

Committee: **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**

Date of meeting: **15th April 2021**

Report Subject: **Age-Friendly Communities programme progress update**

Portfolio Holder: **Cllr Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Stephen Tiley, Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations & David Arnold, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
		01.04.21			15.04.21			PSB SSG PSB

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Public Services Board (PSB) Scrutiny Committee a progress update regarding the PSB's Age-Friendly Communities programme.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 An Age-Friendly Communities programme that aims to help make life better for all people who live and work in Blaenau Gwent, particularly as they age. GAVO is the project sponsor for this PSB programme, closely supported by other PSB partners like the council, health board, and the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner.

2.2 Age-Friendly communities recognise lonely and isolated people in the community and encourage activities that people of all ages can participate in. Decisions on what it means to be age-friendly sit closer to local communities; ensuring local people and organisations have a voice based on their own lived experiences.

2.3 Since March 2020, the programme has suffered some delays and periods where the work was paused whilst partners focussed on responding to the Covid19 pandemic. Some of this work in response to the pandemic is still ongoing but partners are now working together to progress the programme with a new Age-Friendly Action Plan and a refreshed age-friendly 'assessment' of Blaenau Gwent to demonstrate some of the amazing support being provided to older people during and beyond the Covid19 pandemic.

2.4 Many venues and activities within the community have been suspended due to pandemic. Community groups, 50+ organisations and PSB partners are

trying to restart some of those activities by promoting virtual events and activities, however some members of the 50+ community still find it hard to engage virtually and are starting to become more isolated.

- 2.5 A new post-COVID19 Age-Friendly action plan is currently under development via the PSB's age-friendly steering group. Current membership includes GAVO, BGCBC, ABUHB, Aneurin Leisure Trust, Officer of the Police & Crime Commissioner's, the Older People's Champion and 50+ Forum reps.
- 2.6 As part of this work, there is an opportunity for Blaenau Gwent be recognised as an age-friendly community by being awarded Age-Friendly status from the World Health Organisation (WHO), once the new Age-Friendly Action Plan has been agreed. According to the WHO, the benefits for localities that come from being recognised as Age-Friendly Communities include:-
- Access to information sharing with a global community
 - Support from a global network of affiliates, practitioners, researchers, experts and advocates committed to fostering age-friendly environments
 - Recognition and visibility in the Network's activities and WHO's dedicated website – Age friendly World – on which Members can present their activities, achievements and link back to their own website and resources
 - Opportunities for collaboration such as international research projects, joint publications, networking and sharing amongst each other etc.
- 2.7 No other Welsh local authority area has achieved WHO age-friendly status yet so there is an opportunity for Blaenau Gwent to be recognised as one of the first age-friendly localities in Wales.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and accept the report and appendices as provided prior to it being submitted to the Public Services Board.

Option 2

That Members of the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee consider and provide specific comment for consideration by the Public Services Board before approval.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

This report is in-line with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct implications of the Age-Friendly Communities programme on the Council's budget. Continuing to work together as a PSB partnership to develop a coordinated Action Plan might enable our communities to take advantage of any funding opportunities relating to Covid19 support or as a result of Blaenau Gwent achieving Age-Friendly status from the WHO in the future.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Older people in our community often feel like they've been Digitally Excluded, even before the Covid19 pandemic. A number of services used by older people have been digitalised which caused additional stress and limitation to those individuals who previously had little contact with digital world, so the demand placed on services to support these people is higher. This has also made it difficult for PSB partners and other 50+ organisations to engage effectively with the local 50+ community given the engagement challenges caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

The new Age-Friendly Action Plan will help to identify any gaps in existing services and tackle engagement issues through digital inclusion to mitigate against these risks. The PSB's Engagement Sub-Group are also focussing on addressing the ongoing difficulty to engage with vulnerable communities as part of their 2021/22 work programme.

5.3 ***Legal***

The programme has been developed in line with the 5 Ways of Working and other requirements stated in Well-being of Future Generations Act.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The Age-Friendly Communities programme is being supported by the council's Partnerships Team as part of the older people's policy work. Engagement activity is supported by the Engagement Team on an ad hoc basis.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

This programme has been informed by the Wellbeing Assessment as well as additional engagement with local older people to contribute towards achieving the Blaenau Gwent We Want Wellbeing Plan's objective to foster safe and friendly communities. It is also relevant for working towards other priority themes from the Wellbeing Plan, such as encouraging healthy lifestyles and maximising prosperity, particularly amongst older people.

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The eight age-friendly domains of an AFC as identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are being used to develop the Age-Friendly Action Plan and separate assessment:-

- **Transport**
- **Communication & Information**

- **Outdoor Spaces & Buildings**
- **Respect & Social Inclusion**
- **Social Participation**
- **Civic Participation & Employment**
- **Housing**
- **Health & Community Support services**

The Welsh Government published their draft Strategy for an Ageing Society in December 2020, in which they have expressed an ambition to make Wales an Age-Friendly Nation as a long-term vision.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

- Decisions on what it means to be age-friendly sit closer to local communities; ensuring local people and organisations have a voice based on their own lived experiences.
- An effective, sustainable Blaenau Gwent 50+ Forum led by older people, for older people.
- An improved network of information, advice and activities available to people of all ages, which is particularly important for when society starts to unlock fully beyond the Covid19 pandemic.
- The Blaenau Gwent 50+ community is able to live, work and grow old in an age-friendly locality.
- Healthier Wales; More equal Wales; More cohesive Wales.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

Blaenau Gwent and GAVO recently hosted a virtual age-friendly consultation event on 22 February 2021 to discuss what would make or what already makes local communities across Blaenau Gwent more age-friendly for local older people. The feedback from this event is informing the Age-Friendly Action Plan and a follow up event will be held during summer 2021 get people's views on the draft Plan.

The Council's Older People's Champion and two representatives from the 50+ Forum are represented on the PSB's age-friendly steering group. The 50+ Forum is also represented on the PSB's Climate Change Mitigation steering group.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The programme will lead to the development of an ambitious but realistic Age-Friendly Action Plan to make Blaenau Gwent an even better place for people of all ages to live and work, particularly as they age.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

It is hoped that by working together to make Blaenau Gwent an even more age-friendly place for people to live and work will help contribute towards tackling loneliness and isolation and lead to a healthier, more prosperous older population.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Robust partnership networks already in place through the PSB, its Strategic Support Group (SSG) and other delivery groups, as well as buy-in and commitment from other local partners and 50+ stakeholders to develop age-friendly communities across Blaenau Gwent.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The PSB's age-friendly steering group are overseeing the development of an Age-Friendly Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent that integrates to the social, economic, and environmental needs of its residents and community groups.

There are considerable opportunities for age-friendly integration across services areas as the WHO's eight age-friendly domains encourage localities to address a range of age-related issues, such as housing, transport, social participation, and health and community support services.

6.8 ***EqIA***

The engagement approach with older people is built on the national principles for public engagement. There are number of established forums which support engagement with older people covered by the protected characteristic of Age.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The PSB and SSG monitor progress through its strategic work programme performance management arrangements.