

Blaenau Gwent Council Commercial Strategy

‘A place that is fair, open and welcoming to all
by working with and for our communities’

2024 - 2027



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Foreword

As a Council we are ambitious and focused, we want to create an environment that is connected and rich with opportunities, a place which is great for jobs and businesses and where people thrive in education, in their career and in their spare time.

We have an annual budget in excess of £200 million, high levels of community need and we are clear on the difficult financial climate for local government in Wales. This means we have to plan and find innovative ways to change how we deliver public services.

This strategy will set out our commercial approach to service delivery for our communities.

Stephen Thomas - Leader

Helen Cunningham - Deputy Leader

Introduction

Where we are now

This Commercial Strategy has been developed to support the Council in the delivery of its corporate objectives and important public services it provides.

It is a key element of the medium-term financial strategy and is set against a backdrop of financial challenges and the desire to have the best possible outcomes for local residents and businesses.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

To deliver wider and better social outcomes for Blaenau Gwent through optimising our financial sustainability by managing and reducing costs, maximising use of our assets, generating more income and improving customer journeys.

Blaenau Gwent Context

The key themes and priorities to this strategy have been developed through user engagement with customers, staff engagement, senior management workshops, elected member engagement sessions, discussions with public sector partners including WLGA, SOLACE and CIPFA. Recommendations made by Audit Wales have also been integrated into this document as has Welsh Government and UK Government policy and obligations.

This strategy will support the Council's Vision of being 'a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities'.

It will help to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities:

Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent

Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities

An ambitious and innovative Council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place

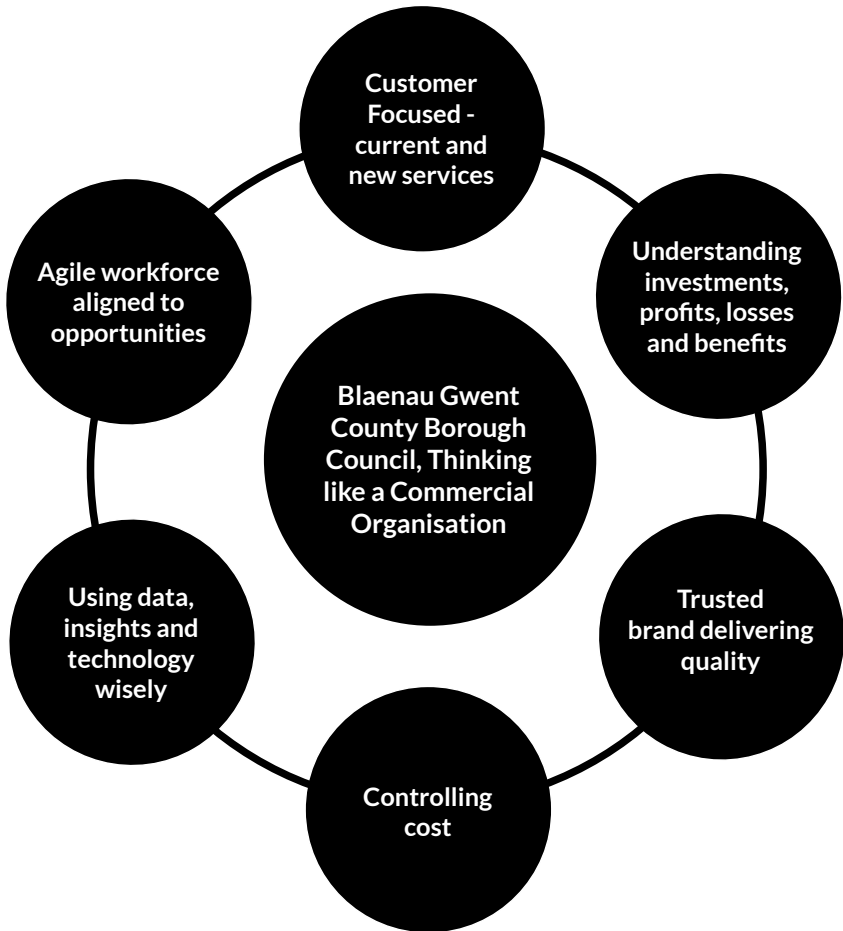
Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

The strategy is aligned to the ambitions of the following key plans and strategies:

- > Medium Term Financial Strategy, Bridging the Gap Programme and Business Case Framework
- > Workforce Strategy
- > Regeneration / Growth Strategy
- > Digital Transformation Strategy
- > Customer Service Strategy
- > Climate Emergency / Decarbonisation
- > Communication Strategy

This strategy demonstrates the Council’s commitment and investment into becoming a commercially minded organisation by:

- > Supporting learning and developing skills;
- > Providing equal access to services;
- > Driving further transformation and modern, commercial service delivery models for the Council;
- > Identifying and developing the right technology in the right way;
- > Improving collaboration with others to identify innovative ways to change how we deliver public services;



Our Commercial Spectrum

Managing 3rd party spend through effective procurement, commissioning and contract management;

Maximising income opportunities, including fees and charges;

Digital solutions to drive down cost, increase efficiencies and provide a good customer offer;

Service redesign and transformation – understanding the customer journey; Optimising investment and development opportunities;

Wales Context

The strategy will contribute towards the requirements and standards set out in the following:

- > **Well-being and Future Generations Act Welsh Procurement Policy**
- > **Welsh Procurement Policy**
- > **Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act**
- > **Digital Strategy for Wales**

Whilst delivering this Strategy, we will ensure the decisions we make consider the well-being goals and five ways of working:

Long Term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration and Prevention.

