



# CODE OF GOVERNANCE

## BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY

### BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Last Revised: March 2019**  
**Version 9**

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## **LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the latest

The Local Code of Governance has been developed from a framework document and guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), but the framework sets out seven core principles of good governance designed to guide local authorities in ensuring their governance arrangements ultimately facilitate the transparent, efficient and accountable use of resources for the citizens of Blaenau Gwent. The Council illustrates how it complies with these principles in its Code of Governance. The seven core principles of good governance laid down are as follows:-

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

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Developing its capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

These principles of

the Audit Committee to test the level of assurance received concerning the application of the Code.

The Code will be reviewed annually, the results of which will be included in future Annual Governance Statements.

Local Authorities continue to be monitored by inspectors and regulators. Progress has been made against the recommendations of R which are helping to shape the Governance Framework of the Authority. Work

improvement throughout the Council. An update has been provided against all proposals in order to establish what has been completed and where further work is required. The work has enabled the streamlining of activity and more focused monitoring as part of the Joint Finance and Performance Report.

In September 2018 the WAO published their Annual Improvement Report for 2017-18. The conclusion of the report was, based on and limited to the work carried out, the Auditor General believes that the Council is likely to comply with the requirements of the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009, during 2018-19. All relevant Audit Compliance Certificates have been received. Gove3 review

The Council will achieve this by holding, communicating and keeping under review:-

- A Member Code of Conduct
- An Officer Code of Conduct
- Council Constitution
- Frameworks for Scrutiny and Executive
- Informal protocols re: Complaints Members and Officers
- Registers of Interest for Members and Officers
- Procedural rules for Members and Officers to declare an interest in the business under consideration at all Committees and Council
- Each Committee has an advisory officer to promote the appropriate conduct of meetings
- Contract Procedure Rules
- An Anti-Fraud, Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy including a fraud hotline

Council for decision, those decisions which will be taken by the Executive or its individual members, and those which are delegated to senior officers. The full Council sets the strategic direction through the adoption of major policies and the budget, the Executive takes major decisions within the overall policy and budget framework, helping to develop new policies. Officers take day to day decisions within the policy and budget framework.

Sets out the responsibilities and procedures for decision making. Decisions which can be taken by the Executive and the other Committees and full Council are shown in sections 4-7 of the Constitution. In addition the Council's policies and protocols set out the processes that must be followed in decision making e.g. Organisation Development Policies, Licensing and Planning Applications, Appeals, tabling motions at Committees.

Establishes through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees a robust overview and scrutiny role. These Committees between them have powers to review and scrutinise decisions relating to any of the Coun

## Local Member / Officer Protocol

In addition, there are a set of Employment Policies which clearly inform

Operation of an effective complaints procedure.

Staff consultation and engagement in decision making.

Ensuring staff are clearly accessible to the public through meetings, telephone availability, email and where appropriate home visits.

By ensuring partner arrangements and procurement arrangements are similarly clear about accountabilities.

The Public Service Well-being Plan outlines the objectives for improving well-being in Blaenau Gwent and meeting the collective duties under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales)





## 2.3 Core Principle C

### **Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.**

The purpose of the Public Services Boards (PSBs) is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area by strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 established statutory PSBs which replaced the voluntary Local Service Boards in each local authority area.

Each PSB must prepare and publish a plan setting out its objectives and the steps it will take to meet them. This is called a Local Well-being Plan. It must say:

Why the PSB feels their objectives will contribute within their local area to achieving the well-being goals

How it has had regard to the as.54 555.31 Tf 555. 555.6(e)6(e)6(t )-193636(f)-11

principles so that the well-being goals are achieved.

The application of the five ways of working identified in the act is how public bodies are able to maximise their contribution to the National Well-being Goals.

In addition to the Codes of Conduct and protocols referred to under Core Principle A, the Council seeks to maintain high standards in the conduct of its business and avoid prejudice, bias and conflicts of interest. This is to be achieved through the development of a Strategic Equality Plan, a Welsh Language Promotion strategy, in line with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards, and various engagement forums such as; Youth Forum, 50+ Forum and Access for All Forum.

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act from here on in) came into operation on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The Act replaced the existing 116 different pieces of law relating to equality, and put them all together in one piece of legislation. The Act strengthens the law in important ways, and in some respects extends current law to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

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- 2020), which came into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, has four objectives to be delivered over a four year period. These objectives are:
1. Make equality vital in decision making and service provision.
  2. Be an equal opportunity employer with a workforce that is aware of, and understands the equality agenda.
  3. Do our best to protect and support those people in our community that need it most.
  4. Promoting understanding and acceptance of diversity

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and partnerships to help achieve these outcomes.

