



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Annual Scrutiny Report 2019-20

Scrutiny Committee Chairpersons



Councillor Stewart Healy
Corporate Overview
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Haydn Trollope
Education and Learning
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Lee Parsons
Regeneration Scrutiny
Committee



Councillor Steve Thomas
Social Services
Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Joanna Wilkins
Community Services
Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Stewart Healy is also Chair of the Joint (Budget) Scrutiny Committee and the Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee

Councillors Haydn Trollope and Stephen Thomas jointly chair (on a rotational basis) the Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee.

Contents

Page

Introduction	3
Bridging the Gap	5
Sustainable Development Principles	6
Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee	7
Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee	10
Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee	13
Social Service Scrutiny Committee	16
Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	19
Joint Scrutiny Committees	22
Scrutiny Committee Performance	25
Contact Information	29



Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Scrutiny Report which outlines work undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2019-2020. The report describes how Scrutiny Members have effectively challenged in order to influence the Council's decision making process undertaken to deliver effective outcomes for the people who live and work in Blaenau Gwent.

As with all local authorities in Wales, Scrutiny has become an established and essential part of the Council's decision making process. It plays an integral part in helping to shape local policy and making a substantial contribution towards the work of the Council by acting as a 'critical friend'.

Scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent is made up of five main Committees that collectively support the work of the Executive Committee and Council. The function of Scrutiny allows non-Executive Elected Members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve. The Committee Members give their views and recommend actions through reporting to the Executive Committee and or Council, both of which are the decision-making bodies of the Council.

Scrutiny Committees also monitor the decisions of the Executive Committee. Scrutiny Members can 'call-in' a decision which has been made by the Executive Committee but has not yet been implemented. This enables consideration to be given as to whether a decision is appropriate and if they feel the Executive Committee needs to reconsider the decision.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act has been established to make public bodies think more about the long term; work better with people, communities and each other; look to prevent problems; and take a more joined-up approach. For the first time, public bodies listed in the Act, including the Local Authority, must work in a sustainable way. The Local Authority will need to make sure that when making decisions it takes into account the potential impact on future generations. The Act also establishes Public Service Boards (PSBs) for each local authority area and to support this, the Council has developed a PSB Scrutiny Committee.

Engagement

To encourage public participation and engagement in Scrutiny Committee meetings, meetings have been taken outside the Civic Centre, for example, an Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee meeting was held in Tredegar Comprehensive School, at which the Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher provided Members with a presentation on School Performance.

Scrutiny Committee meetings have been promoted on Social Media via Facebook, offering members of the public an opportunity to

either attend scrutiny committee meetings or to pose questions on social media which could potentially be raised at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair. Discussions have been held with the Corporate Engagement Team to see how best to engage the public in the scrutiny process.

As part of its role, the Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee receive monitoring reports; these reports are monitored and reviewed by the Local Safeguarding Network Group which is a sub group of the South East Wales Safeguarding Children Board and Gwent wide Adult Safeguarding Board; this group is made up of multi-agency representation from within Blaenau Gwent that has direct links with the Youth Forum to ensure the voice of the child is fully considered and heard on safeguarding issues.

Scrutiny Process

In order to ensure agendas are planned efficiently, **Agenda Preparation Meetings** take place approximately six weeks before each scrutiny committee meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair, Scrutiny officer and report authors attend to discuss their items and what detail they intend to include as well as identifying potential lines of enquiry from the committee. The items are prioritised, timing for each item considered, and, if necessary, expert witnesses are considered to attend the committee who could enhance discussion.

Each scrutiny committee holds an **Agenda Management Discussion Meeting** (pre-meeting) thirty minutes before the scrutiny meeting to which all scrutiny committee members are invited. The purpose of this meeting is to enable the committee members to prepare for the meeting and to approach lines of enquiry as a team. Scrutiny committees are required to be Apolitical processes. At these meetings lines of questioning and enquiry, potential recommendations or amendments to recommendations and intended outcomes are discussed. Members also have the opportunity to raise queries that might not be appropriate for discussion at a public meeting.

Directly following each Scrutiny Committee meeting an **Evaluation Meeting** is held. This includes the Committee Members and the Scrutiny Officer. The Committee are asked to consider areas such as the report content, questions, answers, engagement and chairing. From this, the Committee can decide if any amendments to future meetings need to be made looking at continuous improvement.

Preparing and planning for meetings is seen as good practice and this has been recognised previously by Audit Wales.

Bridging the Gap Programme

In line with Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Council has developed a Bridging the Gap Programme to respond to the challenges the Council faces over the next five years.

The Bridging the Gap Programme will deal with a number of Strategic Business Reviews to deal with potential gaps between anticipated funding and expenditure that aims to build financial resilience. The programme will identify savings opportunities, potential cost avoidance and new revenue streams.

Members have been involved in the Bridging the Gap Programme and the Strategic Business Reviews. An overview of the MTFS and Bridging the Gap programmes has been presented to the Corporate Overview Scrutiny on two occasions this year. Individual Strategic Business Reviews have been reported to the relevant scrutiny committee, as detailed in the table below:

The Scrutiny Committees will receive Progress Update reports on all of the above Strategic Business Reviews as part of the Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes for 2020/21.

