

## Selecting our Objectives

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We are committed to making Torfaen a more equal and sustainable borough through the delivery of our County Plan. Through supporting our residents and the communities in which they live to become more independent, we know that we can reduce demand, not only on our own statutory services but on those delivered by our partners such as the NHS. Simply put we are the frontline defence to public services.

Working in this way will ensure we are getting the most out of our limited resources; by focussing on this mission, we will secure value for money, improving people's lives whilst simultaneously reducing costs. The Council's Service and Financial planning are not competing against each other to deliver different objectives but are complimentary strands of work supporting the Council to deliver its objectives.

This strong positive relationship is focussed on addressing the same problems in order to deliver healthier, happier, more independent communities that will make for a sustainable, prosperous Torfaen. Resilient communities sit at the heart of the council being more sustainable and will result in us being able to spend the limited resources available to us more efficiently, needing to spend less money on those Council services that cost the most money.

We continue to take our aspirations forward in all that we do, however, in the last 12 months a number of key fundamental pieces of work have been developed and delivered as we work towards delivering our County Plan and becoming a more sustainable and resilient Council. These are introduced below to help set the scene but will be referred to frequently throughout the remainder of this report.

### Federated Approach

Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils entered into an innovative collaborative working agreement during 2024/25, with the first Joint Chief Executive post in Wales. An initial discovery phase was agreed in June 2024, to begin exploring the potential for efficiencies and increasing innovation and creativity across both authorities.

Both councils are taking a forward-thinking approach to address current challenges and future demands. They recognise that local government in its current form is facing an uncertain and unsustainable future, therefore the members and officers in both councils are taking a proactive stance in finding new solutions that go beyond the usual 'salami-slicing' approach. This has led to an open consideration to align the councils to create a strong, strategic foundation for the change that is needed.

In January 2025, both Councils agreed to move the temporary arrangements for closer working on to a more permanent footing.

### Marmot Masterplan and the Communities Approach

We have begun systematically reshaping our operating model following the Public Service Board's commitment to become a Marmot region. This 'Communities Approach' has been designed to ensure we are not just saying the right things and doing more of the same, but that we are delivering a real tangible change. In Torfaen we have been adamant that this would not and could not happen.

Our work in 2024, has focussed on 'how'. We recognise that without a clear 'operating model' we would not be able to deliver the change we need, and this is where our Communities Approach comes in. The first pillar of our Communities Approach has asked how we as a council can make a real difference in a complex 'wellbeing' system?

This year, with £5M funding from the National Institute of Health and Care Research, we have established a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC): the first in Wales. This collaboration between the Council, University of South Wales, ADR Wales, and Aneurin Bevan Health Board will conduct research, and gather and link local-level data to inform any decisions impacting on the wellbeing system. We will embed the HDRC into decision making processes across the Council, including service redesign and budget planning, to ensure decisions are based on sound evidence and need. The HDRC can strengthen the Council's ability to prioritise interventions using data and research, for example, mapping where investment in early years or housing can reduce downstream demand, where a new walking and cycling route would

have the biggest impact, how a school could engage parents to reduce economic inactivity, how a community can support an older adult to stay in their own home, etc.

## Early Intervention and Prevention

The second pillar of the Communities Approach is the wholesale redesign of our prevention model, and the associated staffing structures. Our model is designed to provide the right support to the right people at the right time, rather than assuming a 'need' for service provision first. Support can come from many places including (for most people most of the time) their own community. They are the first line of prevention and are essential in helping us manage our wellbeing, particularly at times of personal crisis. Working with our HDRC, our new model incentivises communities to focus on local wellbeing needs, and provides capacity building, research, data and financial support to do so. Our HDRC will work with our communities to undertake action research and evaluate what works in prevention.

The model also moves the Council away from a service-led approach to prevention, to a systems-led approach. Through our new model, any requests for targeted prevention will be triaged, commissioned and delivered by a prevention hub rather than by individual housing, community safety, children's or adults services.

