

**ANNUAL  
GOVERNANCE  
STATEMENT  
2018/19**



# Annual Governance Statement 2018 – 2019

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## Scope of Responsibility

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council ('the Authority') is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority also has a general duty under the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority has approved and adopted a Code of Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". A copy of the code is available from the Governance and Partnerships Section.

This statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control in the Statement of Accounts.

## The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk at a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify the key risks of the Authority, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to

manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. These will include achievement or not of the Council's policies, aims and objectives.

The governance framework has been in place at the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2019 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

In September 2018 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) published their Annual Improvement Report for 2017-18. The conclusion of the report was, "The Council is meeting its statutory requirements in relation to continuous improvement" and "based on, and limited to, the work carried out by the WAO and relevant regulators, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (2009) during 2018-19".

Details of the Proposals for Improvement issued by the WAO during 2018/19 are available from the Corporate Performance Team, and progress against their achievement is included in the Joint Finance and Performance Report. This list of proposals is attached at Appendix A.

## **The Governance Framework**

The governance framework includes the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements, along with an assessment of their effectiveness. The ways in which the Authority demonstrates this are discussed below. Each core principle set out in the Authority's Code of Governance is listed, along with the self-assessment of how well it is applied and how we propose to improve in future. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Senior Managers, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and by comments from the external auditors and other regulators.

**Core Principle A**  
**Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values,**  
**and respecting the rule of law.**

### ***How we do this:***

A Governance Framework exists that sets out the standards and processes to be adopted by both Members and Officers. Codes of Conduct detailing Member / Officer relations are contained within the Constitution and both are required to make declarations of any interests that impact on their positions / functions. These documents are periodically reviewed and updated, and are influenced by best practice and recommendations from both internal and external regulators.

Members' declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer and Officers' declarations are held by Service Managers. All Council meetings are conducted in accordance with the agreed democratic process and have declarations of interest as part of the agenda, with any declarations noted in the minutes and Members withdrawing or not taking part in the debate as appropriate.

A Policy Framework exists to guide both Members and Officers in fulfilment of their roles. This includes a Whistle-Blowing policy enabling Members, Officers and members of the public to report any concerns regarding the integrity and operations of the Authority. In addition, policies such as disciplinary or grievance procedures have been formulated for dealing with breaches to the codes.

Both Officers and Members are advised through the induction process of the standards of behaviour required by the Council throughout their term of office or employment. Continued adherence to the ethical values of the Authority is confirmed through a performance review protocol. This is complemented by a set of job descriptions for most positions in the Council, both for Officer and Member roles.

The Authority's constitution has a published Scheme of Delegation of Functions, which is agreed and published annually. This scheme details subject areas, and identifies the bodies or individuals responsible for decision making. It sets out the terms of reference for the various committees in operation. In addition both the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Officer Resources have oversight of the decisions made by the Authority to ensure their lawfulness and financial probity.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

Each Committee conforms to legislative requirements including compliance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The decision making process is documented and the Authority's Scrutiny Committees can 'call in' a decision which has been made by the Executive Committee but not yet implemented. No decisions were called in during 2018/19.

Work has continued to strengthen Blaenau Gwent's Scrutiny arrangements. A Scrutiny Action Plan continues to be implemented and monitored through the Democratic Services Committee and Council. This plan has been further enhanced by incorporating actions that relate to Democratic Services and Member Support. In June 2018, the WAO undertook a review across all 22 local authorities on 'Overview and Scrutiny: Fit for the Future?' Each local authority received a local report. As per normal practice, the review highlighted a proposal for improvement and the Scrutiny and Democratic Arrangements Action Plan has been updated to include it.

Reference to the scrutiny function is also included within the Performance Management Framework.

A mandatory session on the Constitution including roles and responsibilities was held for all Members.

The Ombudsman received one complaint against members in 2018/19 in relation to Blaenau Gwent. This was investigated and no finding of breach was notified to the Council. For 2017/18 ten complaints of maladministration were made of which five did not proceed, three were closed after initial consideration, one was voluntarily settled and one was upheld. Information for 2018/19 is not yet available.

There were no whistle-blowing incidents reported to the Authority during the year.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures which exist to guide Members and Officers to comply with the Council's expectations in terms of acting with integrity.
- To evidence the robust application of the Authority's Code of Conduct, an Internal Audit review of the declarations of interest process will be undertaken.
- In line with good practice, an Annual review (as a minimum) of the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation to ensure the Authority's governance and decision making processes remain fit for purpose.
- Approval by Council of the reviewed Whistleblowing Policy.
- Continued application of the Members Performance Development Review Scheme and competency framework. It is intended that the non-senior salary holders will be offered a PDR and a competency framework review following the AGM in May 2019 and the Senior Salary holders will be reviewed again in late 2019.
- Continued application of the Officers Performance Review Scheme.
- The audit plan for 2019/20 will include testing a range of policies and procedures.

**Core Principle B**  
**Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Council continues to develop the way in which it engages with the community. We have refreshed the Citizens Panel's membership and integrated it with other engagement activity. The Budget Challenge public engagement around the Councils draft budget proposals for 2018-19 was also undertaken during the year. Over the last 12 months the Council has engaged with over 7,000 people on the following subjects:

- **Side Waste Engagement:** Engaging over 3,200 local people in 20 events, facilitating 1,500 requests to improve recycling.
- **Street Scene:** Engaging over 850 local people and gathering feedback via over 500 questionnaires.
- **Active Travel:** Over 250 residents engaged and 70 representative organisations such as local community groups and businesses.

- **Home to School Transport:** Over 1,200 people taking part in the formal consultation process, including over 400 face-to-face interactions.
- **Budget Challenge:** Over 600 people taking part in the consultation for the budget challenge events.
- **Play Assessment:** Over 400 children and 200 adults took part in the questionnaire on playing and hanging around in their local area.

The Blaenau Gwent Local Well-being Plan 2018 to 2023 was approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018. This plan sets out the main priorities for strategic partnership working and was developed following evidence from the Well-being Assessment and the 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' Engagement Programme.