Committee	Strategic Business Review
Regeneration 14th November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industrial Portfolio Review• Growth Plan• Low Carbon
Corporate Overview 19th November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fees and Charges• Income Recovery• Workplace Transformation• Third Party Expenditure
Community Services 5th December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assets and Property• Trade Waste Service
Corporate Overview 3rd March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of External Grants

Sustainable Development Principles	Links to Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme Items
<p>Thinking for the long term <i>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a second HWRC at Roseheyworth South Business Park Community Services • Review of Homes Allocation Policy Community Services • Medium Term Financial Strategy Corporate Overview • Commercial Strategy 2020-2025 Corporate Overview • Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2018/19 Education and Learning • Replacement Local Development Plan Preferred Strategy Regeneration • Update on Progress of the My Support Team Social Services
<p>Taking an integrated approach <i>Considering how the Council's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Strategy 2020-2025 Corporate Overview • Education Attainment of Children Looked After Pupils Education and Learning • Rassau and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate Business Improvement District Regeneration • Joint Finance and Performance Quarterly Report Corporate Overview
<p>Taking a preventative approach <i>How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help the Council to meet its objectives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Hygiene Rating Scheme Focused Audit Community Services • Inspire 2 Achieve and Work Performance – January to December 2019 Education and Learning • Local Housing Strategy Review Regeneration • Corporate Parenting Progress Social Services
<p>Collaborating <i>Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the Council itself) that could help the Council to meet its well-being objectives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Nature Reserve Designation and Declaration Community Services • Street Lighting Service Review Community Services • EAS Business Plan and Local Authority Annex 2020-2021 Education and Learning • Tech Valleys Regeneration • Welsh Government Childcare Offer Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen Social Services • Regional Partnership Board Update Social Services
<p>Involvement <i>The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council serves</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the Council's Statutory Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24 Corporate Overview • Staff Survey 2019 – Summary Results Corporate Overview • Helping Elected Members Get to Know our Schools Education and Learning • Youth Service Performance 2018-2019 Education and Learning • Self-Build Wales Regeneration • National Adoption Service Annual Report 2018/19 Social Services

Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Member Attendance at Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Stewart Healy (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Greg Paulsen (5 of 8 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (3 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Martin Cook (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Cross (5 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth L Davies (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (8 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor John Hill (4 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Hedley McCarthy (3 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Clive Meredith (5 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor John P Morgan (2 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Lee Parsons (4 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor Joanna Wilkins (6 of 8 meetings attended)
Councillor David Wilkshire (1 of 8 meetings attended)

Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to Organisational Development, treasury management, engagement and corporate responsibilities.

Overview from Chair

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee has had a productive second year, retaining a consistent membership and the appointment of a new Chair and Vice Chair.

Committee members have continued to develop and demonstrate their understanding of the role of Corporate Overview Scrutiny and have collectively provided constructive and relevant input into agenda items. There has been appropriate challenge and questioning of officers with detailed responses and appropriate actions taking place. The Forward Work Programme has been structured and its content has been led by the committee.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to committee members and officers for their valuable input and support this year. Also my sincere thanks to my Vice-Chair Councillor Greg Paulsen.

Councillor Stewart Healy
Chair, Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Report	Activity	Outcome
<p>Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024</p>	<p>A Scrutiny Task and Finish group was established to ensure effective member involvement in the development of the equality objectives and the Plan.</p>	<p>The Task and Finish Group met on two occasions (September and November 2019).</p> <p>The engagement of the member group was instrumental in developing the plan to ensure that it was based on a good understanding of the equality issues in Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>Also as part of the formal consultation a special members' session was held in January 2020, and led by the Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee in order to give all elected members the opportunity to consult on the draft equality objectives.</p> <p>The draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020 to 2024 is to be considered by the Committee at its meeting on 3rd March 2020 at which time the committee will form its recommendations for endorsement at Executive Committee and then approval by Council on 26th March 2020.</p>
<p>Workforce Sickness Absence Performance</p>	<p>The Committee receives an Annual Workforce Sickness Absence report for the Council and at its meeting in November 2019, the committee recommended that processes be put in place for individual Directorates to report quarterly to their specific Scrutiny Committee in order to challenge its Directorate's sickness absence performance.</p>	<p>A common approach for reporting across all committee has been developed and the individual committees have received their performance reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services - 13th January 2020 Education and Learning - 15th January 2020 Community Services - 16th January 2020 Regeneration - 23rd January 2020 Corporate Overview - 3rd March 2020 <p>All committees have welcomed the new reporting, however, felt that work was needed to the report to ensure appropriate information was included to enable Members to challenge. It has been requested by Members that a group be convened to discuss what additional information is required in the report.</p> <p>An agenda item has been included on the Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting for March 2020, to discuss what improvements members require to the report. This will then be fed back to Organisational Development.</p>

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- ICT Training for Members
- Tai Calon - Universal Credit
- Blaenau Gwent on the Move
- Treasury Management
- Brexit Update
- Commercially Minded Council
- Leadership in Health and Safety
- Annual Performance Comparison and Performance Information

Task and Finish and Site Visits

In June 2019, the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee established a working group to consider the proposed Strategic Equality Plan policy development and timeframes from inception, to adoption by Council in March 2020, including key issues such as options for engagement activity. The group has met twice and has concluded its work and the Strategic Equality Plan will be presented to Committee for consideration in March 2020 prior to adoption by Council.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO reports was considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO

to present the report:

- WAO - Service User Perspective - Community Engagement
- WAO - Review of Corporate Arrangements for the Safeguarding of Children

Policies, Plans and Strategies

The Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Commercial Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Capital Strategy
- Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024
- Review of Workforce Strategy
- Organisational Development Policies

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Joint Finance and Performance Quarterly Monitoring;
- Contracts Over £500,000;
- Shared Resources Service (SRS) Partnership Working – Half Yearly Monitoring;
- Treasury Management
- Employee Benefits Scheme - First Year Update
- Annual Health and Safety Report
- Staff Survey 2019 - Summary Results
- CCTV Progress Report

Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Hadyn Trollope (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Jonathan Millard (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Martin Cook (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (3 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Lynn Elias (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Wayne Hodkins (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Julie Holt (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Clive Meredith (5 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor John C Morgan (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Prichard (7 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Keri Rowson (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Tommy Smith (6 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Bob Summers (5 of 7 meetings attended)
Councillor Stephen Thomas (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to education, youth service, school buildings and the EAS.

