

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **5th March 2026**

Report Subject: **Setting the Principles for the Blaenau Gwent Deal**

Portfolio Holder: **Leader / Cabinet Member Corporate Resources**

Report Submitted by: **Deputy Chief Executive Blaenau Gwent and Strategic Director Children, Young People and Families**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Leadership Team	Joint Executive Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet	Council	Other (please state)
	X	13.02.26			19.02.26	23.02.26	05.03.26	Citizens Assembly Survey

1. **Purpose of the Report**
 - 1.1 For Council to consider the suggested principles for the Blaenau Gwent Deal, developed via a number of engagement activities including the Citizens Assembly and a residents' survey.
2. **Scope and Background**
 - 2.1 Working alongside Torfaen Council, Blaenau Gwent Council recognises the need to adapt and evolve to meet residents' changing needs within an increasingly constrained budget for public service delivery.
 - 2.2 To drive this forward, the Council have already taken the bold step to come together in a federation, through a shared Chief Executive and a number of shared senior officers, creating opportunities for collaboration, whilst retaining the individual identity and sovereignty of each council.
 - 2.3 Furthermore, the Council have agreed to a long-term commitment to be a Marmot Council, striving for a future without inequalities where everyone thrives in a fair, inclusive, and resilient community.
 - 2.4 **Development of the Blaenau Gwent Deal**
To provide the pathway to achieve this approach, the Council is entering a new programme of delivery guided by five key missions which will be the cornerstone of the new Blaenau Gwent Deal, which are:
 1. **Early Years – Building Bright Futures:** *Supporting children and families to give every child the best start in life.*
 2. **Inspiring Lifelong Learning, Ambition and Resilience:** *Empowering people of all ages in Blaenau Gwent to lead informed, independent and healthy lives, using community-led and preventative approaches.*
 3. **Wellbeing Through Community Leadership:** *Empowering local people to lead changes that improve health and happiness and the reduce the need for premature NHS healthcare and long-term social care.*

4. **Thriving Economy and Vibrant Places:** *Creating spaces and opportunities where businesses and communities flourish together.*

5. **Empowered Communities – Shared Power and Success:** *Placing power in the hands of residents to shape local priorities and co-produce solutions.*

2.5 Members will be aware that the Council is in the process of developing the Blaenau Gwent Deal. The Deal is a new social contract between the council, residents, communities and partners. It reshapes the relationship between the council and the public by shifting from “doing to” towards “doing with”, rooted in shared responsibility, prevention, fairness, and community power.

2.6 The Deal should therefore be understood as the vehicle through which the council delivers its services and the way we work, embedding a prevention-first, community-centred and collaborative approach across all directorates. It translates the ambitions of the Corporate Plan into day-to-day practice by aligning our culture, systems, service models and delivery plans with the priorities already set out.

2.7 **Engagement with the Community on the Blaenau Gwent Deal**

To support the development of the Blaenau Gwent Deal it was seen as vital to engage key stakeholders to shape its development. To facilitate this, a multi-layered engagement plan was started in the autumn of 2025 to allow interested parties to have their say and share their thoughts through various methods, interactions and discussions.

2.8 The engagement plan has gone through a number of phases to date. This has included in-depth sessions with our own staff and elected members and engagement with key partners and local stakeholders such as our four town and community councils, the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO), Aneurin Bevan Health Board, Tai Calon Community Housing, and Aneurin Leisure Trust.

2.9 There have also been two key phases for public engagement. During November and December 2025, a consultation on the plans for the Deal was held, asking people to consider a series of questions to get the conversation started. Almost 700 people visited our online consultation page with 250 surveys completed. An overview summary of the consultation can be found at Appendix 1.

2.10 This has been followed by a Citizen Assembly for The Deal in January and February 2026 facilitated by Local Partnerships. Citizens’ Assemblies are an established process used all over the world to foster deep conversations, capture experiences that might not usually be heard and empower residents to have their say in shaping the future.

