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Introduction

Welcome to Blaenau Gwent's Annual Summary Report 2022/23 which gives an overview of work undertaken by each Summary Committee. This year has seen significant changes to Elected Members following the local elections in May 2022 and a new committee structure agreed at the Annual General Meeting of the Council in May 2022.

Both returning and newly elected Members have exercised very challenged and influenced the Council's decision making process and added value to a wide range of activity in order to deliver effective outcomes for the people of Blaenau Gwent, some of this work is highlighted in the following sections of this report.

Following changes to the democratic structure in 2022, Blaenau Gwent now has four summary committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council, and the new structure continues to allow non-Cabinet members to influence how local and strategic policy can work more effectively for the people they serve and effectively challenge Cabinet on the decisions it makes.

The Council's Summary Functions are made up of non-Cabinet Members. These non-Cabinet Members are appointed to sit on the Summary Committees to support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

The Committees have no decision making powers, however, they act as a check and balance on the powers exercised and decisions taken by the Cabinet.

Introduction (continued)

The Scrutiny Committee allows non-Cabinet Members to have a greater say in Council matters by:

Assisting the Cabinet in the development of policy;

Monitoring performance of the Council and its partners;

Examining the impact and implementation of Cabinet decisions and policies;

Holding the Leader, Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team to account;

Listening to the views of the public and making sure the public voice is heard; and

Scrutinising external organisations who provide services to our residents.

Scrutiny is most effective when it is focused on a limited number of in-depth topics and priorities. When considering agenda items, the Scrutiny Committee should have regard to the likely value and impact gained for any report or review. This will need to be carefully balanced against the cost of the report or review.

Changes to the Democratic Structure

During 2021/22 we undertook a comprehensive desktop research exercise to consider where the democratic function of the Council could be strengthened and modernised. The research has included:

- Evaluation of comments received from both councillors and members
- Data analysis
- Network meetings and discussions
- Chair and Vice Chair meetings
- Consideration of processes in other areas, and
- Comparative data analysis

Owing to changes made by the Boundary Commission for Wales, Blaenau Gwent reduced from 16 to 14 Wards and the number of Elected Members reducing from 42 to 33. Following the reduction and the research a number of findings and proposals were considered and agreed by Council for implementation during 2022/23 municipal year.

As part of the changes to the democratic structure, Blaenau Gwent now has four scrutiny committees that collectively support the work of the Cabinet and Council.

Further changes agreed in 2022 were:

- The number of Elected Members sitting on Scrutiny Committees was reduced from 15 to 9
- More focused and succinct scrutiny agenda—with a maximum of two items, in the categories of Pre-decision and high level performance monitoring
- Minutes of committee meetings—minutes to include a preamble, apologies, declarations of interest and decisions or recommendations (the full meetings can be viewed via the recording on the Blaenau Gwent website).

We have also established the recommendation protocol as part of the scrutiny process. This enables recommendations from Scrutiny to Cabinet/Council to be easily accessed via the relevant committee meeting page.

Sou nyin Baenu Gwent

The Four sou nycomi ees of the Council are

Corporate Overview and Performance

Partnership

People

Places

As agreed at the May 2022 AGM, each sou nycomi ees is made of 9 Elected Members

Each sou nycomi ee has a specific remit. Full details of the areas covered by each sou nycomi ee are highlighted later in this report.

The new sou ny agenda structure, has ensured members undertake in depth challenge for each item under discussion. The reduction in the number of items for sou ny has also ensured that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is not being overburdened with monitoring items.

Expert witnesses / invitees have been invited and contributed to sou ny meetings including the Education Achievement Service (EAS), the Area in Leisure Trust (AIT) and the Shared Resource Service (SRS). Cabinet members have also undertaken by invitation to answer questions on specific topics.

Outside of the formal sou nycomi ees, members have attended numerous briefing sessions, which have been

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Forward Work Programmes

Work to develop the Forward Work Programmes (FWPs) for 2022/23

Baenau Gwert Srou ny in Figures 2022/23



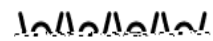
21 The Decision Srou ny Agenda Items



236 Unique Views of Committee Meetings Online



75 Member Briefings Sessions held



87% of Members attended Srou ny Committee meetings



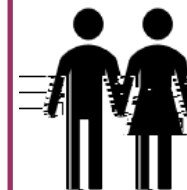
3 Number of expert witnesses/invitees invited and contributed to srou ny meetings



Pages Srou ny Committee Most Viewed Srou ny Committee Meeting on **14th March 2023**



24 Formal Srou ny Committee Meetings held



4 Number of meetings attended by Cabinet Member

Member A endate at Corporate Overview and Performance Sou ry Commi ee

Chair:

Councillor Janna Wilkins (9 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Vice Chair:

