



ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT 2025-26

TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

This Annual Scrutiny Report provides an overview of the activity carried out by Torfaen's five Overview & Scrutiny Committees between **May 2025 and May 2026**. The scrutiny function plays a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability and continuous improvement across the Council. Scrutiny members have reviewed key policies, held decision-makers to account, and ensured that Torfaen residents' voices continue to shape Council activity.

Torfaen Council is comprised of 40 elected members. Eight of those members form the decision-making Executive (collectively referred to as 'the Cabinet'), with the other 32 councillors sitting on one or more scrutiny committees in line with political balance considerations, ensuring that committee membership reflects, as closely as practicable, the overall political composition of the Council. In 2025-26, the Council operated 5 scrutiny committees: Adults & Communities O&S Committee, Education O&S Committee, Children & Families O&S Committee, Economy & Environment O&S Committee and Cross Cutting Resources & Business O&S Committee



"Our committees have worked tirelessly this year to provide rigorous scrutiny, meaningful challenge, and practical recommendations that support better outcomes for residents. The breadth of work undertaken reflects a genuine commitment to accountability and continuous improvement across the Council ensuring that community voices remain at the heart of the Council's activity."

Scrutiny Chairs 2025-26

SCRUTINY IN NUMBERS

How Much Scrutiny Did We Do?

The start of a very busy scrutiny year began in July 2025 with each overview and scrutiny committee holding their visioning sessions. During these sessions, members met the relevant Executive Members and Strategic Directors who report to the individual committees and discussed the key issues forthcoming in the year ahead. Following in-depth consideration, each committee prioritised their basket of items for scrutiny activity in the year ahead. Inclusive of these sessions, 27 scrutiny meetings were held up until May 2026. Each meeting was preceded by a pre-agenda session where committee and co-opted members determined a questioning strategy for the meeting. The continued approach of considering “single item” agendas for all overview and scrutiny committee meetings has ensured in-depth challenge is undertaken for each item under discussion and clear, well considered recommendations are made to Executive Members and Strategic Directors.

Where appropriate, scrutiny members have adopted less formal working methods to inform and widen the perspective of their work. This included undertaking visits. Across the 5 scrutiny committees, in 2025-26, 10 visits took place. These visits included Cwmbran Library, Foster Carer Panel, Blaenavon Youth Group, the EIP Hub and several schools. Feedback from members has indicated that visits provide an invaluable contribution to informing and delivering effective scrutiny.

Following each cycle of committee meetings, the Scrutiny Support Team meet with the 5 Chairs in Informal Chairs Meetings, to reflect on the previous cycle and plan for the upcoming round of meetings as well as consider areas for development or process improvement.

Building a strong relationship between Executive members and Scrutiny Committees is essential for effective governance, as it promotes transparency, constructive challenge, and better-informed decision-making. Executive Members attended 27 of 30 scrutiny meetings invitations (some meetings required the attendance of more than 1 Executive Member) held in the year (90% attendance rate up from 79% in 2024-25)

Scrutiny activity should be impactful. During the work programming process, and throughout the course of the year, whilst several items were deemed as being of importance to members, as they would form update information rather than impactful scrutiny activity, these items were referred to the more appropriate avenue of Member Seminars. In 2025-26, 3 Member Seminars were held as a result of scrutiny referrals.



27 meetings in 2025-26



10 visits (inc. schools, Cwmbran Library, Foster Carer Support Group, Blaenavon Youth Group, EIP Hub)



5 Informal Chairs Meetings



27 meetings attended by the relevant Executive Member



3 Seminars Following Scrutiny Referrals

How Much Engagement Did Scrutiny Achieve?

	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Average Member Attendance at Scrutiny Meetings	66%	66%	68%
Number of Invitees Attending/ Contributing	97	115	54
Number of Webcast Views	2132	1873	2059
Number of Public Comments	63	131	163

The rate of councillor attendance measures an important aspect of effectiveness as it reflects the engagement of councillors in the scrutiny process. 2025-26's figure for attendance is 66% for all committees which is consistent with 66% in 2024-25. (Individual scrutiny committee and member attendance is broken down later in this report).

The total number of webcast views across the scrutiny committees in 2025-26 was 2132, an increase on 2024-25 and 2023-2024 viewing figures. The average views per meeting (that were webcast live) was 79, a significant increase on 67 in 2024-25. The 18th September 2025 meeting of the Adults & Communities O&S Committee looking at Adult Social Care: Flow through the System, received the most views at 100 views. The continued growth in webcast viewership demonstrates that scrutiny committee meetings and their activity are reaching and engaging a wider audience. This increased public interest supports the committee's objective of scrutinising matters that are important to residents, delivering greater visibility of the scrutiny function and its impact on local services and outcomes.