2.11 Sortition Foundation managed the recruitment and selection process as a respected and independent specialist organisation through a two-stage selection process, in-line with the OECD’s good practice principles for deliberative processes for public decision making.

- 2.12 The first stage saw 12,000 households from across Blaenau Gwent randomly selected from the Royal Mail database. Each one of these households received bilingual correspondence inviting residents to register as potential participants for the Assembly. The correspondence included a covering letter, a frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet, and an invitation card.
- 2.13 Sortition received 233 responses from people across the Blaenau Gwent area expressing an interest in taking part. All these people were required to provide information about themselves to support fair and representative selection. This included their address, date of birth, gender identity, ethnicity, disability status, and occupation. Respondents were also asked an attitudinal question relating to their perceived ability to influence decisions affecting their local area.
- 2.14 The second stage took the form of a democratic lottery for the recruitment process, whereby the information supplied by those that responded was utilised to select 40 individuals to participate representing a cross-section of the borough from different places covering all 14 electoral wards and demographics i.e. sex, age, ethnicity and disability. (see Appendix 4).
- 2.15 During the participant confirmation stage, some individuals withdrew or were unable to take part. These places were filled through further lottery selections in order to maintain the intended demographic composition of each assembly as much as possible.
- 2.16 **Citizens' Assembly**
The Blaenau Gwent Deal Citizens' Assembly took place over the course of three sessions on Saturday 17th January (Llanhilleth Institute), Saturday 31st January (Llanhilleth Institute), and Saturday 14th February 2026 (General Offices, Ebbw Vale).
- 2.17 The format for each session was to hear evidence from presenters, debate and discuss the findings relating to their own experience, reach a consensus on the key points to be presented back to the council, and the community to form future policy and ways of working.
- 2.18 The core purpose of the Assembly was to create a set of principles that would drive the Blaenau Gwent Deal, where the Council has a role to play, but more can be achieved through empowering communities and building on the strengths and talents from across the borough. Consequently, the participants were asked to consider the question:
- 'What principles should guide the new relationship and ways of working to deliver our shared ambition for our borough'?***
- 2.19 Below are the proposed principles from Citizen's Assembly that were agreed and voted on the 14th of February.

1. **More Public Involvement in Shaping the Place** - Residents to be involved early, continuously and meaningfully in decisions about their area.
2. **Foster Volunteering and Community Leadership** - Increase the opportunity for people to take part and contribute by supporting community-led groups.
3. **Community Hubs** - Help people connect through community places a focal point for residents, creating a sense of belonging, reducing isolation and a source of information and networking.
4. **Shared Power through Joint Effort** - Use the power of cooperation between the council and residents to achieve the best results, coordinating services to meet people's needs at different times in their lives.
5. **Pride and Potential for the Future** - A focus on the positive that celebrates achievement and the place we live, with a look to the future in supporting people to reach their potential, live healthy lives, and have pride in their local area.
6. **Recreating Thriving Town Centres** - Town centres strengthened as vibrant, thriving spaces for residents and visitors, adapted for the modern economy while celebrating the area's rich heritage.
7. **Learning and Listening** - Recognising that things won't always be right the first time, but that we can work together to improve the borough.

- 2.20 Further information supporting the proposed principles as agreed by the Assembly can be found at Appendix 2, and the detailed report on the process and findings from the Assembly can be found in Appendix 3.

Options for Recommendation

- 3.
- 3.1 *Note: The final principles for The Blaenau Gwent Deal have been presented to the Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 19th February 2026 and to Cabinet on Monday 23rd February 2026 (see paragraph 2.19).*

Scrutiny recommended Option 1, supporting the Blaenau Gwent Deal principles developed by the community and made suggestions to further shape the future approach around communication and engagement and on-going elected member involvement.

Any recommendations from Cabinet will be provided verbally to Council.