Overview from Chair

This year has been a pleasing year as we have been able to go out to the schools and College to see first-hand the great work

they are doing.

Once again we are seeing the standards raised in our schools and it is pleasing to note how many schools have been categorised as 'Green' across the borough, but there is still a lot of work to do, so that we can have confidence the we are giving every pupil in the Borough the best education they can possibly have.

Going forward, this will be a challenging time for scrutiny as we all have to get to grips with the new education framework from Welsh Government, as we are not only here to scrutinise but to be that critical friend and support education in every way that we can. It is with great sadness that the Director of Education has decided to go to pastures new, Lynette has taken us on this journey of improvement, that I personally believe no other person could have done. Lynette will be sorely missed, but I wish her all the best for the future.

Councillor Haydn Trollope
Chair, Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Report	Activity	Outcome
<p>Helping Elected Members Get to Know Our Schools</p>	<p>Following National Reform and the removal of high stakes accountability in schools, the Scrutiny Committee requested that a new Member led sub-group of the committee be established.</p> <p>In July 2019, Members received a report to establish the Member group.</p> <p>The group would visit schools over a two year period to engage with school leaders about how the setting is nurturing good well-being.</p>	<p>The Committee agreed that the sub-group would consist of 9 Members and nominations were agreed.</p> <p>Since April 2019 to date, the sub group has visited 18 schools.</p>
<p>Education Achievement Service (EAS) Value for Money - Financial Year 2018/19</p>	<p>At the meeting on 11th September 2019, the Committee requested that an evaluation report on the Education Achievement Service (EAS) be prepared for a future meeting to look at value for money and to include Service Level Agreements and any budget issues.</p>	<p>On 6th November 2019, the Committee received a report from the Director of Resource, Business and Governance of the EAS. The report detailed the outcomes of an external evaluation on the Regional EAS.</p> <p>The Committee welcomed the report and following robust questioning, the Committee requested further information, such as, the number of Challenge Advisers supporting primary and secondary schools and sought assurance that the Executive Member receive regular updates on the financial situation within schools.</p> <p>Following this, the Committee recommended approval of the report to the Executive Committee.</p>

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- School Balances (Surplus and Deficits)
- Welsh Government Youth Support Grant
- Brynmawr Foundation School
- Child Employment and Child Performance

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Home to School and Post 16 Transport Policy;
- Policy to Prevent Children Missing Education;
- Welsh in Education Strategic Plan;
- EAS Business Plan 2020/21
- School Admissions Policy Statutory and Nursery Education;
- Education Neglect Policy; and
- Blaenau Gwent Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Summary of School Inspection Outcomes – Termly reporting;
- Management of Pupil Places and the School Estate 2017/18;
- Improving Schools Programme;
- Inspire to Achieve / Work Performance;
- Key Stage 4 Outcomes;
- Pupil Exclusions;
- School Attendance;
- Youth Service Performance;
- School Categorisation;
- 21st Century Schools Programme Band A & B; and
- Children Looked After Provision and Progress
- Self Evaluation Report

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Joanna Wilkins (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Clive Meredith (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Peter Baldwin (2 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Martin Cook (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Gareth L Davies (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Lyn Elias (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Stewart Healy (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Wayne Hodgins (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Julie Holt (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Hedley McCarthy (6 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor John P Morgan (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Greg Paulsen (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Tim Sharrem (5 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Bob Summers (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Councillor Lisa Winnett (7 of 7 meetings attended)

Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to environment, asset management, community asset transfers, leisure services and community services including waste and recycling and street cleansing.

Overview from Chair

This year has seen the newly formed Community Services Committee set up allowing the committee to focus on environmental matters.

This was expected to be a challenging year given the large number of significant reviews that have been presented to the committee. However, the committee rose to the challenge and this turned out to be an extremely productive year.

Due to the diverse background and professionalism of the Scrutiny Committee members, questions put to officers have been in-depth and comprehensive, enabling them to fully scrutinise reports and hold officers to account.

The year ahead will no doubt be even more challenging; however, I have every faith that this committee will face that challenge with vigour.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee members and officers for their participation and input. I would also like to thank the support staff for their help and guidance throughout the year.

Councillor Joanna Wilkins
Chair of Community Services Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Report	Activity	Outcome
<p>The Strategic Business Case - Development of Second Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) at Roseheyworth South Business Park</p>	<p>The Committee received a report in November 2019, to consider the strategic business case for the HWRC.</p> <p>The Committee raised concerns regarding revenue funding and operational issues in relation to running two HWRC.</p> <p>The committee supported the strategic business case for recommendation to Executive for approval, however, also requested that a further report be presented to Committee with detailed revenue costings to include operational issues.</p>	<p>Following the request by the Committee for a further report, a report on the Operating Costs for a Second Household Waste Recycling Centre at Roseheyworth South Business Park was presented to full Council during December 2019, the report asked that Members consider the operational days of the New Vale Centre and the proposed new Centre in Roseheyworth; and the financial implications of operating a second recycling centre.</p> <p>The report was accepted by Council, and approval was granted to carry out soft market testing to better understand the opportunity to achieve a public sector collaboration.</p>

Members Learning and Development

Members of the Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee have attended a number of Member Briefing sessions in order to support them in their role as Scrutiny Members:

- Keeping up with the Jones' Campaign
- Food Waste Bags
- Abandoned Vehicles
- Civil Parking Enforcement Update
- Work of Trading Standards
- A465 HoV Section 2 Works: Brynmawr Traffic Switch Signals

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO reports were considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO to present the report:

- Delivering with Less Leisure Services
- Well-being of Future Generations: An examination of 'Improving access to, and the quality of open spaces for the benefit of our communities, business and visitors'
- Environmental Health follow-up Review.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Civil Parking Enforcement Policy;

- Waste Management and Recycling Strategy 2018-2025; and
- Review of Blaenau Gwent Homes Allocation Policy.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Litter and Dog Control Offences Annual Report;
- Highways Capital Works Programme;
- Annual Review of Flood Management Plan;
- Waste and Recycling Performance;
- Community Services Directorate Performance; and
- National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Stephen Thomas (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor Keri Rowson (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Derrick Bevan (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Day (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Lynn Elias (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Hayden (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Julie Holt (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Jonathan Millard (6 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor John P Morgan (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gregg Paulsen (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Tim Sharrem (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Tommy Smith (5 of 6 meetings attended)

Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to Social Services, including adults and children.

Overview from Chair

The Social Services Scrutiny Committee has continued its work to scrutinise and challenge across a wide-ranging work programme utilising the skills and experience developed by members over the past three years to put forward recommendations to the Executive Committee, some of which are agreed and some which are not.

In children's services the committee has examined a varied work programme scrutinising reports on critical areas such as: The Childcare Offer, National Adoption Service, Corporate Parenting as well as regular reporting of the safe reduction of Children Looked After which has been a challenging area for all councils in recent years. A notable development has been the MYST project which is demonstrating good early signs as it progresses; the committee feels that it is vital to establish new ventures such as this to future proof whilst we are receiving additional Welsh Government grant funding.

In adult services we have challenged ongoing reports into areas such as The Integrated Care Fund, Living Independently in the 21st Century, the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Assisted Transport. The new model in the Information Advice and Assistance Team has embedded well across operational areas within both adults and children's services with clearly scoped out roles and responsibilities. The Committee were pleased to learn that the Police now have a presence within the Children's IAA team which further strengthens their response for safeguarding referrals.

The Committee determined that the department has responded well to external audit reports and has developed solid action plans to deal with recommendations which have largely been completed following the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection report for Blaenau Gwent.

I would like to thank all Members of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee and Officers from the Department for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

Councillor Stephen Thomas
Chair, Social Services Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Report	Activity	Outcome
<p>Eligibility Criteria for Transport Provision</p>	<p>The committee has received a series of reports from March 2016 to November 2018 to consider Assisted Transport provision. In November 2018, the Committee recommended and was supported by the Executive, not to introduce a charging policy at that time and requested that officers prepare a report on proposed charging policy with full costings.</p>	<p>On 13th January 2020, a report was presented to Members to consider the implementation of a charging mechanism for those service users who continue to access the transport provision.</p> <p>The Committee considered the two options presented and decided to recommend to Executive Committee an alternative option.</p> <p>The Committee's alternative option was considered by the Executive on 29th January 2020, to which the Vice-Chair of the Committee presented the Scrutiny Committee's reasons for the alternative options. However, the Executive Committee did not support the Scrutiny recommendation. As part of the Council's democratic arrangements for Scrutiny to hold the Executive to account, the Executive Member for Social Services will be invited to the April meeting of the Committee to explain the reasons for the Executive Committee rejecting the recommendation.</p>

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Social Services Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Care Closer to Home - 6 Monthly Update;
- Assitive Technology / Digital Solutions to Promote Independence;
- Community Connectors; and
- My Support Team and National Fostering Framework.

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) Reports

The following CIW reports were considered and accepted by the Committee and where appropriate the Chair invited a representative from CIW to present the report:

- Local Authority Performance Review; and
- Inspection of Provider Services.

Wales Audit Office (WAO) Reports

The following WAO report was considered and accepted by the Committee and the Chair invited a representative from the WAO to present the report:

Well-being of Future Generations - Ensuring preventative services target the most vulnerable families in Blaenau Gwent who do not meet the criteria for a care and support plan.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- School Services Assisted Transport Provision.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Annual and Bi Annual report of the Director of Social Services;
- Welsh Government Childcare Offer;
- Children Looked After Update;
- Regional Partnership Board Quarterly report;
- Corporate Parenting Progress;
- National Adoption Service Annual report;
- Living Independently in the 21st Century;
- Care Inspectorate Wales Inspection Action Plan;
- Evaluation of the Supporting Change Team;
- Integrated Care Fund - Adult Services; and
- Update on Progress of the My Support Team.

Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Chair: Councillor Lee Parsons (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Vice-Chair: Councillor John Hill (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Councillor Malcolm Cross (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth A Davies (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Gareth L Davies (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Malcolm Day (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Phil Edwards (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Mark Holland (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Hedley McCarthy (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Jonathan Millard (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Amanda Moore (2 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor John C Morgan (5 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keith Prichard (4 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Keri Rowson (3 of 6 meetings attended)
Councillor Bernard Willis (4 of 6 meetings attended)

Aim of the Committee

The role and aim of the committee is to scrutinise activity, monitor and challenge performance and input into the development and delivery of strategies, policies and protocols in relation to regeneration and economic development, including Housing, Employment and Skills, Destination Management and Tourism, Energy and Digital and Town Centres.

