on to represent Gwent in the national finals in Cardiff Bay.



## The Strategic Equalities Plan

The Council is committed to implementing the Equality Act 2010 and this is evidenced by the Blaenau Gwent Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020. Some key activity to date includes:

- ▶ Blaenau Gwent Council being recognised by the Children's Commissioner for Wales as being one of the only Council's in Wales to have a published Accessibility Strategy and action plan.
- ▶ Blaenau Gwent Council has collaborated with Tai Calon, a local registered social landlord, as well as Pride Cymru, to work with the young person's LGBT+ community to develop a local LGBT+ Social Group. This network, which young people have named 'Pridentity' exists as a self-sustained social group through which young people regularly meet to discuss ways in which to improve visibility of the LGBT+ community across Blaenau Gwent.
- ▶ Established through the Council's Corporate Equality Network, a Procurement working group has set out a number of priorities in order to review and improve the way in which the Council carries out its procurement functions. Procurement is a 'Specific Duty' for Wales under the PSED, requiring the principles of equality to be embedded in to the procurement framework and subsequent commissioning activities. The working group are exploring equality considerations in line with the principles of the Community Benefits Strategy, as well as the commitment expectations set out in the Code of Practice for Ethical Employment in Supply Chains.

- ▶ Engagement with the local community has been improving and groups worked with include:
  - Disability groups, including the Access 4 All forum;
  - The Buddhist Community;
  - The Gypsy Traveller Community;
  - LGBT groups;
  - Pregnancy and Maternity Groups;
  - Armed Forces support networks;
  - Welsh Language Groups; and
  - Children and Young People's networks.



### Case Study - Race Relations

Ystruth Primary School has a policy which ensures all persons are treated fairly and equally irrespective of their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The school has been engaged in the 'Show Racism the Red Card' workshops and have achieved The Rights Respecting Schools Level 2 Award.

As a Rights Respecting School we actively teach our pupils that they have a right to be safe and it is their responsibility to look after their own safety and the safety of others. In order to keep safe we provide opportunities for the pupils to consider their; safety on the roads, safety on the railways, safety with electricity, safety on building sites, the danger of 'strangers' and internet safety.

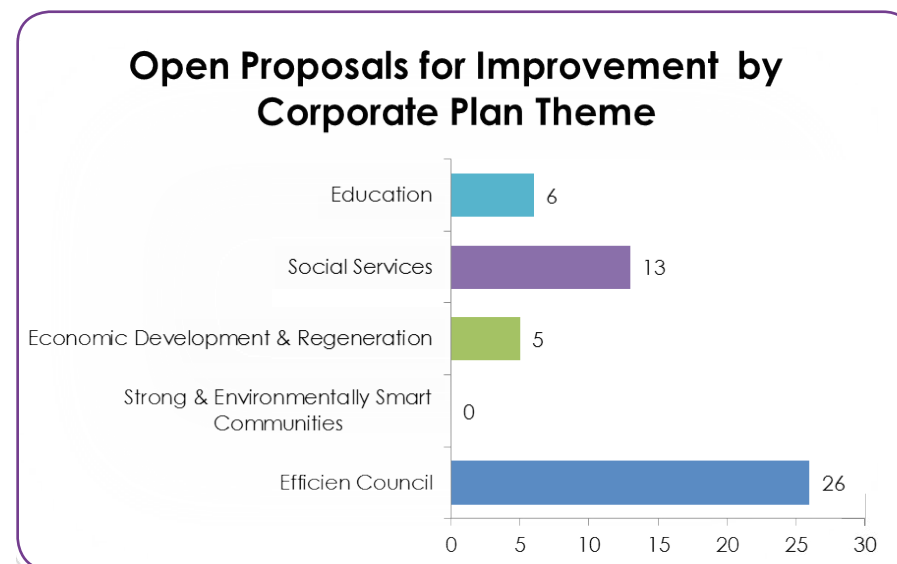
Throughout the year we will be preparing lessons, inviting speakers and showing films and videos all aiming to highlight these dangers and to encourage children to manage their own safety. We shall also provide pupils with information of what they could do if they do not feel safe.

## Internal and External Regulations

The Council is monitored by a number of regulatory bodies, the main of which are:

- Wales Audit Office (WAO);
- Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW); and
- Estyn.

The Council monitors all proposals for improvement it receives from both internal and external auditors on a quarterly basis through the Finance and Performance Report. Each of the proposals is monitored through the relevant business plan. Periodically, a review of the open proposals is undertaken and presented to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) to consider which proposals can close as they have been completed or have moved to business as usual. In 2018/19, the Council either worked on or received 11 reports five were local and six were national.



From these and previous proposals for improvement received, the Council is monitoring 50 proposals for improvement. The Council looks to report final reports from auditors and the responding management response to the relevant Scrutiny Committee and then Audit Committee.

**Annual Improvement Report 2018/19** The Auditor General for Wales reported that for 2018/19 the Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement. Based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the Wales Audit Office and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2019-20. During the course of the year, the Auditor General did not make any formal recommendations.

**Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Local Authority Performance Review 2018/19** In July 2019, CIW provided a summary of the work they undertook in Blaenau Gwent throughout 2018/19 and the performance of how well the Council had carried out its statutory Social Services function. CIW identified a number of strengths and improvements in line with the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2015.