Councillor Jacqueline Thomas (9 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Carl Banton (8 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Malcolm Day (8 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor George Humphries (9 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Helen Jones (8 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Ross Leadbeater (8 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Chris Smith (9 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Councillor Tommy Smith (7 of 9 mee ngs a ended)

Remit of the Commi ee

The main areas of responsibility of the Corporate Overview Sou ry Commi ee is to develop and review strategies, plans and policies and monitor performance of the Council as a whole; and Organisational Development, Communication and Marketing Equality, Customer and Citizens, Welsh Language, Medium Term Financial Strategy In addi on this new commi ee also monitor the financial management of the Council

Sou ry Forward Work Programme Highlights

Topic: Discretionary Cost of Living Scheme

Activity

A report was presented requesting support for funding provided by Welsh Government to enable councils to provide support under a discretionary scheme to help households in need of assistance with their living costs. The Committee were asked to support a payment of £100 to eligible households. As part of the scheme, the committee was also asked to support the Council in making a contribution of £100k to the Blaenau Gwent Foodbank and £50k to Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

Outcome

The committee supported the £150 payment to eligible households and also the £50k contribution to CAB; however, the committee recommended an amendment to the Scheme, that £30k be provided to BG Foodbank as the main recipient and a discretionary fund of £20k be established to allow other local food distribution groups / organisations to apply for funding from the council to assist in delivery work within their respective communities.

Corporate Overview and Performance Summary Committee

The Corporate Overview and Performance Summary Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Commissioning and Procurement Strategy

Revenue Budget Proposals 2023/24

Capital Strategy Review

Review of the Agile Working Policy

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PeopleSour nyCommi ee

Chair's Overview

The PeopleSour nyCommi ee has con nued its work to so
commi ee members using skills and experience to put forward

In Childeris Services, the Commi ee has examined oi cal areas
Paen ng and regular reporting of the safe educ on of di

A notable development has been the introduc on of a four
accommoda on in the Fedegrarea, the Commi ee felt that
add onal Welsh Government capital funding in a need of di
children looked a ert to live within their communi es fore
the care of Blaerau Gwert. They also welcomed the opport
oi cal area

In Adult services the commi ee has examined oi cal areas

In Educa on the Commi ee has sou rised reports and n
transport, AIN provision and strategies, Educa on and safe
Members also sou rised a report on the Estyn Inspec on

challenge across a wide ranging work programme, with
a on to Cabinet for considera on

the Childcare O er; Na onal Adop on Service, Corporate
er

residen al home and further four bed emergency
establish new ventures such as this and take advantage of
all budgets. Members felt that the project would allow
s and to live as close to friends and family as possible while in
one could bring in helping to reduce revenue funding in a

igated Care Fund, living Independently

a on to the Cabinet in areas that include home to school
s admissions policy and the improving schools' programme
an end of year / fl &

Member A **endanteat** **People** **Sou** **ny** **Comi** **ee**

Chair:

Place Strategy Committee

The Place Strategy Committee considered a number of policies, plans and strategies and high level performance reports. Members also attended Member Briefing sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge. Some examples of these are listed below.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

Public Protection and Environment

Partnership Society Committee

Chair's Overview

2022 saw the establishment of a new Society Committee, with a focus on Partnerships. The Committee focused on those Partnerships which the Council has an interest in and is delivering public services on our behalf.

The Committee has looked to scrutinise the main areas of oversight and governance arrangements of Partners so that they are adequate and effective, covering the principles of good governance namely Accountability, Leadership, Integrity, Stewardship and Transparency.

The main Partnerships scrutinised included:

- The Regional Partnership Board

- SRS

- Arca Leisure Trust

- Educational Achievement Service

Recommendations were made to Cabinet regarding the Educational Partnership Agreement, the Great Well-being Plan, the National Collaborative Arrangements for Welsh (Local Authority) Adoption and Fostering Services and the EAS Business Plan.

Member Attendance at Scrutiny Committees

Total Members to Attend	Actual Attendance	% of Attendance	Number of Meetings Held	* Committee Structure
Sept 22- Apr 23	Sept 22- Apr 23	Sept 22- Apr 23	Sept 22- Apr 23	June 21-

Legislation

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 contains a number of provisions to promote diversity in council and paricipa on in council decision making. Some of these provisions include:

- Encouraging local people to participate in decision making
- Development of a Participa on Strategy
- The electronic broadcast of council meetings
- A review of the council's performance
- Job sharing for members of the Executive

The Council is looking to implement the required areas from the Act and has included this within an implementation plan which in future can be monitored by the Democratic Services Committee as appropriate.