Overview from Chair

The newly formed Regeneration Scrutiny Committee was not without teething problems in its infancy but once these were overcome it soon became obvious that there was a great deal of work to be done over the year in a very interesting and

challenging portfolio, the year should be looked upon as being very productive and laying the foundations for future years.

Scrutiny Committee members have been excellent throughout the year, with prevalent questions from the reports put to officers and which have been answered professionally by all officers in attendance enabling members to fully scrutinise reports and make robust recommendations to council.

The reformation of the Town Centre Task & Finish group has again looked at the decline of our five Town Centres and how we as a council can try to reinvigorate them and increase footfall, the group is under no illusions and know this will be a major piece of work going forward.

The completion of the Tourism brochure will also aid the Council as it looks to attract more visitors to our beautiful Borough.

The future of the Regeneration Scrutiny committee will be very exciting with many projects in the pipeline and I am positive the members will tackle the challenge head on with the same energy and enthusiasm they have done over the past 12 months.

From a personal point of view, I would like to extend my thanks to our officers and support staff for their help and guidance throughout the year, the fortnightly Executive Member/ Officer meetings have proved very beneficial and have been of great interest and proved priceless in being able to offer guidance to members during scrutiny.

I would also like to thank Councillor John Hill who has played an invaluable role as Vice-Chairman and supported me throughout the year at all Scrutiny, Pre-Agenda and Executive/Officer meetings.

Councillor Lee Parsons
Chair, Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Activity

Report	Activity	Outcome
<p>Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group</p>	<p>At its meeting in September 2019, the Draft Forward Work Programme for 2019/20 was presented for the Committees approval.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the Town Centre Strategy Task and Finish Group should be re-established under the remit of the new Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Following the Committee's request a report was included in the Forward Work Programme and a report was considered by the Committee at its meeting in December 2019.</p>	<p>The Committee considered the agreed the Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group, and agreed that there should be representation on Group from all towns in the borough. Nominations were proposed and agreed from the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and other nominations were sought by the Chair from across the scrutiny committees to ensure full representation.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group has met twice and a further two meetings are planned for March 2020.</p> <p>A report on the findings of the Task and Finish Group will be included on the Forward Work Programme 2020/21, for the Committee's consideration.</p>

Members Learning and Development

The following Member Briefing Sessions were identified as part of the Regeneration Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme, however, all Members were invited to attend:

- Rassau and Tafarnaubach Industrial Estates Business Improvement District;
- Overview of the Regeneration and Economic Development Service and Priorities Moving Forward;
- Replacement Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy; and
- Affordable Housing.

Task and Finish and Site Visits

The Regeneration Scrutiny Committee currently hosts one task and finish group, a Town Centre Task and Finish Group that was re-established under the new Scrutiny Committee in December 2019 and has met twice. The Town Centre Task and Finish Group will work with partners to develop a new vision for the Town Centres within the Borough, ensuring their long term future.

The Scrutiny Committee has also proposed that a Task and Finish Group is established to develop a Local Transport Strategy. A report is to be presented to the Committee in May 2020 to nominate members to sit on the group and to agree the Terms of Reference.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Committee Members considered and provided their views and recommendations on the following core Strategy and Policy documents:

- Enterprise Strategy;
- Revised Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy;
- Energy Prospectus;
- Housing Strategy; and
- Employment and Skills Plan.

Monitoring and Progress Updates

As part of its monitoring role, the Committee received monitoring and progress updates against:

- Destination Management – Annual Review;
- CCRCQ Quarterly Performance Report;
- Regeneration Directorate Performance Report; and
- Targeted Regeneration Funding Update.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Joint Education and Learning and Social Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Committee

The Council has a responsibility under the Children Act 2004, to make arrangements for safeguarding and to promote the welfare of children within their area boundary. These arrangements should ensure that all children and young people are safe and include the identification of vulnerable learners in need or at risk of significant harm. The Council also needs to maintain a record of staff suitability. Importantly, the Council has a duty to promote safe practices and create a culture of safety.

Safeguarding reports are presented to a Joint Committee of the Education and Learning and the Social Services Scrutiny Members and meets three times per year. These monitoring arrangements provide an opportunity for the Joint Committee to monitor progress and provide appropriate challenge in order to make further improvements and to ensure that the Council's Safeguarding processes remain effective.

To enable greater focus on the Safeguarding agenda, monitoring has been enhanced to include Safeguarding Performance information relating to Adult Services.

The committee has also received the revised Education Directorate Safeguarding Policy and recommended for approval at the Executive Committee meeting on 14th November 2019. The Executive Committee approved the policy for distribution to schools.

The Chairs of the Education and Learning Scrutiny Committee and the Social Services Scrutiny Committee chair the Joint Committee on a rotational basis.

Joint Finance Scrutiny Committee

On a quarterly basis, a Joint Committee of all Scrutiny Members is held which receives financial information relating to all portfolio areas. This gives Members the opportunity to monitor the information as well as refer specific service items onto the relevant Scrutiny Committee. By scrutinising the financial position of the Council on a quarterly basis, Members are able to advise and influence the areas that require most focus.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Joint Finance Committee.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory Public Services Boards (PSBs) to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being by strengthening joint working across all public services. To ensure local accountability, there is a requirement under the Act to establish scrutiny arrangements for the PSB.

The Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee acts as the PSB Scrutiny Committee, with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all Scrutiny Committees invited as members when acting in the role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee. To ensure the Committee is politically proportionate additional members have been identified. The committee was established in February 2017.

The PSB Scrutiny Committee operates in the same way as other Scrutiny Committees but holds the Public Service Board to account rather than the Executive Committee and is also responsible for holding the collective body of the PSB to account rather than individual bodies.