The Council has been proactively working with the WAO to consider the Council's opportunities and levers for change relating to public engagement. This audit was followed up with an additional Audit regarding engagement called Service User Perspective. The Council has received feedback from the WAO regarding the Levers for Change Audit and service user perspective and a management response is being prepared. In November the Executive approved a Council Engagement Strategy. For 2018/19, the Council developed a Corporate Plan 2018/22 which includes revised Well-being Objectives (which also act as Improvement Objectives). Evidence and data from the Well-being Assessment and engagement events were used to support the development of the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan priority areas have been aligned to the business planning process of the Council.

The Authority hosted a joint assurance and risk assessment workshop with WAO, Estyn and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) that informed the work of WAO for 2019-20.

After a challenging year for Social Services in 2017/18, the first part of the year has seen progress on a number of fronts; the CIW has 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 acknowledgement of the significant challenges facing the Council in delivering the service at a time of financial and resource pressures.

On a regional basis the directors of Social Services are continually committed to looking at collaboration opportunities across Social Services; and have commenced work on a number of areas which will produce scoping papers over coming months. One area we are progressing is looking at all our in-house provision across Gwent with a partner to see whether there is any potential to deliver these services in a different way collaboratively moving forward.

The Corporate Parenting Board continues to make progress on their priorities within their action plan i.e. improving accommodation and employment, education and training outcomes for Looked After Children. Work to improve the contract facilities for our Looked After Children and our Care Leavers at Beaufort Road has successfully been completed following feedback from our children and young people, with a room now more age appropriate for our older children in place.

Blaenau Gwent, after successfully implementing the Welsh Government Childcare Offer was asked by Welsh Government to engage with other stakeholders and implement the rollout to Torfaen. The Offer enables working parents of 3 and 4 year olds to access free childcare on top of the Foundation Phase, providing a total of 30 hours a week of free early education and childcare for 48 weeks of a year. Swift progress was made by the team to implement the offer within Torfaen from September 2018.

The Council has an established engagement framework for staff and the Council's Trade Union and Consultation Framework has been reviewed and updated this year. The Partnership and Engagement Team has developed an overarching Council Engagement Framework which includes engagement with staff. A staff survey was distributed in 2019.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

To ensure relevant stakeholders are engaged throughout the Councils policy development and decision making processes, comprehensive engagement events have been held throughout the year.

The Policy, Partnership and Engagement Team have supported a number of engagement and participation activities and events. Additionally, the Council continues to hold a number of key engagement and participation activities and events including: monthly Youth Forums; School Grand Council each school term; quarterly Over 50's Network and Forum; and equality focused Access for all Forums. The Council also continues to develop its use of social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Flickr.

A staff survey was undertaken in August / September 2016, that identified opportunities for improvement in staff engagement. It highlighted four service areas that were to receive Organisational Development intervention, and actions were built in to service business plans to address the issues noted. All four services identified undertook a follow up survey in September / October 2017 that showed significant improvement on the previous survey results. A suite of staff engagement events have commenced with the Managing Director and Leader of the Council meeting with staff to discuss the future direction of the Authority and answer questions on matters of interest. A further staff survey was undertaken in January 2019.

All relevant Audit Certificates have been received. Engagement arrangements with WAO are in place with monthly meetings with the Head of Governance and Partnerships and separate monthly meetings with the Managing Director. Quarterly meetings are also undertaken with the Leadership.

The Authority's Education Services have a regular termly Local Authority Link Inspector (LALI) meeting convened with Estyn in line with regulatory requirements. The Authority has update meetings between the Corporate Director Education, political leaders and the Welsh Government officials as and when required.

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 we have continued to invest in the knowledge and learning of our Care Management staff through attendance of outcomes training and collaborative working with Social Care Wales to identify best practice and



showcase examples where we have supported citizens to achieve their outcomes. We have received positive feedback from the Older Persons Commissioner into the outcomes that older people experience in Care Homes across Blaenau Gwent and a report outlining the findings was reported to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee in April 2018. In July 2018 Blaenau Gwent received its Fostering report and in September 2018 received its Children's services report from CIW. Findings from these reports have been included within an action plan monitored through the business plans and through the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Blaenau Gwent continues to work with a wide range of partners where partnership opportunities provide better outcomes for local residents than the Council could achieve if working on its own. We work in partnership with a variety of stakeholders including staff, residents and businesses.

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 £13.4 million 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.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Further work to be undertaken linked to the findings of the WAO Levers of Change and Service User Perspective review.
- Evaluate the findings of the staff survey conducted during January 2019 and implement change.
- Monitor progress of the Local Well-being Plan.
- Continued implementation of the Council's Engagement Programme as part of the Engagement Strategy.

**Core Principle C**  
**Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.**

## ***How we do this:***

The Authority has reviewed its priorities, vision and values and these are set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2018/22. The Corporate Plan acts as the Council's business plan and is directly linked to the priorities in the Well-being Plan. The Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 and covers the four year period to 2022, in line with the remainder of the term of office until the next local elections. The plan sets out five priority areas, each of which are defined by a number of aims setting out the focus of our activity. The five priorities are:

- Improving the Well-being of People who need Care and Support (Social Services)
- Improving Pupil Outcomes and Well-being (Education)
- Strong and Environmentally Smart Communities
- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Efficient Council

The priority areas will also act as our Improvement Objectives as required by the Local Government (Wales) Measure.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Service Boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing across Wales by strengthening joint working across all public services. The Authority is one of five statutory members of the board.

The Blaenau Gwent PSB was established with an agreed Terms of Reference and a PSB Scrutiny Committee has also been set up through our agreed democratic processes. The Well-being Assessment and Well-being Plan have been developed and published with the Council leading on this work.

The Authority has a Strategic Equality Plan that was agreed by Council in May 2016. The plan was subject to comprehensive engagement including through the Access for all Forum and the Older Peoples Network as part of its development. The Authority is committed to the principles of the Wales Procurement Policy that identifies Procurement as a strategic enabler, delivering key policy objectives to support the Council's economic, social and environmental priorities.