We will ensure that our decisions are evidenced-based and consider the social and economic impact on our communities.

Our Principles

The Strategy is underpinned by two key principles and three priorities, which are essential to improving and delivering our commercial ambitions:

Principle One

Develop a culture that supports the organisation to become more commercially minded.

Aim: To develop the knowledge, skills and behaviors across the organisation so that better commercial planning becomes business as usual.

Key activities will include:

- > Developing a shared understanding of what commercial means for our organisation, customers and businesses;
- > Actively working with others to share knowledge, ideas, experience and practice that could support our commercial activity;
- > Continuing to develop the impact of the officer Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB) and the supporting Business and Commercial Opportunities Network (BaCON), to identify and develop opportunities across the commercial spectrum;
- > Delivering a targeted programme of Learning and Development opportunities to support our continued development of skills and capacity;

Principle Two

Develop the organisational governance and procedures that will support improved commercial planning.

Aim: To set the right conditions to enable directorates to be responsive to opportunities and bring forward commercial proposals for consideration.

Key activities will include:

- > providing strategic direction and oversight to ensure commercial opportunities are aligned to the Council's corporate priorities;
- > ensuring our governance framework and procedures enables us to act in a timely way to maximise opportunities;
- > building and developing multi-disciplinary teams drawing on internal expertise, external advice and learning from others to produce commercial business cases;
- > providing an opportunity to share and recognise good practice from across the organisation and further afield;

Our Priorities

Priority One – To change the way in which elected Members and staff perceive and drive forward commercial opportunities.

Aim: Establishing a better understanding of the wider commercial spectrum including the opportunity to maximise assets and driving service innovation.

Key activities will include:

- > developing a shared understanding of what commercial means for our organisation, customers and businesses;
- > promoting the development of a more business minded culture and approach across the organisation;
- > continuing elected member and staff engagement to help support the necessary culture and behavioural change;
- > continuing to deliver a targeted programme of Learning and Development opportunities to support our commercial approaches;
- > becoming more efficient when delivering projects with shared knowledge, ownership and understanding;
- > embedding better commercial planning into service delivery across the Council;
- > providing commercial support to staff and Services to assist with the development of opportunities and transformation that leads to enhanced commercial outcomes;

Priority Two - To build and embed the organisational approaches that support alternative models of service delivery and commercial investment opportunities.

Aim: to establish a tool set and governance framework that enables the organisation to be responsive and maximise commercial opportunities.

Key activities will include:

- > ensuring a clear and robust route through the democratic process to enable elected members to consider commercial opportunities as they arise;
- > continuing to embed the commercial and business case framework to ensure consistent application and robust documentation is submitted for consideration;
- > building and developing multi-disciplinary teams to produce commercial business cases, improve skills and draw on internal expertise;
- > continuing to develop the impact of the officer Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB) and the supporting Business and Commercial Opportunities Network, to identify and develop opportunities across the commercial spectrum as defined in this strategy;
- > developing a dynamic register of commercial projects to provide corporate oversight and to support on-going monitoring and review;
- > exploring opportunities to develop CJC's to support wider collaborations;
- > maximising our commercial advantage through effective commissioning, procurement and contract management activities;
- > making further use of technology in support of the Council becoming a more modern, dynamic organisation;

Priority Three - To develop an organisational wide programme of current and proposed commercial activity;

Aim: to create a pipeline to identify, prioritise and deliver a commercial programme of projects that require investment to support the Council's Corporate Plan and MTFs.

Key activities will include:

- > applying the commercial framework to identify and prioritise commercial opportunities;
- > shaping investment options based on robust business cases, risk assessment and market intelligence;
- > using data and market intelligence to inform business cases and support strategic decision making;
- > aligning commercial projects to the corporate objectives and to support wider outcomes;

Monitoring and Review

This strategy is one of a set of strategic commercial programmes designed to secure the future sustainability across the community and deliver improved outcomes for our residents and businesses.

A set of quantitative and qualitative metrics and performance measures will be developed and reported via the established democratic processes.

In addition, the strategy will be subject to a mid-term review to ensure we keep pace with on-going changes to commercial innovation, technologies and customer expectations.

The officer Strategic Commercial Commissioning Board (SCCB) will provide direction and oversight to the Council's commercial ambitions, ensuring robust check and challenge to commercial opportunities and escalation through to the democratic decision making process as required.

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