Using social media to understand the views of citizens, speaking with experts and relevant stakeholders in person and via online methods and conducting in-depth research and review work have all contributed to helping members broaden their knowledge of the issues being scrutinised. The number of public comments submitted in relation to scrutiny items decreased from 131 in the previous reporting period to 63 this year. While this represents a reduction in direct public engagement through comments, it should be viewed in the context of changing methods of engagement and varying levels of public interest in the topics considered during the year.

Committees have also regularly invited external witnesses/invitees to contribute to their meetings to help broaden their knowledge of the issue under scrutiny. This involved the participation of Executive Members, Strategic Directors, Heads of Service and service-based officers, service providers and service users, external regulators, and other professional bodies. Invitees involved in scrutiny over the last year have included representatives from ABuHB, South-East Wales Education Achievement Service, Gwent Police, Early Years providers and Headteachers.

Public Speaking at Scrutiny was introduced in May 2025. To date a member of the public has attended scrutiny on 2 occasions to ask questions. These were the Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 12th February 2026 - Local Authority School Improvement Service (LASIS) and Summer Outcomes and 26th March 2026 - Learner Progression and Cluster Working. They also strengthen democratic engagement by allowing scrutiny members to hear first-hand experiences and concerns, leading to more informed discussions and better outcomes for the public.

What Impact Has Scrutiny Had?

	2025-26	2024-25	2023-4
Total Number of Recommendations Made	112	154	159
Number of Recommendations Accepted	82% (n.92)	82% (n.126)	79% (n.126)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Further Consideration	17% (n.19)	15% (n.23)	17% (n.26)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	1% (n.1)	3% (n.5)	4% (n.7)

Committee members put forward recommendations for improvement based on their scrutiny activity and discussions held during meetings. These recommendations require a prompt response from the relevant Executive Member or Strategic Director. The extent to which these recommendations are accepted provides a strong indicator of the effectiveness of scrutiny in producing well-evidenced, constructive proposals.

A breakdown by committee is detailed below in the committee section. Overall, the percentage of accepted recommendations is 82% in 2025-26 consistent with 82% in 2024-25. The number of recommendations that were noted for further consideration were up to 17% in 2025-26 from 15% in 2024-25 and the number of recommendations rejected reducing from 3% in 2024-25 to 1% in 2025-26. These outcomes indicate that members are making improvements in offering more impactful and effective recommendations.

With continued training, development and experience, and reviewing previous recommendations and their responses, we aim to ensure all scrutiny activity results in SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely), impactful recommendations.

Annual Update on Recommendations

Each scrutiny committee takes an annual report to assess progress against the implementation of recommendations accepted or those noted for further consideration as well as reflecting on the impact that their scrutiny activity has had.

To ensure the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and recommendations are not just accepted but acted upon, a summary of progress is produced against each scrutiny item; including a progress update for each recommendation previously accepted or to be considered and examining what has been the impact of progressing the recommendation(s).

Following reviews of these updates, the committees overwhelmingly agreed they were satisfied with the progress made actioning each committee's recommendations, removing the majority from further annual monitoring.

The recommendations made by each committee over 2025-26 will be considered in a report to each relevant committee in July 2026.

92.8% of members responded to the Annual Member's Scrutiny survey that scrutiny does have an impact, a slight improvement on last year. Below are examples of impact for each of the scrutiny committees.

IMPACT

Economy & Environment O&S Committee

Sports Facilities Leasing Policy and the Provision and Maintenance of Play Parks

The scrutiny session added value by providing robust oversight of sports pitch leasing and children's play park provision. Members identified opportunities for service improvement and informed future development through their review of performance, challenges and demand. The session also strengthened transparency and accountability by requiring officers to explain service standards, demonstrate performance and provide assurance on the management of these important community assets.

Education O&S Committee

School Catering

The Committee's scrutiny provided assurance that Torfaen schools are delivering healthy, high-quality and affordable school meals, while also maintaining a focus on continuous improvement. Through its examination of catering arrangements and standards, the Committee reinforced the importance of promoting healthy eating and ensuring that pupil needs and preferences inform service delivery. The session also highlighted the positive impact of youth engagement, with Members welcoming the direct involvement of young people in shaping the scrutiny agenda through the Torfaen Youth Forum's suggestion of the topic. This demonstrated how scrutiny can amplify young people's voices and help ensure their views influence Council services.

Adults & Communities O&S Committee

IAA – Flow Through the System

Scrutiny provided a forum for monitoring both the direction of travel for Adult Services including the policy implementation, performance monitoring and how the department had demonstrated progress against the direction of travel including where we have implemented service redesign including future redesign work streams. Members were able to identify lessons about past mistakes or successes by reviewing Council/ service area expenditure, administration and operational management. Questions were appropriately raised relating to how the performance measures led to higher standards or better processes in Adult Services teams through the act of conducting effective scrutiny.