The Authority receives a capital allocation from Welsh Government that is used along with the capital receipt reserve to form a capital programme providing a range of sustainable benefits for the Authority. The funding is allocated based on departmental bids for projects. The bids are analysed and scored in line with a set of criteria that consider, amongst other things, the projects alignment with corporate and national priorities.

## ***Review of Effectiveness:***

To monitor progress and ensure their relevance there will be an annual review of the Corporate Plan.

Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken against all relevant proposals, and included within the business planning framework and financial efficiency projects. The Annual Report to the Equality and Human Rights Commission was published and submitted within the appropriate timescales.

Welsh Language Standards were agreed by Welsh Government in March 2015. Blaenau Gwent Council were issued with an initial Welsh Standards Compliance Notice in September 2015. Of the 176 standards, the Council was assigned 171 standards. Appropriate challenge for appeal to defer implementation against a number of the standards was submitted to the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner, in line with the agreed national procedure. This has led to a number of variations in the standards, and the Council has been issued with an updated Compliance Notice in August 2017. The Annual Welsh Language Report was sent to the Office of the Welsh Language Commissioner within the appropriate timescales.

It is a statutory responsibility for the Corporate Director of Social Services to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of Social Services and produce an Annual Report. The Annual Report contributes to and forms part of the Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF). The report of the Corporate Director of Social Services was presented to the Social Services Scrutiny Committee in June 2018.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Continued implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language Standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent.
- Continue to support the collective and individual body duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.
- Annual review of the Corporate Plan.

**Core Principle D**  
**Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Authority has strengthened its Performance Management Framework to ensure a consistent approach and accountability for performance improvement. This process has been aligned to the Risk Management Framework to provide one approach for data collection and monitoring.

The Project Management Framework provides consistent practice and guidance across the Council to help those involved in projects to deliver successful outcomes. The use of the framework ensures that all projects undertaken / completed are subject to the appropriate approval processes and that reviews of the success of these projects is carried out. This will

enable the Council to learn lessons for the future and mitigate the possibilities of the same problems occurring in future projects. The Project Management Framework has been reviewed as part of the Service Review Programme and areas for improvement identified.

There is a Financial Efficiency Programme in place for 2018/19 and 2019/20 and a Service Review Programme for 2018/19 facilitated by the Strategic Transformation Team. These programmes are designed to identify service improvements, potential savings and alternative models for service delivery.

A Strategic Procurement Board operates to oversee spending decisions, exercising stronger governance in line with its Medium Term Financial Strategy. The board provides challenge with regards to the merits of each spending proposal and ensures a consistent approach to spending in line with the objectives of the Authority.

The corporate reporting format has been designed to guide officers and members to consider the key implications of any proposals put forward. The report has defined areas for considering options appraisal, risk, staffing and financial impact, along with the contribution to the Sustainable Development Principles. This assists in the process for making informed and transparent decisions and ensures the links between budget and planning are considered.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Authority presents the Joint Finance and Performance Report to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee on a quarterly basis. This report highlights key messages, performance information, workforce information, financial analysis, Financial Efficiency Projects progress, WAO proposals for improvement and directorate and corporate risks.

Self-evaluation arrangements are in place and continue to be refined, requiring each service area to consider how its activities contributed to the achievement of its intended outcomes and support the Council to achieve its goals. The process enables us to gather and use good quality information to better understand how we are performing.

The Strategic Transformation Team receives monthly progress against each Financial Efficiency Project and provides a highlight report to Wider Corporate Leadership Team (WCLT) on a quarterly basis. Evaluation arrangements are in place to continue to refine the reporting and engagement processes.

Progress against the Service Review Programme is monitored through Departmental Management Teams (DMTs) with the Strategic Transformation Team presenting highlight reports to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Executive Members on a six weekly basis. The programme enables us to gather and use good quality information to better understand how we are performing and make informed decisions about the future delivery of services. A programme of Strategic Business Reviews is currently being developed by Corporate Leadership Team to ensure an improved approach to improvements and identification of alternative delivery models.

The remit of the Strategic Procurement Board has been extended, through amendment to Contract Procedure Rules, providing it with full responsibility for contract approval as agreed by the Constitutional Working Group and Council.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations for Improvement:***

- Review of the Performance Management Framework to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan.
- Review of the self-evaluation process.
- Further review of Project Management Framework and implementation of results.

**Core Principle E**  
**Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**

### ***How we do this:***

Blaenau Gwent has 42 elected members who collectively make up the decision making body for the Authority. This is complemented by an officer structure of trained and experienced people.

Most policy decisions are developed by the Executive Committee, which for 2018/19 has comprised the Leader and four Members with individual portfolio responsibilities. The portfolios were agreed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Council in May 2018.

In addition to the Executive Committee, the Authority's Committee structure also comprises three decision making Committees (1 x Planning and 2 x Licensing), four Scrutiny Committees, two Joint Scrutiny Committees, a Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee, a Standards Committee, a Democratic Services Committee and an Audit Committee.

Members are appointed to these Committees, each of which is supported by relevant officers. Payments to Members who are in positions which attract a senior salary are in line with the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

There are four statutory posts in place namely the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer, the Head of Democratic Services and the Section 151 Officer. These are satisfied by the appointments of the Managing Director, the Head of Legal and Compliance, the Head of Governance and Partnerships and the Chief Officer - Resources, respectively. These post holders are charged with ensuring elected Members receive appropriate advice

There are two further officer roles, namely, the Corporate Director of Education and the Corporate Director of Social Services who undertake statutory functions for Education and Social Services respectively. Two more officer roles are taken up by the position of Corporate Director of Regeneration and Community Services and the Chief Officer – Commercial.

The Authority has a clear set of strategic outcomes, supporting actions and competencies which relate to service delivery. Both Members and Officers receive appropriate training to enable them to develop / enhance the necessary skills to fulfil their roles.

A Performance Coaching Scheme exists for Officers and a Personal Development Review Scheme (PDRs) and Competency Framework for Members to ensure an appropriate level of competency and to identify any further training needs or continuous professional development requirements that are required for the job role, or to prepare them for future roles. Most officer posts have a detailed job description and person specification, and selection is made through a robust recruitment process to meet the specific skills and competencies of the post.