The Council business planning is more robust and has enhanced its self-evaluation processes, by further developing the guidance documentation and forms. The business planning process has also become more streamlined with the incorporation of Performance Indicators, Risk, Business Continuity, EQIA, and proposals for improvement from auditors into one monitoring form on a central system. The self-evaluation process directly links to the business planning process. The plan for 2019/20 is to further enhance this monitoring system with the inclusion of the Environment Act and its statutory responsibilities.

The Council prepares an Annual Budget to resource its service

need to perform well.

The Council will achieve this by:

Continuing with its Member Training Programme and mandatory training programme.

Member briefings on issues of importance to the Council.

Induction training and professional advice for Members.

Introduction of skills and experience requirements for special responsibility posts.

Continuing to develop Information Communication Technology (ICT) support for Members to give a better understanding of modern administration and to improve communication.

Operating a competence framework for Officers and Members.

Mentoring programme for Elected Members.

Arrangements for Members sitting on Outside Bodies to report their progress to Council.

A Recruitment Charter ensuring the Council employ staff with necessary qualifications and experience to carry out the role expected of them.

Performance coaching in place for all staff and departmental monitoring.

The Head of Paid Service is responsible for ensuring that the

The Council benefits from its membership of the Welsh Local Government Association which provides support and assistance over a range of Council functions and responsibilities. Similar support is available to members of different professional bodies across the Council.

The Council remains committed to promoting health and well-being to its employees through periodic staff surveys, a staff panel and staff engagement.

The Council will expect similar values of staff development and empowerment of its partners and agents in service delivery.

The Council recognises the need to have effective political and management structures and processes to govern decision making and the exercise of authority within the organisation. It believes it is important that all those involved in planning and delivering a service ponsibilities and how together they can deliver the best possible outcomes.

To help achieve this, service portfolios and the role of and responsibility of all Members, along with those decisions retained by Council.

It specifically lays out the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee and its Executive Members, Scrutiny Committees and their Chairs, Scrutiny Members and Regulatory Committee Chairs and Members.

It identifies the Leader and Deputy Leader as having a specific role in providing leadership and also in undertaking an ambassadorial role.

Membership of all political posts is determined each year at the

The Democratic Services Committee keeps the roles and responsibilities under review. Additionally the Council provides induction training for all new Members along with professional advice

Minutes are kept for all formal Committee meetings recording decisions made.

Briefing sessions are provided to Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees in advance of Committee meetings and wider briefings are organised on specific issues.

Similarly on the Officer side, the Constitution lays out the Scheme of Delegation to Directors, Chief Officers and Senior Officers.

In particular four statutory appointments of Head of Paid Service (Managing Director), Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal and Corporate

Compliance) Section 151 Officer (Chief Officer - Resources) and Head of Democratic Services (Head of Governance and Partnerships) are included along with their specific roles and responsibilities. This helps ensure Members receive appropriate professional financial, legal and other advice.

Similarly the Council has the statutory roles of the Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Director of Social Services.

The Managing Director is responsible for all aspects of operational management and in practice operates this

national and local data of priorities linked to the strategic outcomes.

Keeping value for money under review.

Reviews of service provision and priorities.

Preparation of externally audited accounts.

Annual approval of budgets and regular consideration of budget reports.

An effective member scrutiny function for all services to include performance and finance as part of their terms of reference.

Arrangements to deal with service failure.

Monitoring of partnership arrangements.

Testing customer satisfaction.

Operating effective internal controls.

Monitoring complaints.

Ensuring competition in relevant service provision and proper contract management.

Service and Directorate Risk Registers which will be effective and proactively used and reported.

External audit scrutiny by WAO and other regulators, through their regulatory plan.

Maintaining an effective Internal Audit Service and Audit Committee.

The Council has an Audit Committee which is politically balanced. It meets on a regular basis and is Internal Audit, and is normally attended by representatives of the role of the Audit Committee.

Under the requirements of the Local Government Measure 2011 the role and purpose of Audit Committee and its membership have been reviewed to ensure that it is set up to improve strategic planning and facilitate both scrutiny and challenge within the structures of the Council. The Audit Committee has the following functions:

- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations in
- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on control and corporate governance arrangements.
- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on corporate governance arrangements.
- Review, scrutinise and issue reports and recommendations on its financial statements.

The Council has adopted a Risk Management Strategy with the ultimate aim of embedding a consistent and effective approach to Risk Management throughout the whole Council. The strategy is supported by a Risk Management Handbook (guidance)



The Risk Management Framework identifies the roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers, guidance on how to describe risk, and guidance on how to evaluate and assess risk. The framework requires that risk registers be maintained at Service / Department / Project levels and that these will support and feed the Corporate Risk