## Our County Plan 2022-2027



Our County Plan was adopted by Council in December 2022 and will be in place for the duration of the existing Council administration – up to 2027. Although our approach to communities, Marmot, early intervention and prevention and the federated model have been implemented since, they do not change our County Plan, only strengthen our ability to deliver it.

The Plan and our objectives have been developed around four central themes that will guide our policy making and service design, over the coming years. Grouping initiatives together into themes has helped to ensure decisions and planning are not undertaken in silos and are focused more around the 'bigger picture' and vision for the County.

Our themes are not self-contained; they are more cross-cutting and will form the basis by which delivery of current plans and all future proposals will be tested. The themes of our work are:

### Well-being...

Maximising independence, early intervention and prevention, partnership working and to tackle key drivers of inequality

### Sustainability...

Improving economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being for Torfaen and the world

### Connectivity...

Welcoming, resilient and empowered communities, joining up skills and businesses enabling a physically and digitally accessible Torfaen

### Culture and Heritage...

Respecting our history, welcoming of diversity, proud of our place, celebrating who we are and what we stand for

Our 9 key priorities areas that we will work to deliver on, and which will collectively form our well-being objectives, throughout the life of the plan, are as follows:



## OUR WELL-BEING OBJECTIVES 2022-27

**Well-being Objective 1** - We will raise educational attainment, helping young people and adults to gain the qualifications and skills needed to lead positive lives

**Well-being Objective 2** - We will encourage and champion children, young people and families so they can thrive

**Well-being Objective 3** - We will tackle inequality by focusing on early identification and prevention activities that support people to live independent and fulfilling lives

**Well-being Objective 4** - We will make Torfaen more sustainable by connecting people and communities, socially, digitally and physically.

**Well-being Objective 5** - We will address our climate and nature emergencies, recycle more and make improvements to the local environment

**Well-being Objective 6** - We will make Torfaen a great place to do business delivering fair work for all by working with local employers & trade unions, encouraging new business start-ups and entrepreneurial activities.

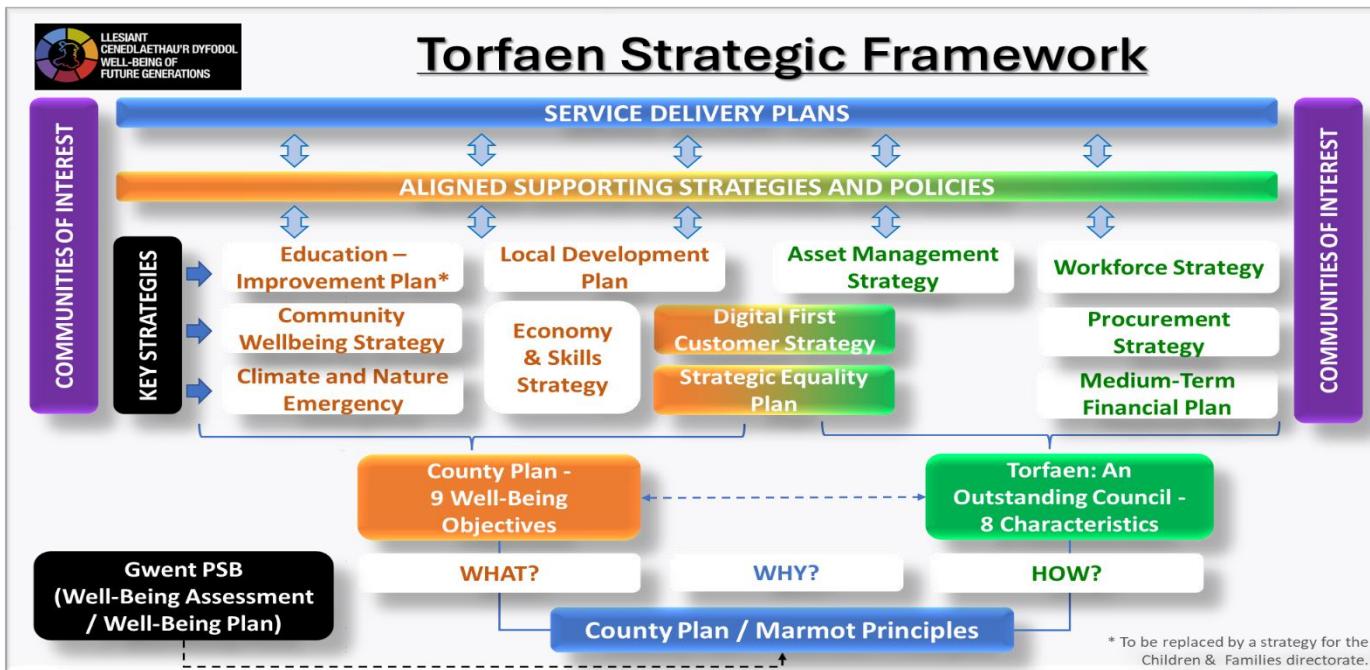
**Well-being Objective 7** - We will promote healthier lifestyles in Torfaen to improve mental and physical wellbeing.