Role descriptions for Members are established and included in the Constitution and include role descriptions and personal specifications for Elected Members. These will include specific role descriptions for senior member roles.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

In November 2018 the Council received its Level 1 Wales Charter for Member Support and Development awarded by the Welsh Local Government Association, recognising the Authority's good practice in this area. The Member Development Strategy was updated as part of this process. A Member Induction Programme has been implemented and was aligned to the forward work programmes following the local election on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017. Procedures for Member Personal Development Reviews (PDR) are in place. The PDR process has been enhanced with the development of a Members Competency Framework which was considered and approved at the AGM in May 2018. This process is mandatory for all senior salary holders and offered to all members.

A revised mentoring scheme for Members has been agreed by Council. Three Members have undergone mentoring training and a further three requests from Members to become mentors have been received as part of the Personal Development Review (PDR) process. Currently two Members have requested to be mentees. The positions of Mayor and Deputy were removed from the Council's establishment at the AGM held in June 2017. They were replaced with the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of Council. These roles do not carry a senior salary. Civic duties are undertaken by the Executive Members and Chair of the Council.

A Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) operates within the Authority, consisting of the Managing Director, supported by departmental Directors. These meetings are minuted and key information is disseminated to all officers through an established reporting structure.

The Authority monitors performance reviews through the management structure, feeding concerns up to CLT as appropriate. There is an established Engagement and Consultation Framework agreed with and in place for trade union involvement which has been reviewed and updated with them this year. An Engagement Strategy was introduced during 2018 which includes staff engagement.

With the austerity measures implemented by the council there continues to be a reduction in external training opportunities however in house, on the job training continues and essential

external training is still undertaken. Both managers and staff have the ability to discuss capability and capacity issues as part of the performance review process.

One member of staff has been the subject of the capability process during the period April 2018 – March 2019, and issues have now been resolved.

Nine internal grievance procedures were instigated between April 2018 and March 2019. One remained open at the close of the year.

The Authority has operated a Leadership Programme from January 2016 to 2018 designed to build leadership knowledge and skills in those with managerial responsibilities up to and including WCLT level. The principles of the programme have been adapted for the needs of the services requiring support., and have in the main focused on areas such as Supervisory and First Line Management and included topics such as Code of Conduct, Visioning and Values, Effective Performance Coaching and Assertiveness. A staff survey was undertaken in January 2019 to gauge current opinions and identify further areas requiring support.

The Managing Director has undertaken phase 1 of a Senior Management Review looking at the current and future requirements of leadership roles within the council. Appointment to these roles was concluded in late 2018. Phase 2 of the Senior Management Review is underway with some areas completed.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Conclude phase 2 of the Senior Management Review.
- Production of job descriptions and person specifications for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee.
- Analyse the findings of the staff survey and implement required actions.

**Core Principle F**  
**Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.**

### ***How we do this:***

The Authority has in place a Risk Management Framework that includes a Risk Management Strategy and a Risk Management Handbook. The risk management arrangements are set out in the Performance Management Framework. These set out the risk appetite of the Council and provide a methodology to ensure the consistent assessment / prioritisation of the risks the Authority faces and any mitigating actions.

The Authority continues to produce the Joint Finance and Performance Report which highlights progress in relation to finance, performance, risk and financial efficiency.

The Council has a corporate policy in place to deal with complaints that the Council has adopted. A review of monitoring the complaints has been undertaken and new processes and nominated officers have been identified. The monitoring of complaints has been identified as a key measure within the Council's Corporate Plan. Complaints information is

now included within the Joint Finance and Performance Report and annual Corporate Plan report.

An Audit Committee has been established in line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure receiving reports from internal and external regulators on the internal control environment, risk and governance. The Committee provides appropriate challenge and seeks assurance in line with its terms of reference that are included in the constitution.

As a Local Authority it is necessary that we collect and use personal information to perform many of our day-to-day operations. The General Data Protection Act (GDPR) is the most comprehensive and significant change to Data Protection in 20 years. The Council established a Corporate Project Group in April 2017 to manage the preparatory work for GDPR compliance. The Council's 'Information & Governance Officer' was assigned the statutory role of Data Protection Officer and the post retitled 'Data Protection and Governance Officer' to reflect this.

The Council implemented an Information Asset Owner structure to establish clear lines of responsibility for information management. Information Asset Registers are in place for each Department to provide corporate oversight of all key information systems and to risk assess in terms of confidentiality, integrity and availability. The Council has also created a Record of Processing Activities to drill down into the necessary level of detail required under GDPR and identify the lawful basis for processing all the different types of personal data that it holds. The Council has a number of Information Governance policies and procedures to manage compliance with its statutory obligations.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Authority's key governance systems continue to be risk assessed and included in the annual audit plan. Two key governance systems were subject to an internal audit, namely Financial Efficiency Projects from 17/18 and 18/19. The findings of these audits have not yet been reported to the Audit Committee due to their timing but will be reported as appropriate during 2019/20. A follow-up audit of the Absence Management process was completed and progress against recommendations was found to be poor. This was escalated to CLT who have committed to undertake the necessary actions for improvement. In addition, further implementation of the functionality of the iTrent HR and Payroll system will improve controls in this process.

The Risk Management Strategy and Handbook were reviewed and adopted by Council in February 2018. The Risk and Insurance Manager attends quarterly Departmental Management Team meetings to facilitate challenge / discussions on directorate risks. This has resulted in a more consistent approach to risk evaluation and reporting becoming embedded across the Council.