**Internal Audit** Internal Audit also undertakes a number of reviews across Council services and their information is reported to the Audit Committee: [http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau\\_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=AUD](http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=AUD)

## Well-being Statement

As part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 all Public Bodies have a duty, under section 7 of the legislation, to publish a Well-being Statement at the same time that they publish their Well-being Objectives. As part of this duty, an annual report must be developed which documents the previous year's progress against implementing the Well-being and Improvement Objectives. This was published in October 2018. This was published in October 2018 and is available at [http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau\\_gwent/images/att9171.pdf](http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/images/att9171.pdf)

The Well-being Objectives have been written to support the achievement of the Well-being Goals and their success will be dependent on the delivery of the Well-being Objectives and their supporting actions and measures.



The delivery of the Sustainable Development Principles supporting the Well-being Goals will be evidenced within the Council's business plans that work to implement the Corporate Plan 2018/22.

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## How the Council will govern itself to meet the Well-being Objectives

As part of the requirements of the Future Generations Commissioner, the Council completed a self assessment tool against implementation of our Well-being Objectives. The Commissioner has used the tool to understand how public bodies are implementing the Act 'on the ground', in order to promote the Sustainable Development Principle and encourage public bodies to meet their Well-being Objectives, so that we can all move towards meeting the seven National Well-being Goals.

The Commissioner has provided a response to the Council on progress made to date, including suggestions for improvement. The Council has aimed to respond to the Commissioner within this report and will continue to work to implement these improvements over the coming years.

As part of our ongoing governance arrangements, we monitor the implementation of the Corporate Plan and Well-being Objectives

using a well-structured performance management framework which includes business planning, reporting and self-evaluation. The Council operates a single performance management system which includes the majority of Council planning and holds information in one place in order to avoid duplication.

Everything we do should contribute to the Council's priorities (the 'golden thread') so that all our effort and resources are linked into the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Council's business planning framework is strategically aligned from the Corporate Plan throughout the organisation so that all staff can understand their contribution to implementation.

The corporate requirement is for all business plans to be updated at least quarterly. Achievements, challenges, PIs and progress against any internal or external regulatory proposals for improvement are then included within our Finance and Performance Report which is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee.



## How the Council will review the steps to meeting the Well-being Objectives

A lot of the programmes listed in the Plan are ambitious and some are in the early stages of development. Over the course of the four years of the Plan (2018/22) there may be some changes to measures and priorities and this will be identified through our robust self evaluation process.

The Council's Corporate Leadership Team, Members of the Executive and Senior Officers are currently working on a review of the strategic policies and strategies that govern the way that the Council operates both now and in the future. As a result of this work there may be minor amendments made to the priorities within the Corporate Plan, consideration will be given to what we can do differently to make a better contribution to not only the Well-being Goals and Sustainable Development Principles but also to the outcomes and future well-being of the community and how to appropriately resource each Objective. However, it is important to note that the overall emphasis of each Well-being Objective will not change.

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## How the Council will involve communities to achieve the Well-being Objectives

The Council's Engagement Strategy 2018/22 sets out the commitment and approach to engagement to be undertaken by the Council when engaging with the community, stakeholders, elected members and staff. The Strategy supports the Council's Corporate Plan and provides a commitment to continue a programme of public engagement. The strategy outlines the benefits of effective engagement for both the Council and those who engage with us, grounded in the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales. The Engagement Strategy can be found at [http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau\\_gwent/images/att9468.pdf](http://democracy.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/aksblaenau_gwent/images/att9468.pdf)

### We want those that engage with us to:

- ▶ Become better informed about why we do what we do and how we do it;
- ▶ Have a greater say in shaping local services;
- ▶ Know that views and opinions are important to us;
- ▶ Have great confidence and trust in us; and
- ▶ Take an interest and ownership of things that matter.

### We want to engage effectively to:

- ▶ Help to shape better decision-making and problem-solving;
- ▶ Take transparent decisions based on strong evidence;
- ▶ Support greater involvement in the democratic process; and
- ▶ Lead efficient and effective services that reflect need.

## Contact Information

### Contact Information

This document is available electronically at <http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/performance/> and in hard copy by request.

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Phone: 01495 311556  
Email: [pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:pps@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

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## Providing Feedback

We welcome any feedback you might have about the Council's Assessment of Performance 2018/19. Your views are important to us and we want to know what information you would like to see and how you would like to see it reported. Please contact the team on the details above if you would like to give feedback on the Assessment, if there is any information you think could be considered for inclusion in the future, or if you require this document in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio version, etc.

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## Fersiwn Gymraeg

Yn unol â Chynllun Iaith Gymraeg y Cyngor, bydd fersiwn Gymraeg o'r Cynllun Gwella ar gael ar wefan y Cyngor.



This document acts as Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Well-being Statement, prepared under section 7 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and related guidance issued by the Welsh Government. This Assessment of Performance outlines the Council's responsibility to publish an assessment of performance for the financial year 2018/19 as outlined in section 15 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

The Council is satisfied that the information given in this plan is accurate based on the information available at the time of publication.

This Council's Assessment of Performance 2018/19 has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment screening.