**Well-being Objective 8** - We will support our local culture and heritage and make Torfaen a thriving, safe and attractive place to live and visit

These nine wellbeing objectives were developed through the consideration of an extensive evidence base, from existing commitments and previous key drivers including the Well-being of Future Generations Act. They describe what 'we will' set out to achieve over the coming years - not just for Torfaen, but in meeting the collective responsibility to improve well-being in Wales. They are also underpinned by:

- Commitments and previous key drivers including the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Collectively, we consider our well-being objectives to be the right areas to focus on, to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen, by seeking to ensure 'that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.
- Key strategies and plans which provide more detail about what we are going to do and how we will do it, reviewed annually by the Council's Leadership Team.
- Primary involvement of our communities and others. Particularly during the development of our strategies and plans, to ensure that our priorities and actions are the right ones for Torfaen.
- Secondary involvement which is central to the future delivery of our priorities by asking our communities how they can support and work with us to deliver our objectives going forward.
- Gwent Well-being Assessment carried out by the newly formed Gwent Public Service Board, including the well-being assessments for Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon and their surrounding communities. This told us about wider aspects of well-being across the county today but also how it is most likely to develop in the future, based on challenges, such as social and economic differences, an ageing population, health inequality, educational attainment gaps and climate change.

This has been simplified within the illustration below:



A full version of our [County Plan](#) is available to read or download.

Sitting alongside our County Plan is our statutory [Well-being Statement for 2022/27](#), which explains in more detail how we have derived our objectives and how they will contribute to the seven national well-being goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. Our Well-Being statement also acts as a key driver for improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen by seeking to ensure 'that the needs of the present are met, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

### Gwent Public Service Board (PSB)

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act has been introduced in Wales to ensure sustainable development is embedded at the heart of the public sector.



The Act means public bodies have a duty to think about people now and in the future when they make their decisions. To do this, the Future Generations Act sets out:

#### What public services are aiming for: Seven national well-being goals



#### How public services should work: Five ways of working



Under the Act, the Council has both a collective and an individual duty.

### Our collective role:

This involves working with public sector partners, through a Public Services Board (PSB), to set joint well-being objectives, that we will deliver together.

PSBs are statutory partnerships that bring together public services in an area to improve well-being, both now, and in the long term. PSBs are required to assess the well-being of the area they cover and form well-being plans on a five-year cycle. Membership of the Gwent PSB can be viewed [here](#).

Gwent PSB adopted its first [Well-being Plan](#) in July 2023, setting out how public services will collaborate to respond to some of Gwent's key well-being challenges.

The plan runs from 2023-25 and sets out two interconnected well-being objectives and five underpinning steps to be delivered over a five-year delivery period.