The highest level risks faced by the Authority are recorded on the Corporate Risk Register. The main risks facing the Authority during the period were:

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>
Failure to deliver and sustain the changes required to ensure that vital services are	Vital services will not be protected if the Council fails to find more efficient ways



prioritised within the financial constraints faced by the Council.	of working and improvements to social, economic and environmental well-being of the areas will not be achieved.
Failure to deliver the Council's priorities within the agreed annual budget.	Increased use of emergency finance measures and the drawdown of reserves.
Failure of schools in Blaenau Gwent to adapt and change accordingly to the new curriculum and national agenda of the Welsh Government as laid out in the National reform agenda document "Education for Wales: Our national Mission".	Failure to deliver improvements in educational attainment and progress and an inability to offer a broad range of educational opportunities which will ultimately result in an adverse impact on pupil life chances and affect the realisation of full potential.
Exiting the EU will have an adverse impact at a national and local level.	Impact on the community and on the Council and its ability to deliver public services.
Failure to improve staff attendance rates within the Council.	Unacceptable impact on the ability of the Council to deliver services effectively and financially support the cost of sickness absence.
Failure of the Council to manage its information assets in accordance with requirements set down within legislation	Financial penalties and possible sanctions that hinder service delivery.
Increasingly complex needs and demand for services provided by Social Services, in particular for Looked After Children.	Further significant pressure on the Council's budget.
The Financial resilience of the council could be at risk if the council does not ensure that financial planning and management decisions support long term stability and sustainability.	Inability to deliver effective / lower quality services. Unplanned reduction of services provided.

A copy of the full Corporate Risk Register can be obtained from the Risk Management and Insurance Section.

All financial efficiency and service review projects are risk assessed using the Corporate Risk Management Framework. Decisions on managing those risks are agreed and monitored as part of the project management arrangements that are in place. A service review was undertaken of Project Management and recommendations for improvement were identified.

All Data Impact Assessments are approved by the Data Protection and Governance Officer to ensure that there are effective controls in place to mitigate the risk of a Data Protection Breach. Where a Data Protection Incident is reported, the Data Protection & Governance Officer will investigate the cause and review the responsible service area controls to ensure they are effective. The Data Protection & Governance Officer, Information Governance Forum and the Council's Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) review the Council's information governance arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- To assess and demonstrate its compliance with the Local Government Measure and the aims and objectives of the Council, the annual report of the audit committee will be produced summarising the 2018/19 year's activity and evidencing their responsibilities as part of the governance arrangements.
- Regular review of Risk Management arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are implemented consistently.
- As part of the Authority's ongoing commitment to managing its risks, the Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate.
- Continued inclusion of key governance systems in the internal audit plan to ensure key elements of the governance framework are prioritised and examined annually.
- IT (SRS) support required in terms of due diligence of IT applications / providers, the ability to respond to subject access requests, data breach identification and secure disposal of personal information stored in IT applications.

**Core Principle G**  
**Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.**

### ***How we do this:***

Decision making processes for both Officers and Members are set out in the Constitution. Boundaries are clearly defined and the Committee structure includes decision making, scrutiny and regulatory functions. A set of Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules have been adopted to ensure consistency, transparency and value for money in financial management and procurement. The Chief Officer Resources ensures the Authority's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). An annual Statement of Accounts is produced and presented to Members for scrutiny. A period of public consultation is held where members of the public can inspect the accounts.

An Audit Committee is established that has the primary functions of reviewing financial reports and challenging governance arrangements. The Committee aims to seek assurance that the governance framework operating within the Authority is robust, effective and efficient. This is achieved in part through the Committee receiving this Annual Governance Statement. The role and scope of the Audit Committee are set out in the Constitution.

The Internal Audit Service works on a risk based approach, to an annual audit plan, in order to assess the internal control environment of the Authority. The work of the section is prioritised in line with the Authority's objectives. The results of all audit work are reported to the Audit Committee who can, if necessary, call Officers to account where weak control is identified. Policies are maintained for Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery, and Anti-

Money-Laundering. Adherence to these is considered as part of the work of the Internal Audit function.

The Social Services Directorate is subject to audit, inspection and review by the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). On a quarterly basis the Director of Social Services and Heads of Adult and \children's Services meet with CIW to discuss achievements, performance and key challenges. The Directorate is scrutinised by the Social Services Scrutiny Committee. Regular liaison meetings are held with the Directorate, the Executive Member and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to produce an annual report on the discharge of its social services functions. The Council's arrangements to meet their safeguarding responsibilities are scrutinised by the Joint Education & Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee. The Committee exists to monitor and challenge, in order to make improvements and ensure the Council's safeguarding processes are effective.

Council meetings are held open to the public and minutes are published on the Authority's website. A number of meetings have previously been webcast. A report on webcasting provision has been considered by the Democratic Services Committee detailing options. Since this time, CLT have looked to support and implement Office 365 which will also support the provision of webcasting.

### ***Review of Effectiveness:***

The Council strives to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of its services through its improvement planning process and the Performance Management Framework. It has strengthened these arrangements to align them with risk management and project management as well as identifying levels of accountability.

The remit of the WCLT is to effectively support the CLT in its role of providing strategic direction to the organisation. It is a forum to disseminate information and communicate messages ensuring a one council approach as well as networking with colleagues and peers and providing personal development opportunities.

A performance management system, utilised by the whole Council is in place which incorporates the majority of the Councils business planning and performance arrangements, so that we have one place for information management and monitoring. The system works to avoid duplication and to provide a consistent approach across the Council. The system includes statutory monitoring as well as business plans, self-evaluations, equalities, risk, projects, business continuity, performance indicators and sustainable development.

The Authority's assurance arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. The Internal Audit Service is subject to regular review by the Authority's external auditors, who place reliance on the work carried out by the section where possible. The service underwent an external quality assessment during 2016/17 that found the service to conform to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Internal Audit Services issued 45 audit opinions during the year.

<b>Audit Grading</b>	<b>No of audits</b>
Full Assurance	20
Reasonable Assurance	20
Limited Assurance	5
No Assurance	0

There were no No Assurance audit gradings issued during the financial year compared to 2 in 2017/18 and Limited Assurance audit gradings issued increased from 2 to 5. In addition a further 5 Limited Assurance gradings have been issued on a provisional basis but have not yet been cleared for accuracy with the services involved. The number of investigations concerning minor incidences of petty theft and improper use of the Authority's assets/resources has continued to decrease. The approach to financial systems audits changed during 2018/19, with a number of systems now being conducted via Control Risk Self-Assessment (CRSA). Results of Financial Systems audits continue to show improvement and the number to be undertaken using CRSA will increase further for 2019/20. Whilst the Limited Assurance gradings have increased during the year, subject to the provisional reports being finalised, there are no patterns or themes to the findings that cause undue concern. Consequently the overall audit opinion on the adequacy of the internal control environment will continue to reflect Reasonable Assurance across the council. The WCLT continues to receive periodic reviews of Internal Audit findings to ensure appropriate corrective action is taken to maintain and / or improve internal controls.