Option 1:

To agree the:

- engagement approach undertaken for the Blaenau Gwent Deal and be satisfied that it has been sufficiently robust and effective in building trust, fostering shared responsibility, and empowering communities; and
- agree the Blaenau Gwent Deal principles, developed by the community.

Option 2:

To consider the:

- engagement approach undertaken for the Blaenau Gwent Deal and provide comment or suggestion for further community engagement in the process to ensure that it has been sufficiently robust and effective in building trust, fostering shared responsibility, and empowering communities.
- Blaenau Gwent Deal principles, developed by the community, and provide comment or amendment to these.

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

The Deal is a crucial strategic delivery programme of the Council's transformation approach and sets out the Council's commitment to working differently alongside the community. It will provide a new social contract built on trust, shared responsibility, and collective action focusing through the five key missions.

5. Implications Against Each Option

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

There are no immediate direct implications of this report. However, the long-term ethos of the Deal focuses on empowering staff and communities through devolved budgets and involvement in decision making which builds on the strengths of communities.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

There is a reputational risk of not accepting and implementing the principles of the Deal as set through the outlined engagement programme via the Citizen Assembly, which may erode trust in the Council and its intended transformation approach.

It will be crucial for the success of the Deal to show positive action and change because of a new relationship with our communities and partners through effective communication and on-going engagement processes.

5.3 *Legal*

There are no legal implications of this report.

5.4 *Human Resources*

There are no direct human resources implications of this report. However, it will be crucial to the success of the Deal that our staffing resources across the Council are effectively equipped to understand their crucial roles in delivering against the Deal through effective staff development and training opportunities.

5.5 *Health and Safety*

There are no specific health and safety considerations to this report.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

Key performance information and data is presented throughout the report and supported further within the appendices.

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

The Deal is a new relationship between the Council, our communities and partners. It's a social contract built on trust, shared responsibility, and collective action. The focus of the Deal is ultimately challenging entrenched health inequalities that exist within the borough and working with our communities to manage rising demand with reducing resources.

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

Involvement has already played a crucial role in shaping the principles for the Deal and will continue to be pivotal to its success as the Council looks to reset the relationship the council has with communities and partners, and through the deal rebuild trust.

As things progress assurance will be required that the Council will deliver on what our communities have been telling us through these engagement processes.

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

The Deal is a long-term transformation programme for the Council, its communities and place. The intention is the approach will look to provide the framework to set a shared vision for a better long-term future.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

The focus of the Deal is to challenge health inequalities through realigning our approaches against each of the five missions with a preventative first and communities approach.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The Council will continue to work with our local partners on the Deal and have already involved key partners in the Assembly process i.e. Aneurin Leisure Trust, Tai Calon and Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Furthermore, the Assembly showcased community organisations and programmes which are already up and running and epitomising the ethos of the Deal (Appendix 4).

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

The Deal will focus around five inter-locking missions, led by our Strategic Directors. They will enable an organisational, holistic approach to delivering the Deal.

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

There are no direct considerations in relation to decarbonisation and reducing carbon emissions. However, as the Mission delivery programmes develop there will be key actions that address health inequalities which are a consequence of environmental factors including the need to reduce carbon emissions.

6.9 ***Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)***

The process for selecting participants for the Citizen's Assembly ensured key protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010, were integral to the selection process (sex, age, disability and culture).

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

The Deal and its principles will be tracked through the Council's service planning and risk management arrangements. This will be scrutinised through existing arrangements as part of the Corporate Governance and Resources Scrutiny Committee forward work programme for 2026/27.

Furthermore, we are working with Powys County Council in the role of a critical friend to support transformation work.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- *Appendix 1 – Summary of the Blaenau Gwent Consultation*
- *Appendix 2 – The Citizen Assembly Principles*
- *Appendix 3 – Blaenau Gwent Citizen Assembly Report*
- *Appendix 4 – Profile of Citizen Assembly Members for Blaenau Gwent*
- *Appendix 5 – Case Studies used at Citizen Assembly*