The role of the PSB Scrutiny Committee is to:

- Review and scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken by the Public Services Board;
- Review or scrutinise the board's governance arrangements;

- Make reports or recommendations to the Board regarding its functions or governance arrangements;
- Consider matters relating to the Board as the Welsh Ministers may refer to it and report to the Welsh Ministers accordingly; and
- Carry out other functions in relation to the board that are imposed on it by the Act.

The Chair of the Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee is also the Chair of the Public Services Board Committee.

Joint Scrutiny Committees

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal (CCRCD) is a Joint Scrutiny Committee of all ten local authorities of South East Wales. The Joint Working Agreement states that 'The Councils shall form the joint committee for the purpose of overseeing and co-ordinating the discharge of the Councils' obligations in relation to the City Deal'.

The Joint Committee consists of one non-executive Member from each authority and also a deputy member.

The role of the CCRCD Joint Scrutiny Committee is to:

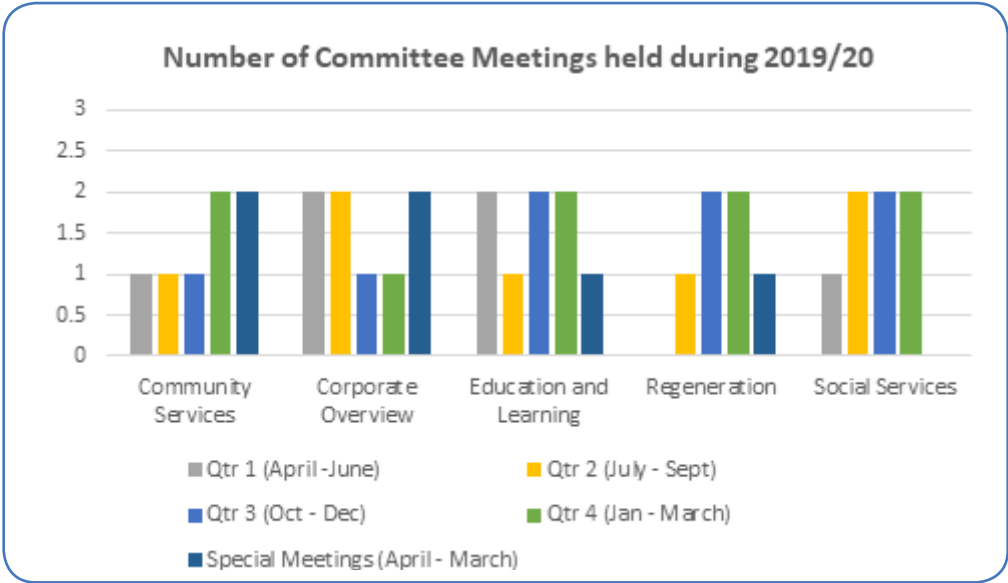
- Develop a forward work programme;
- Seek assurance and consider if the CCRCD is operating in accordance with the Joint Working Agreement, its Annual Business Plan, timetable and / or is being managed effectively;
- Monitor any CCRCD project's progress against its programme plan; and
- Make any reports and recommendation to the Regional Cabinet and / or to any of the appointing authorities and to any of their executive in respect of any function that has been developed to the Regional Cabinet.

For 2018/19 the Blaenau Gwent Member representative, who is the Chair of Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee, has in the first year of the CCRCD scrutiny committee acted as the Chair.

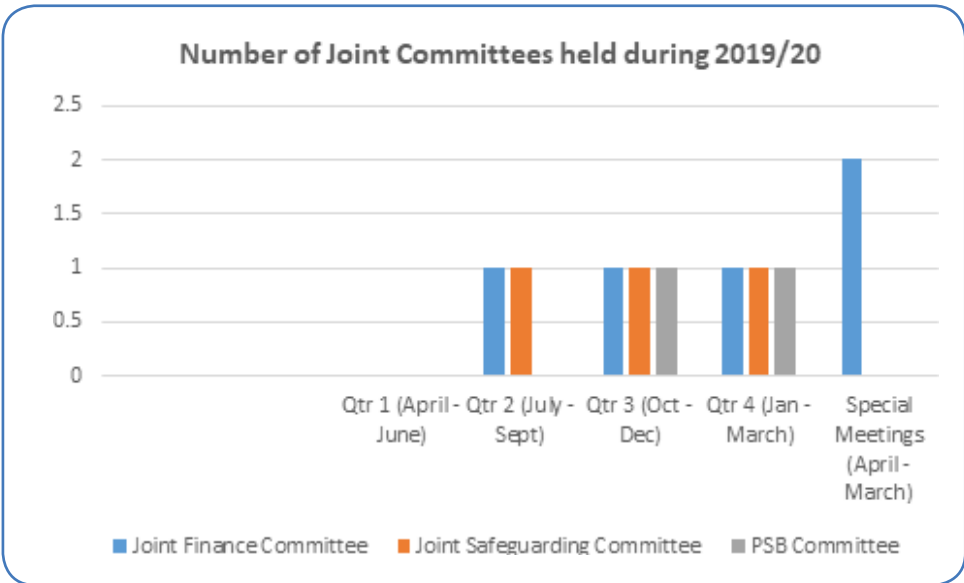
Five meetings have taken place to date. The next meeting is planned for January 2020. A Workshop is scheduled for nominated Chairs during November 2019 to consider the dedicated support required from members on the committee in order for them to perform their role on the joint committee.

Scrutiny Committee Performance

The chart shows the number of committee meetings held during 2019/20 (up to end of March 2020) and the number of special meetings arranged during that year.