The Authority received and processed 1048 Freedom of Information requests during the year, an increase on the 826 received in the previous year. The service areas have improved their response times with 92.27% of the requests being responded to within 20 working days compared to 89.79% in the previous year. This is comparable to other Welsh authorities.

### ***Recommendations for Development:***

- Managers to implement the actions identified to address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Managers to ensure systems for which they have responsibility have robust internal controls to further improve the integrity of the Authority's processes.
- The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- CLT to consider a scoping exercise for webcasting meetings linked to implementation of Office 365.

### **Significant Governance Issues**

We have been advised on the implications of the results of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose subject to the significant governance issues to be specifically addressed as outlined below:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p>The economic situation remains a concern to the Public Sector in Wales and the indications from the Welsh Government are that the tough financial settlements will continue for the foreseeable future. This will pose significant challenges for the Council and it will be critical for the Council to demonstrate that it has appropriate governance arrangements in place to manage its financial affairs and plan towards achieving a sustainable financial position.</p>	<p>Financial monitoring statements are reported regularly into Scrutiny and Executive Committee via the quarterly portfolio budget forecast reports.</p> <p>The provisional outturn for 2018/19 is an adverse variance position of £0.07m. This is after the net use of reserves of £0.8m, mainly used to assist in addressing one off, in year planned expenditure. However, the general reserve increased by £0.41m at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 due to an additional contribution and a number of technical adjustments when compiling the Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>As part of the 2018/19 budget setting process, Financial Efficiency projects totalling £3.8m were developed and approved.</p> <p>Quarterly progress reports on the financial efficiency projects are provided to WCLT, the Executive Committee, and Joint Budget Scrutiny as part of the quarterly budget monitoring report. As at March 2019 the Financial Efficiency Projects identified for 2018/19 (either as part of the budget setting process or subsequently) have achieved £3.5m (92%) of the agreed savings proposals. A further £3.4m savings proposal has been agreed by Council and built into the 2019/20 base budget.</p> <p>For the medium term</p>	<p>Chief Officer Resources</p>

	<p>future, the Council intends to carry out a number of strategic business reviews which will focus on its core functions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising Income</li> <li>• Maximising Resources</li> <li>• Demand Management</li> <li>• Maximising technology and data</li> </ul> <p>Within this framework the Authority will be looking at ways to achieve savings whilst mitigating the impact on services.</p>	
Social Services historic abuse insurance claims.	In accordance with proper accounting practice, the Authority's Accounts include appropriate provisions and reserves to mitigate potential liabilities for historic claims, calculated on the basis of currently held information.	Corporate Leadership Team
The Wales Audit Office received some correspondence towards the end of its 2016/17 audit. As the investigation by WAO into the issues raised in the correspondence has not been finalised, the Council is yet to receive an audit opinion or certificate of audit completion for the 2016/17 or 2017/18 Accounts.	The Authority's Accounts for 2018/19 have been prepared in compliance with statutory requirements, relevant accounting Codes and Standards. There has been no change in accounting treatment for those issues in question, pending the outcome of investigations by the police and Wales Audit Office.	Chief Officer Resources

***Certification of the Annual Governance Statement***

In conclusion there has been positive movement for the Authority's Governance Framework during 2018/19 and the progress made against the areas for improvement identified in the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement are shown in Appendix B.

Whilst there remain some areas that require development or further improvement, in considering the governance framework and its application as detailed in this statement, we are of the opinion that the governance arrangements in place for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are effective and remain fit for purpose, providing an adequate level of assurance for the Council.

(signed).....

(signed).....

**Councillor Nigel Daniels**

**Rhian Hayden**

**Leader of the Council**

**Chief Officer Resources**

**September 2019**

**September 2019**

(signed).....

**Michelle Morris**

**Managing Director**

**September 2019**

## Appendix A

### WAO Proposals for Improvement Issued During 2018/19

<b>WAO Scrutiny Fit for the Future (Issued June 2018)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Proposals for Improvement</i></b>	
The Council's scrutiny function could be strengthened by:	
1.	Improving the provision of training and development opportunities for members to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide further training on the Well-being of Future Generations Act for scrutiny members to improve their understanding and consideration of the Act when undertaking scrutiny activity;</li><li>• Understand the individual development needs of members and deliver relevant scrutiny skill training; and</li><li>• Develop member questioning skills to improve member questioning and constructive challenge.</li></ul>
<b>WAO 'speak my language: Overcoming language and communication barriers in public services (Issued April 2018)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Recommendations</i></b>	
Ensuring that people who face language and communication barriers can access public services	
1.	Public bodies are required to ensure that people can access the services they need. To take account of the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and other legislation, we recommend that public bodies regularly review the accessibility of their services to people who do not speak English or Welsh as a main language including Deaf people who use sign language. This assessment can include using our checklist.
<b>WAO Supporting Financial Resilience (Issued September 2018)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Proposals for Improvement</i></b>	
Support Financial Resilience by:	
1.	The Council should review its administration of Council Tax to ensure prompt and efficient collection. In particular it should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review its Council Tax collection arrangements with the aim of increasing in-year collection rates; and</li><li>• Compare its Council Tax staffing costs with other Wales councils to understand the apparent cost variations and identify potential opportunities for cost savings.</li></ul>
2.	The Council should manage grants strategically alongside other funding streams. In particular it should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Better integrate the applications for grants into the budget setting process</li></ul>