Gwent PSB well-being objectives:

1. *We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all.*
2. *We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations.*

Five underpinning steps:

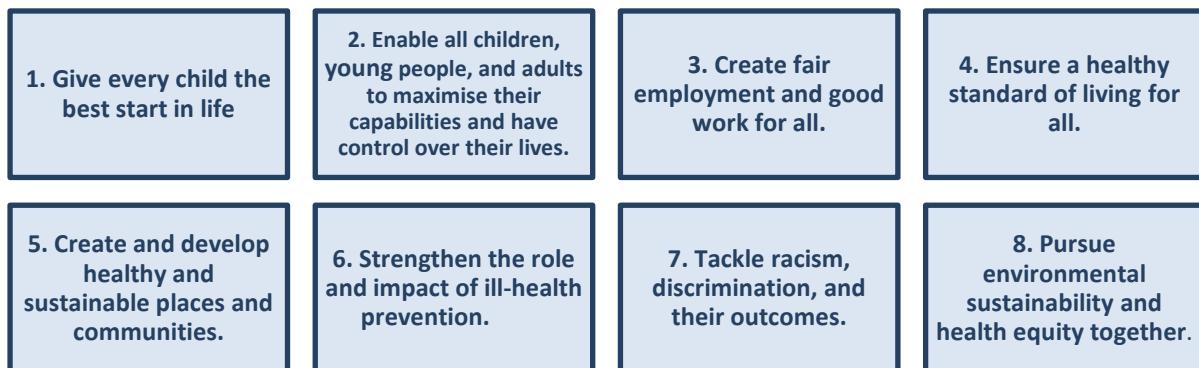
- *Take action to reduce the cost-of-living crisis in the longer term.*
- *Provide and enable the supply of good quality, affordable, appropriate homes.*
- *Taking action to reduce our carbon emissions, help Gwent adapt to climate change, and protect and restore our natural environment.*
- *Enable and support people, neighbourhoods, and communities to be resilient, connected, thriving and safe.*
- *Take action to address inequities, particularly in relation to health, through the framework of the Marmot Principles.*

During the past year, Gwent PSB has decided on four priority areas of focus, namely:

- That every child has the best start in life
- That everyone lives in a place they feel safe
- That everyone has the same economic chances
- That everyone lives in a climate-ready community where their environment is valued and protected

To support the PSB to tackle the high levels of inequality across Gwent, it worked with the Institute of Health Equity, using guiding principles identified in Professor Marmot's review, [Fair Society, Healthy Lives](#), for achieving greater health equity. This resulted in a range of recommendations documents in the [Building a Fairer Gwent Report](#).

The 8 Marmot Principles:



In 2022, Gwent [officially became a Marmot region](#) and Torfaen CBC strategically and forensically focussed our organisation on tackling socio-economic inequalities and the social determinants of health, a bold move that has attracted significant attention.

In December 2024, we hosted the Canada-UK Council Colloquium (CUCC) at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall. This year's Colloquium was entitled: 'Fairer Society, Healthier Lives: Overcoming Unequal Health Outcomes in the UK and Canada'.

A [blog post](#) by CUCC governing body member Greg Quinn OBE, reflecting on the event, explains:

**"The Colloquium drew together senior scientists, religious figures, politicians, diplomats, youth advocates, and NGOs amongst many others. As with all Colloquiums the goal is to allow participants to talk openly and candidly about the issue at hand.**

**That so many such influential people took part (from both sides of the Atlantic) and that so much interest was shown on the part of authorities in Wales, demonstrates how valuable people see the CUKC as a platform to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. All to help inform policy and to make recommendations for the betterment of citizens in both Canada and the UK".**

Subsequently, the Welsh Government Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, Sarah Murphy, has highlighted [Wales' commitment to become the world's first Marmot Nation](#), an announcement made at the Canada-UK Council's Fairer Society, Healthier Lives report launch in Cardiff on 16th June 2025.

We continue to focus on the wider determinates of health here in Torfaen, to plan and shape the work that we do across our organisation well into the future.

In 2024/25, we were [awarded funding](#) through the Health Determinates Research Collaboration Fund to enhance our research capacity and capability to support a culture of evidence based decision making. We have since appointed a team who are all now in post, exploring key topics that were highlighted by our Town/Community Councils and residents.