The Act has enabled councils to operate meetings whereby Elected Members, Officers and the public and press are

given the opportunity to attend meetings physically at the General Offices in Ebbw Vale or virtually via Microsoft Teams. Councils may not mandate physical attendance at meetings. Blaenau Gwent Council approved its Multi-Local Meeting Policy in September 2022.

Decarbonisation

The Welsh Government published its Net Zero Carbon Status by 2030 Public Sector Road Map in July 2021. The document provided a strategic overview of the key priority areas for

Future Planned Developments

The Council is currently preparing a Partnership Strategy to include ways in which members of the public can engage in the decision-making process

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Live broadcast of full Council meetings will commence within the 2023/24 cycle. This may be expanded to other Decision-making meetings dependent on Welsh Government guidance

Identifying young persons to support the scrutiny process, e.g. a ending formal committees and committees and finish groups, consultations and member briefing sessions

Undertake a review of the remit and arrangements for the Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Contact Information

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

**Head of Democratic Services,
Governance and Partnerships**

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

**Surrey and Democratic Officer
(Committee Adviser)**

Study Evaluations Report

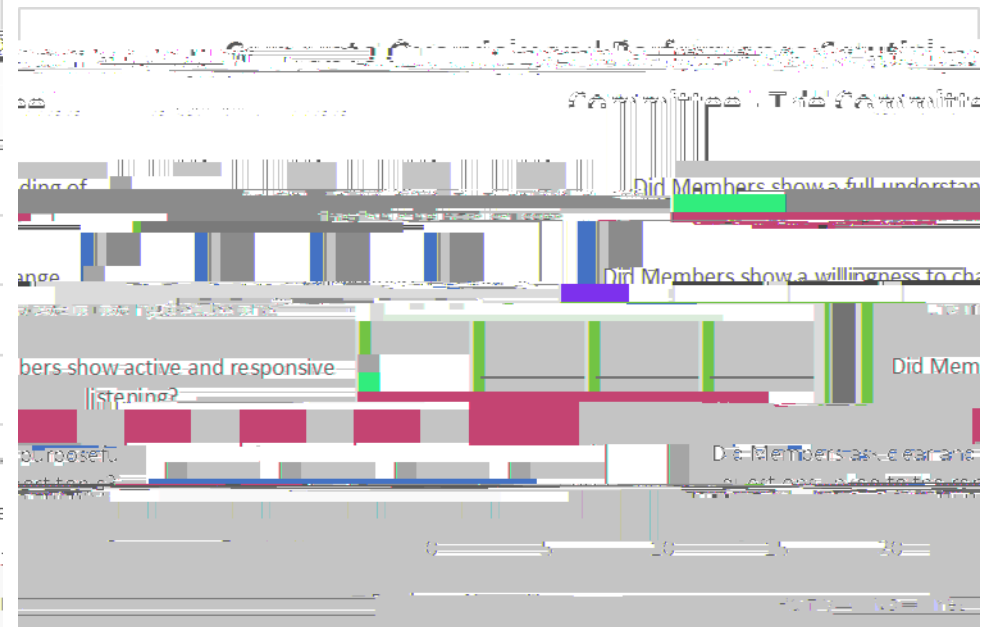
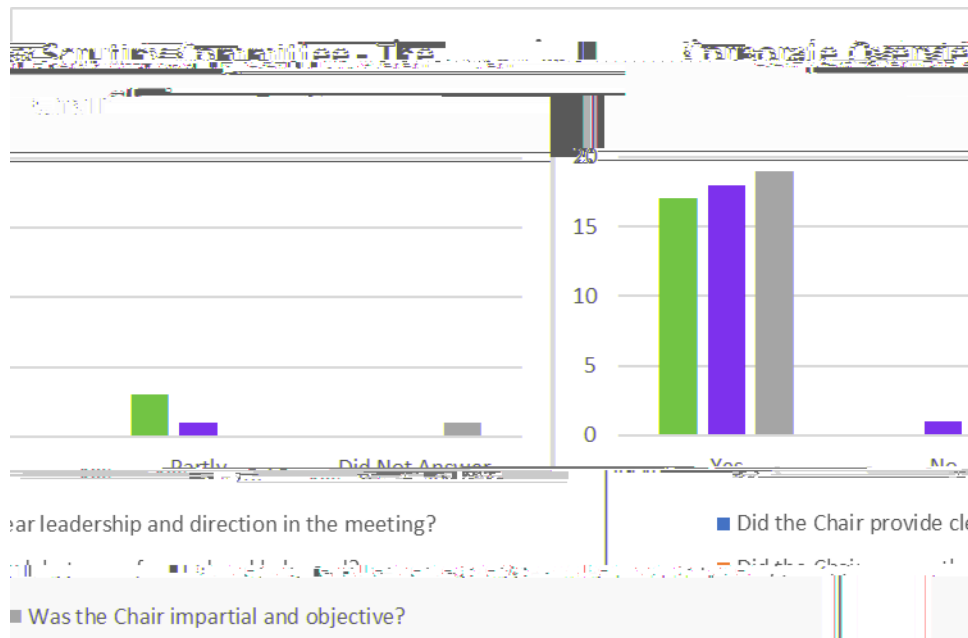
Evaluations are an important part of the study process. Regular evaluation of our study processes helps us to reflect on