	<p>(where possible);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain central records of potential and successful grant applications to support a strategic overview of this funding stream; and</li> <li>• Review the grants made by the Council to ensure they provide value for money.</li> </ul>
3.	<p>The Council should provide robust challenge in the setting of fees and charges to ensure they support delivery of its strategic priorities. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an income generation policy to support delivery of the Council's strategic priorities;</li> <li>• Central finance should issue clear instructions in to managers about increases in fees and charges taking account of relevant external influences;</li> <li>• Services should comply with budget instructions in respect of increases in fees and charges;</li> <li>• Central finance should carry out robust checks to challenge and confirm compliance with budget instructions; and</li> <li>• Budgeted income should reflect agreed levels of fees and charges and anticipated activity levels.</li> </ul>
4.	<p>To deliver the 2018-19 budget, the Council should respond constructively to 2017-18 budget imbalances, that may reoccur in 2018-19, utilising the skills of the Central Finance Team, Strategic Transformation Team and budget holders. In particular the Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critically review and learn from the 2017-18 revenue budget overspends and underspends to identify reasons for imbalances for future year budgets;</li> <li>• Take action to ensure weaknesses identified do not reoccur</li> <li>• Maximise the potential of the strategic transformation team</li> <li>• Improve monitoring of savings projects and take clear corrective action to address anticipated under-delivery and address the root causes;</li> <li>• Review skills, capability and development needs of budget holders and provide training support to meet them;</li> <li>• Ensure Central Finance lead on and facilitate a robust financial culture throughout the organisation.</li> </ul>
5.	<p>In planning for the 2019-20 budget the Council should improve accountability throughout the organisation for the setting and delivery of the 2019-20 and future budgets. In particular it should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify budget / service imbalances from 2017-18 and forecasts in 2018-19</li> <li>• Decide whether overspending is to be funded through extra budget or managed down by management action</li> <li>• Decide whether underspending can be maintained and reallocate budget accordingly</li> <li>• Introduce workforce planning to the budget setting process</li> <li>• Improve accountability for budget setting and delivery</li> <li>• Strengthen budget management by holding budget holders to account and take early corrective action</li> </ul>
6.	<p>The Council should maintain careful budgetary controls to ensure unforeseen budget pressures do not result in the General Reserve reducing below its minimum target level.</p>
7.	<p>The Council should use data more effectively in managing finances and performance and in setting its budget to achieve and demonstrate value for money. In particular it</p>

	<p>should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review membership of external networks / professional organisations and ensure clear outputs that will benefit the Council's improvement agenda;</li> <li>• Better embed data into its performance and financial management arrangements; and</li> <li>• Use data more effectively in the budget setting process to identify value for money opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>WAO Public Procurement in Wales (Issued September 2018)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Recommendation</i></b>	
1.	We recommend that public bodies review their procurement strategies and policies during 2017-18 and on an annual basis thereafter to ensure that they reflect wider policy and legislative changes and support continuous improvement.
<b>WAO Strategic Commissioning of accommodation services for adults with Learning Disabilities (Issued May 2018)</b>	
<b><i>WAO Recommendations</i></b>	
1.	<p>We recommend that local authorities continue to focus on preventing people becoming dependent on more expensive placements in care homes by providing effective support at home and a range of step up accommodation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the evaluation of prevention activity so local authorities understand what works well and why;</li> <li>• Utilising the mapping of prevention services under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 that covers other agencies and service providers;</li> <li>• Improving the signposting of additional help so carers and support networks can be more resilient and self-reliant. This should include encouraging carers to make long term plans for care to maintain and protect their dependant's wellbeing; and</li> <li>• Sharing risk analysis and long term planning data with local authorities, service providers, and partners to agree a shared understanding of the range of options.</li> </ul>
2.	<p>We recommend that local authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the approach to planning services for people with learning disabilities by building on the Regional Partnership</li> <li>• Boards population assessments for people with learning disabilities and agreeing future priorities</li> </ul>
3.	<p>We recommend that local authorities do more to integrate commissioning arrangements with partners and providers and take account of the work of the National Commissioning Board by::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the barriers that exist in stopping or hindering further integration;</li> <li>• Improving the quality of joint strategic plans for learning disability services (see also paragraphs 3.11 – 3.14);</li> <li>• Establishing investment models and sustainable financial structures, joint</li> </ul>

	<p>workforce planning and multi-year budgeting; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing appropriate governance and data sharing frameworks with key local partners that include a clear process for managing risk and failure.</li> </ul>
4.	<p>We recommend that local authorities do more to involve people with learning disabilities and their carers in care planning and agreeing pathways to further independence by::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistently including people with disabilities and their carers in the writing, monitoring and development of care plans;</li> <li>• Systematically involving carers and advocacy groups in evaluating the quality of services;</li> <li>• Involving people with learning disabilities in procurement processes; and</li> <li>• Ensuring communications are written in accessible and appropriate language to improve the understanding and impact of guidance and information.</li> </ul>
5.	<p>We recommend that local authorities collaborate with providers, the third sector and suppliers in understanding challenges, sharing data, and pooling expertise by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the quality range, and accessibility of tendering information; and</li> <li>• Working with providers to shape local markets by coming to a common understanding of the opportunities, risks, and future priorities in providing learning disabilities services.</li> </ul>
6.	<p>We recommend that local authorities develop a more appropriate set of performance indicators and measures of success that make it easier to monitor and demonstrate the impact of service activity by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-designing measures, services and contract performance indicators with service providers, people with learning disabilities and their carers;</li> <li>• Ensure commissioners have sufficient cost and qualitative information on the full range of placement and care options available;</li> <li>• Equipping commissioners with data to demonstrate the long term financial benefits of commissioning choices, this includes having the right systems and technology;</li> <li>• Integrating the outcomes and learning from different types of interventions and placements; and</li> <li>• Including learning disability services in local authority scrutiny reviews to challenge performance and identify improvements.</li> </ul>

Details of progress against these proposals can be obtained from the Governance and Partnerships Department.