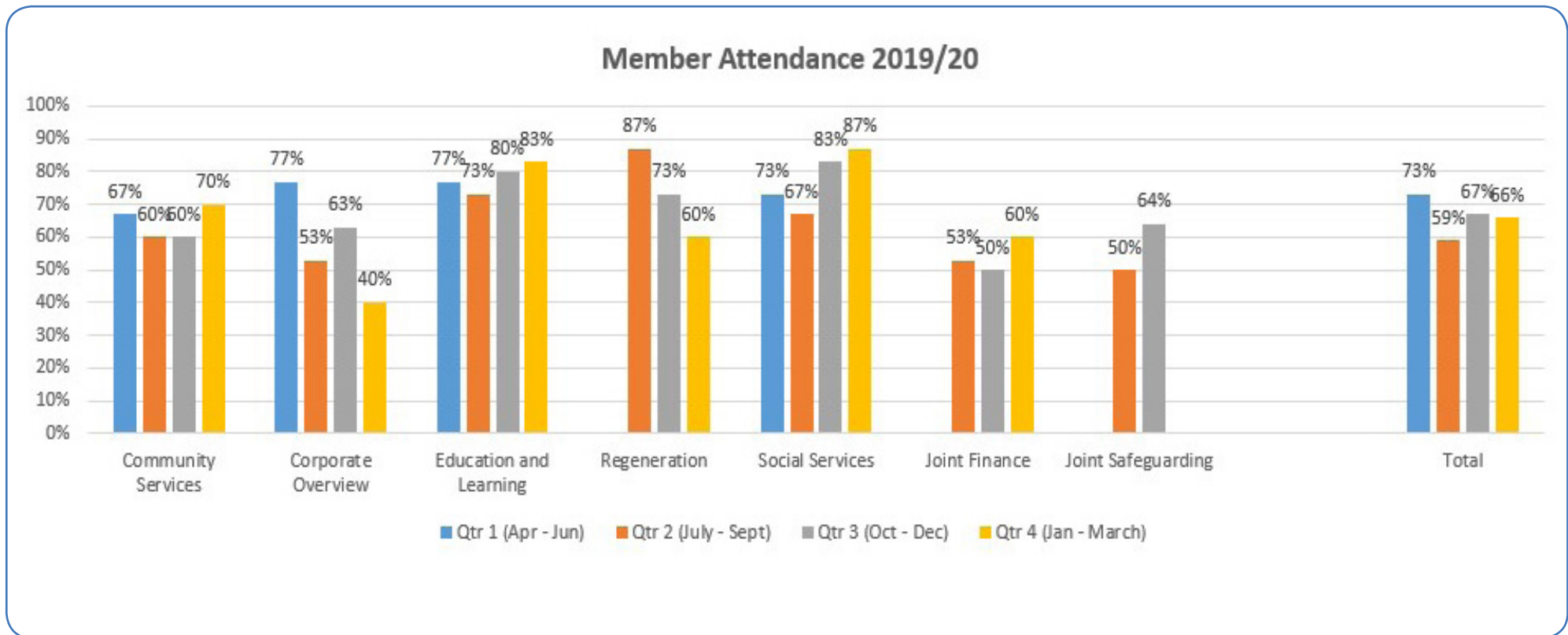


The chart shows the number of joint committee meetings held during 2019/20.

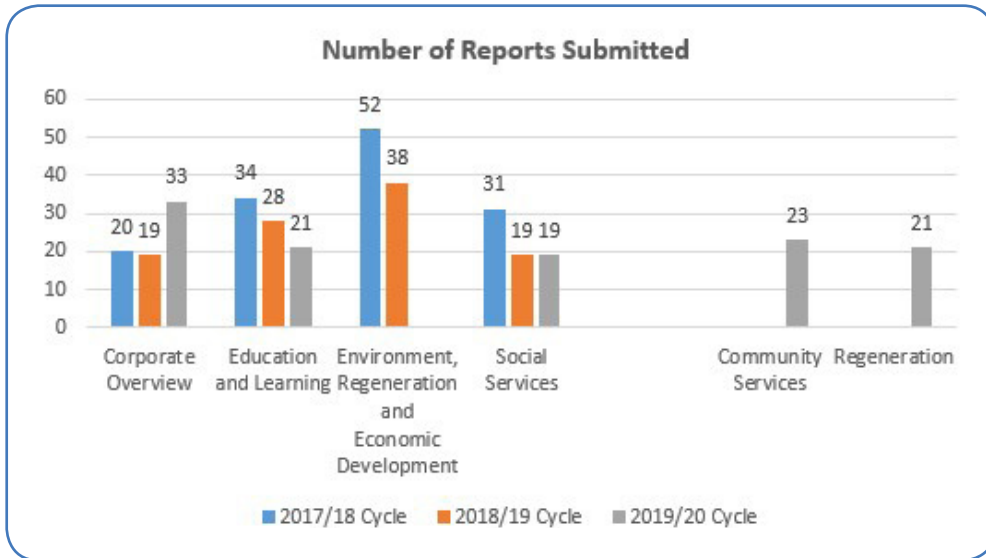


Scrutiny Committee Performance

The chart shows Member attendance at all scrutiny committee meetings during the year to end of March 2020.