The Marmot Principles continue to underpin the developing work of the Gwent PSB and the board share Torfaen's commitment to improving the evidence base for our work. One key development this year, led by our colleagues at Public Health Wales, has been the development of the [Gwent Joint Strategic Assessment and accompanying Gwent Indicator Framework](#), which provide a comprehensive overview of the health and well-being of the people of Gwent, in an accessible way for everyone to view.

The tools provide partners across Gwent with a shared intelligence source to inform planning for local service delivery. Together, they provide a framework for building a Healthier, Fairer, Safer and Stronger Gwent, supporting decision-making, by providing a strong evidence base on which to build positive change. We will continue to build on the data included until it can serve as a single point of truth for various statutory assessments including the PSB's Well-being Assessments, the Regional Partnership Board's Population Needs Assessment and Natural Resources Wales - Southeast Wales Area Statement.

#### **a. Our Long-Term Master Plan....**

The specific commitment within the Gwent PSB's regional plan to become a Marmot region, represents the next phase of our County Planning. It is important that we don't just consider this ambition as a regional endeavour, but as something that we must live and breathe as a Council, in the way in which we deliver services to our local communities.

In common with other regions of Gwent, it is an unfortunate fact that communities in Torfaen face some of the worst health disparities in Wales. Addressing generational inequality across the county, demands that we take a longer-term perspective. Being a Marmot council offers us a chance to focus, and to use our council's resources and wide-ranging influence to tackle sources of inequality.

We therefore began the development of our own Masterplan. However, this does not represent the development of a new or replacement County Plan but rather it builds upon and dovetails our existing County Plan. It recognises a need to plan over a longer period of time, in the knowledge that this work will take us well beyond the current County Plan for 2027. Our County Plan continues to remain active and relevant, representing the first 5 years of our journey towards our longer-term aspiration to reduce inequity in Torfaen. Furthermore, our own 15-year plan, also signals we are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot council, over future generations.

We must therefore not forget that our County Plan and each supporting single year delivery plan represents a contribution to a much longer-term endeavour. Therefore, when considering lines of activity in our delivery plan such as, the development of a new school, a childcare setting or a leisure facility, increasing participation and achievement in adult education courses, improving uptake of benefits and grants, increasing the use of assistive technology, installing new photovoltaic installations or raising the recycling rate - it is important not to lose sight of the fact that these milestones are not just part of a single year plan but are vital stepping stones taking us towards a longer term ambition. Furthermore, these aspirations go well beyond the end of our current County Plan in 2027 and are part of a longer-term journey, as we aim to meet the needs of future generations.

In collaboration with the HDRC, we are also supporting the development of outcome indicators, aligned to local priorities, such as healthy life expectancy, housing insecurity, and social capital. These indicators will be incorporated into a performance dashboard, which we are co-developing with Public Health during 2025/26. This dashboard will contribute to a Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA).

## Future Developments....

The measures listed in our Masterplan will continue to be refined and improved over time, as new datasets become available or are developed internally. In doing so, we will ensure that the plan is always being supported with the best possible data to evidence the impacts of our actions, including those associated with the recommendations made in the 'Building a Fairer Gwent' report.

Importantly, the adoption of the Marmot principles and the development of the outcomes and measures represent only a small part of the work we must do to become a Marmot council. In order for Torfaen and our partners to have any meaningful impact on the wider determinants of health, the approach must penetrate all parts of the organisation and run far beyond reporting against a list of outcome measures. We will shortly be running a First into Research training programme for staff, elected members and the wider community, that will encourage the use of research and evidence, in their decision making.

Through our planning processes, we are therefore questioning how we do things, adjusting as necessary to ensure we are maximising the impact on sources of inequality and inequity in Torfaen. We are serious about our role and our commitment to adopting the principles of being a Marmot Council, but this must be matched by our actions. Therefore, reviewing what we do and how we measure its impact will be under constant review in the years to come, as we develop stronger delivery mechanisms to reach our outcomes.

Without doing so, we will never be able to address the social determinants of health, which for the residents of Torfaen will inevitably mean they are far less likely to reach their full potential and far more likely in the future to be the recipient of Council and wider public service support or interventions.