

Committee: **Council**
 Date of Meeting: **26th September, 2024**
 Report Subject: **Annual Scrutiny Report 2023-24**
 Portfolio Holder: **Councillor S. Thomas, Leader / Cabinet Member
 Corporate & Performance**
 Report Submitted by: **Elizabeth Thomas, Scrutiny and Democratic Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	05.09.24						26.09.24	

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to Members of Council the Annual Scrutiny report 2023/24 in accordance with the Council’s Constitution (attached at Appendix 1).

2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 The Annual Scrutiny Report has been produced in accordance with Section 7.4.3 of the Council’s Constitution which states that ‘The Overview and Scrutiny Committee must report annually to the Full Council on their workings with recommendations for their future working programme and amended working methods if appropriate’.
 - 2.2 The Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24 sets out the key areas of work that have been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2023/24.
 - 2.3 Actions in relation to the delivery of scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent are set out within the Business Plan of the Performance and Democratic Section and monitored throughout the year.

3. **Options for Recommendation**
 - 3.1 **Option 1:** That Council approves the ‘scrutiny activity’ that has been undertaken by each Scrutiny Committee during 2023/24; and agree that the report is published on the Blaenau Gwent website.

Option 2: That Council suggest amendment to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2023/24 prior to publication on the Council’s website.

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

The submission of an Annual Scrutiny Report is a statutory responsibility under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

There are no direct financial implications linked to this report.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

Scrutiny has a pivotal role in promoting improvement, efficiency and collaboration across public services and in holding those responsible for delivering services to account.

Scrutiny is an important element of the governance and democratic arrangements of the Council and is often reviewed externally by Audit, Inspection and Review Bodies. If Scrutiny is considered to not be working well this will then have a negative impact on the reputation of the Council as well as on the governance arrangements of the Council.

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications linked to this report.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

There is one officer supporting the implementation of Scrutiny throughout the Council.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

The service monitors and collects performance data.

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

Pre decision scrutiny aims to improve the needs and requirements of local people via the policy work and service area developments that the scrutiny committees undertake; on behalf of the local community, members consider, challenge and make recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet or Council prior to decisions being made.

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

As part of ongoing Scrutiny development, evaluation meetings are held directly following each scrutiny committee and evaluations forms are sent to officers and members, to encourage engagement from both parties within the scrutiny process.

The public can engage in the scrutiny process via the Blaenau Gwent website and the Get Involved with Democracy page.

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

The Annual Scrutiny report includes areas for future development to ensure that the Council's Scrutiny arrangements continue to be developed, monitored and reviewed so that it continues to be part of the Council's robust governance arrangements.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

Scrutiny Committees consider policies and procedures in order to recommend improvements for the future, taking a preventative approach to planning.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

Peer learning and support from other local authorities is used to continue to develop the approach to Scrutiny.

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

The internal evaluation arrangements that involve both Members and Officers are ongoing throughout the meeting cycle. Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny meetings are held regularly throughout the cycle to support the implementation of the scrutiny arrangements.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The Multi Location Meeting Policy includes the provision for holding both remote and hybrid meetings which can support a reduction in the requirement to travel to attend a committee meeting. The democratic process is also paperless and has fully adopted the use of laptops for Council business which has removed the need for the printing of papers.

6.8 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

This is not a decision-making report. However, it is anticipated that there would not be any negative impact on the protected characteristics.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 When necessary, scrutiny support arrangements are monitored by the Democratic Services Committee who recommend to Council via the Democratic Arrangements Report.

Actions in relation to the delivery of scrutiny in Blaenau Gwent are set out within the Business Plan of the Performance and Democratic Section and monitored throughout the year.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Annual Report 2023/24