## Appendix B

<b>Recommendation for Improvement made in the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement</b>	<b>Action Undertaken during 2018/19</b>	<b>Further Action Required</b>
<b>Core Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.</b>		
Continued adherence to the Authority's policies and procedures which exist to guide Members and Officers to comply with the Council's expectations in terms of acting with integrity.	A risk based audit plan was operated for 2018/19 which included examination of the Authority's policies and procedures.	The audit plan for 2019/20 will include testing a range of policies and procedures.
To evidence robust application of the Authority's code of Conduct, an Internal Audit review of the declarations of interest process will be undertaken	An audit of the Authority's Code of Conduct for Officers was not conducted during 2018/19 but has been rescheduled for 2019/20.	The audit plan for 2019/20 will include an audit of the Authority's Code of Conduct for Officers
Review / update the Whistleblowing Policy.	The Whistleblowing Policy has been reviewed and will be presented to Council in May 2019 for approval.	
Application of the Members Performance Development Review (PDR) Scheme and competency framework.	The Elected Member Performance Development Review Scheme has been enhanced with the development of a Local Competency Framework. In 2017/18 all senior salary holders undertook a PDR and competency framework review that was externally facilitated. From this individual action plans have been developed.	It is intended that the non-senior salary holders will be offered a PDR and competency framework review following the AGM in May 2019 and that Senior Salary holders will be reviewed again in late 2019.
In line with good practice, an annual review (as a minimum ) of the Constitution and Scheme of delegation to ensure the Authority's governance and decision making processes remain fit for purpose	The Constitution and Scheme of Delegation is being reviewed at the Annual General Meeting of Council in May 2019.	
<b>Core Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</b>		
Development of a council engagement strategy covering public and staff is under development.	The Engagement Strategy has been developed.	Further work to be undertaken linked to the findings of the WAO Levers of Change and Service User Perspective reviews.
Conduct a staff survey during Autumn 2018.	Staff survey conducted in 2019	Evaluate findings and implement changes.

Monitor progress of the Local Well-being Plan.	On-going monitoring of progress of the Local Well-being Plan.	On-going monitoring of progress of the Local Well-being Plan.
Continued implementation of the Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement Programme.	Ongoing implementation of the Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement Programme.	Ongoing implementation of the Council's Engagement Programme.
<b>Core Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.</b>		
Continued implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language standards across all areas of Blaenau Gwent	Responsibility for the implementation and mainstreaming of the Welsh Language standards has been disseminated to departments	Consider findings from the Commissioner and implement as appropriate.
Continue to support the collective and individual body duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act	A report of year 1 of the Well-being Objectives has been completed and approved by Council in October. The Commissioners office has reviewed the plan. A self-assessment of year 1 has also been completed for the Commissioner.	
Annual review of the Corporate Plan	An annual review of the Corporate Plan is scheduled.	An annual review of the Corporate Plan is scheduled.
<b>Core Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes.</b>		
Review of the Performance Management Framework to ensure alignment with the Corporate Plan.	Project management was reviewed as part of the FEP process. The review made a number of recommendations. Until this exercise is completed the Project Management process will be excluded from the business planning template (although project management guidance and templates are still in use).	Implementation of the recommendations from the Project Management FEP.  Review of the Performance Management Framework is to be undertaken.
Further embedding of the Transforming Blaenau Gwent Programme and ongoing review to ensure it continues to support improved service delivery throughout the Council	A Financial Efficiency Programme and Service Review Programme for 2018/19 were developed and implemented.	A Financial Efficiency Programme and Service Review Programme for 2019/20
Review of the Project Management Framework and implementation of	Implementation of the recommendations from the Project Management FEP	

results.		
<b>Core Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.</b>		
Retain Members Charter Level 1 following resubmission.	Level 1 of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development retained	
Utilisation of the Member Competency Framework as part of the PDR process.	Member competency framework utilised throughout the year and further training needs identified.	Develop and implement training based on the needs identified through the PDR process.
Conduct staff survey during Autumn 2018.	Staff survey undertaken in January 2019.	Analyse findings of the staff survey and implement actions required.
Conclude phases 1 and 2 of the Senior Management Review.	Phase 1 of the Senior Management Review completed.	Complete Phase 2 of the Senior Management Review.
<b>Core Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b>		
To assess and demonstrate its compliance with the Local Government Measure and the aims and objectives of the Council, an annual report of the audit committee will be developed summarising the year’s activity and evidencing their responsibilities as part of the governance arrangements.	An annual report of the audit committee for 17/18 was produced and presented to the September 2018 Committee meeting.	An annual report for 2018/19 will be produced and reported to the Audit Committee during 2019.
Regular review of Risk Management arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose and are implemented consistently.	Corporate Risk Register reported to CLT quarterly and to Members as part of the Joint report. Risk & Insurance Manager also available to advise Managers on team / service risks. Risk & Insurance Manager attends quarterly DMT’s to facilitate / challenge discussions on Directorate risks;	
As part of the Authority’s ongoing commitment to managing its risks, the anti-fraud, anti-corruption and anti-bribery policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy was not reviewed during the period	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed during 2019/20.
Continued inclusion of key governance systems in the internal audit plan to ensure key elements of the governance framework are	A number of key governance systems were audited during 2018/19 and findings reported to the appropriate service areas for action.	The risk based audit plan for 2019/20 has prioritised a number of key governance systems for audit during 2019/20.

prioritised and examined annually		
Data Protection Training – mandatory e-learning is to be introduced. Staff training and awareness is a key control measure that must be addressed through a mixture of e-learning and face to face delivery methods.	Data Protection Training was rolled out to staff during 2018/19.	
<b>Core Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability</b>		
Managers to implement the actions identified to address weaknesses highlighted by Internal Audit. Meetings are undertaken with the Wider Corporate Leadership Team, in addition to responsible Officers, and timescales are set for implementation. Managers to ensure systems for which they have responsibility have robust internal controls to further improve the integrity of the Authority's processes.	Each audit finding has been responded to with an appropriate action identified by management. An audit follow-up process has been undertaken retesting the weaknesses identified and reporting findings to senior managers and Audit Committee as appropriate.	A programme of follow-up audits will be undertaken during 2019/20.
The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy was not reviewed during the period	The Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy will be reviewed during 2019/20.
Conduct a scoping exercise for webcasting meetings.	CLT are considering the webcasting of meetings as part of a larger Office 365 project.	