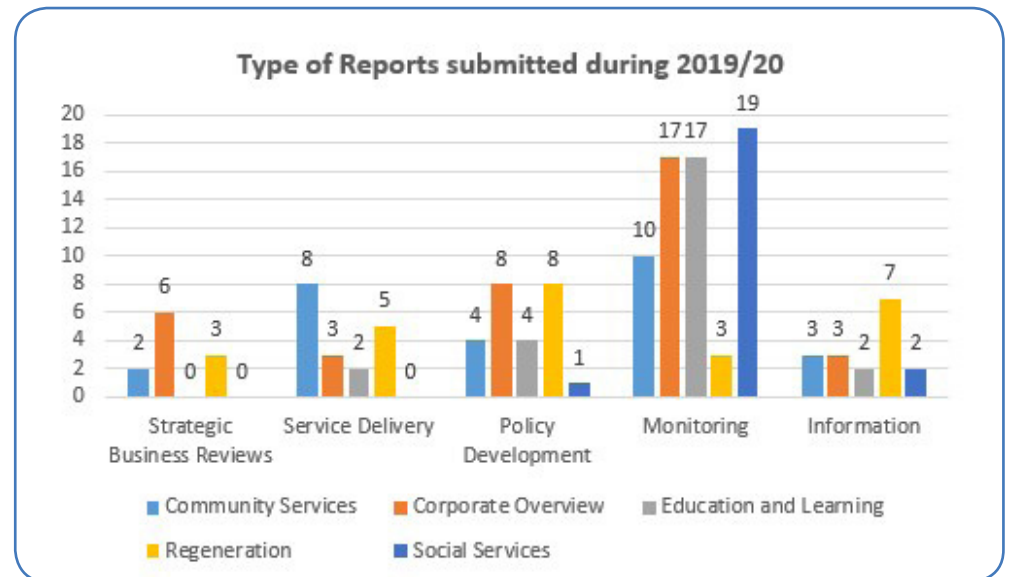
Scrutiny Committee Performance



The above chart shows the number of reports submitted through the Scrutiny Committee process compared to 2018/19.

It should be noted that in 2019/20 the former Environment, Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee was split into two Committees, namely, Community Services Scrutiny Committee and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee. However, this has had little impact on the number of reports presented:

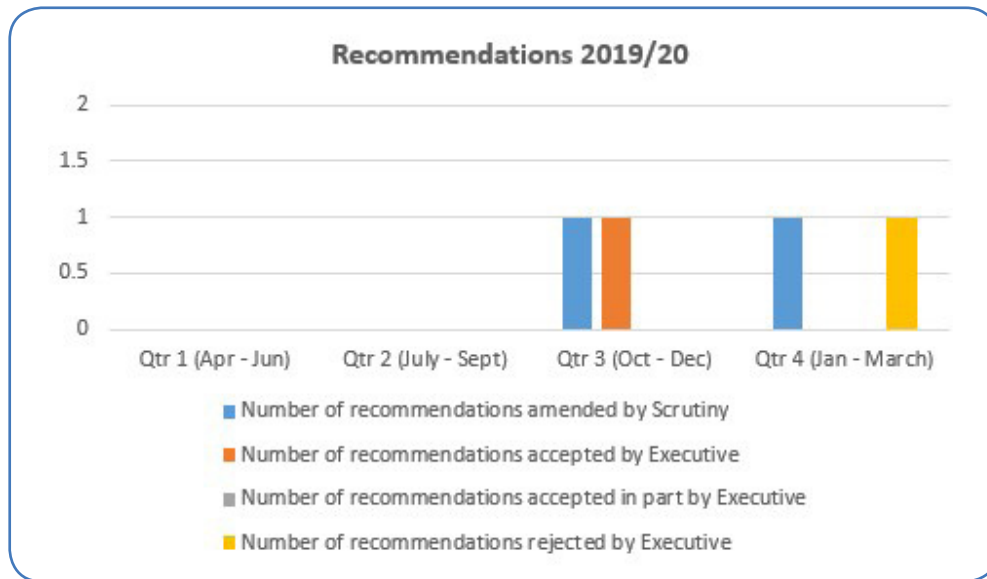
During the cycle Scrutiny Committees consider and challenge a range of reports, as well as receiving information reports. The below chart identifies the range of reports via category:-



Note: This is the main category for each report; some reports may fit into more than one category.

Scrutiny Committee Performance

As part of its role, Scrutiny is able to amend recommendations in reports presented. The chart below details how many reports were amended by Scrutiny Committees and then how many were accepted; accepted in part or rejected by the Executive Committee.



Contact Information

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

Head of Governance and Partnerships (Statutory Head of Democratic Services)

Bernadette Elias

Tel: (01495) 355016

Email:

Bernadette.elias@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

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

Contact details for Councillors can be found on our website at
[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Councillor Directory](#)

Address:

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Civic Centre
Ebbw Vale
Gwent NP23 6XB

Web: www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Service Manager Performance and Democratic (Deputy Head of Democratic Services)

Gemma Wasley

Tel: (01495) 355089

Email:

Gemma.wasley@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Getting Involved

People living in Blaenau Gwent are invited to contribute towards the Scrutiny process and encouraged to suggest items for the work programme, attend meetings or pose questions, please do so by contacting the Scrutiny Officer or by responding through the website.
[Blaenau Gwent CBC: Get Involved with Democracy](#)

Members of the public can also observe any public meeting from the Public Gallery, without invitation.

Scrutiny Officer/ Advisor

Elizabeth Thomas

Tel: (01495) 354795

Email:

Liz.thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Additional documents which may be of interest to you can be found on our website or by contacting us.

Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan 2018-23 –
https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Partnerships/Well-beingPlan_Layout_-D8_xsmall_.pdf

Corporate Plan 2020 - 2022 –
https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/fileadmin/documents/Council/Policies_Strategies_Plans/Final_Corporate_Plan_July_2020.pdf

Council Minutes and Reports –
<https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/council/councillors-and-committees/council-minutes-agendas-reports/>