Corporate Overview and Performance Strategy Committee

Member Feedback

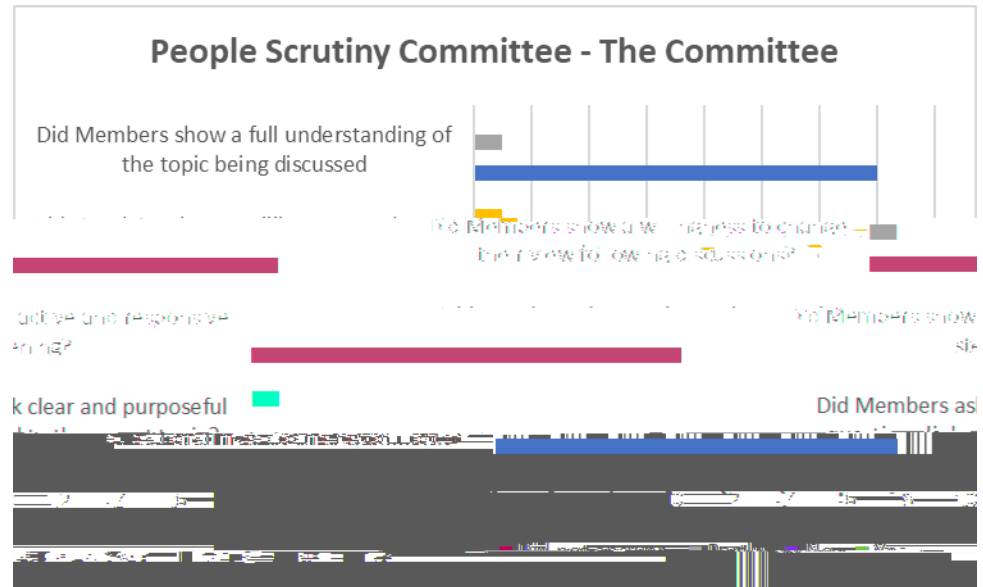
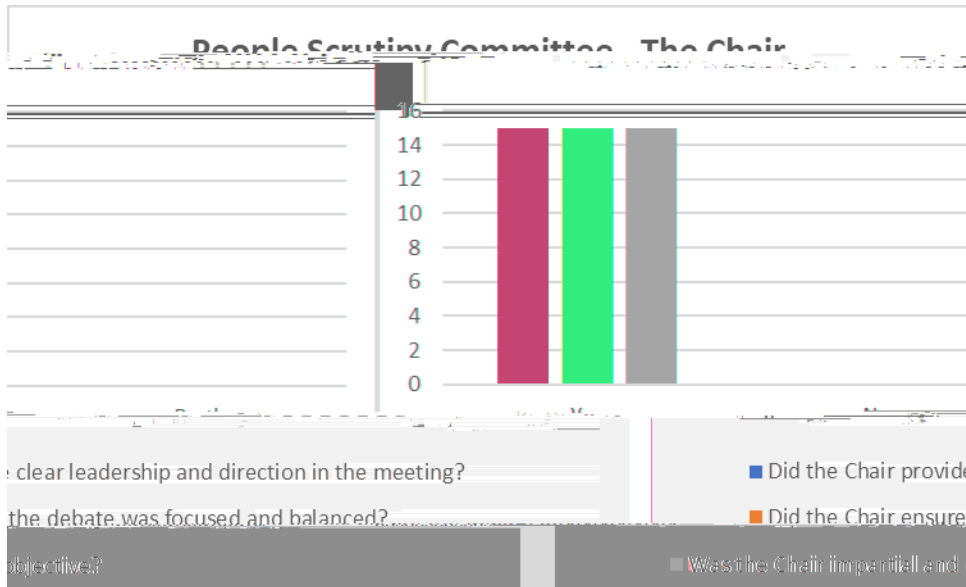
Of the 71 evaluations sent out over the nine meetings, 20 evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below.



PeopleScrutinyCommittee

Member Feedback

Of the 3 Evaluations sent out over the six meetings, 18 Evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below.





Partnership Scrutiny Committee

The information is gathered from meetings held during the period October 2023 to March 2023, encompassing 4 Scrutiny Committee meetings in total.

Committee Member Feedback

Of the 30 evaluations sent out over the four meetings, 6 evaluations were completed. The results of those evaluations can be seen in the graphs below.