Children & Families O&S Committee

Foster Care

Through in-depth scrutiny including speaking with a group of Foster Carers, members were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing our foster carers, making recommendations to progress and improve the support given to our foster carers and to contribute to expanding the number of in-house fostering households

Cross Cutting Resources & Business Committee

The Torfaen Deal – Communication & Engagement with the Community

Scrutiny added tangible value to the development of the Council's *Community Communications and Engagement Strategy* for the new Torfaen Deal. While supporting the overall direction of the Strategy, the Committee identified areas for further enhancement and made eight recommendations to the Leader and senior officers to strengthen future delivery and community engagement. Members also recognised the significant contribution of Citizen Assembly participants, whose views and experiences helped shape the Committee's considerations and recommendations.

DEVELOPMENTS DELIVERED THROUGH THE YEAR

Our approach to overview and scrutiny has continued to adapt and strive for improvement during 2025-26.....

Torfaen/ Blaenau Gwent Federation

The Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Federation is an innovative partnership between Torfaen County Borough Council and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, designed to strengthen local government services through closer collaboration while maintaining the independence, democratic accountability and financial sovereignty of each council. By working together where it is beneficial to do so, the two councils aim to improve outcomes for residents, protect frontline services and develop a more sustainable approach to delivering public services across both areas

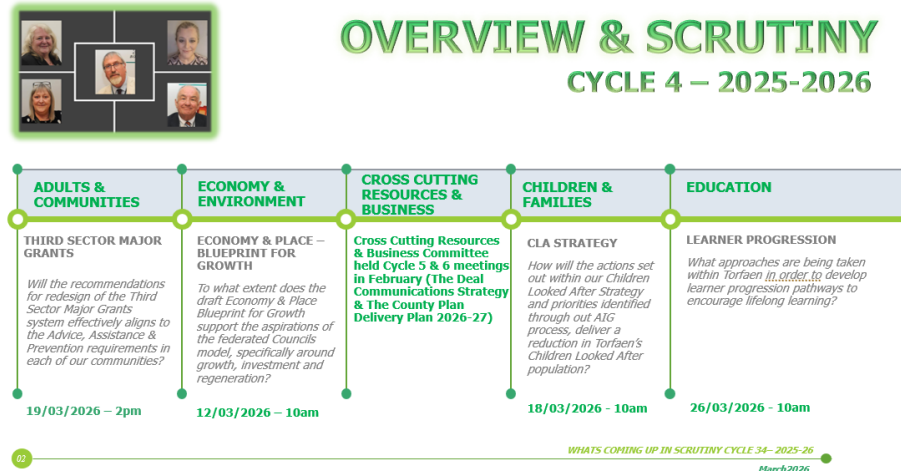
Although Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent remain separate sovereign local authorities, the federation provides valuable opportunities for joint scrutiny arrangements where there are shared services, common priorities or issues that affect residents across both areas. This approach has the potential to strengthen democratic oversight while supporting the federation's wider aim of delivering better outcomes and more resilient public services for communities in both Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. Work to start developing a Joint Scrutiny Protocol was commenced in consultation with the scrutiny chairs from both councils as well as group leaders. This protocol once approved by both Councils, with constitutional updates, will begin the process of holding the first BGT Joint Scrutiny Committee meeting the 2026/27 scrutiny year.

Self-evaluation

Regular informal meetings were held with all Scrutiny Chairs following each cycle of scrutiny meetings to promote a consistent and effective approach to scrutiny across all committees. These sessions provided an important opportunity for Chairs to collectively reflect on performance, share learning and good practice, identify common challenges, and consider solutions to issues arising during the scrutiny process.

These discussions generated a number of practical suggestions to further strengthen the scrutiny function. One key proposal was the development of a mechanism to provide all members with regular updates on forthcoming scrutiny activity across each committee as well as the key question to be addressed through scrutiny activity by each of the committees.

The aim of this approach is to improve awareness of the scrutiny work programme, enable members to identify items of interest at an earlier stage, and create greater opportunities for engagement in the scrutiny process. By improving communication and visibility of upcoming agenda items, this initiative will help ensure that scrutiny is better informed, more collaborative and able to draw on the knowledge and expertise of all Members.



Members are also invited to complete an annual survey that covers both the wider Democratic Services function and the Scrutiny function. The Annual Scrutiny survey results are reported later in this report.

In previous years, feedback was sought from officers after each scrutiny meeting; however, response rates were low. To improve participation and obtain more meaningful feedback, a new annual survey approach was introduced in June 2025. The online survey was issued to all officers involved in the scrutiny process during the year and sought views on the effectiveness of scrutiny, the impact of scrutiny activity, and opportunities for further improvement. The findings of the initial survey were set out in last year's Annual Scrutiny report, with this year's results set out later in this report. The feedback provides a baseline against which future annual results can be compared, enabling the Council to assess trends and measure improvements in the scrutiny process over time.

The results from the member and officer surveys are fed into and are regularly monitored as part of our service planning performance monitoring for timely changes to be made or emerging issues to be addressed.

Service Plan Reporting

The Council's service plans are used as a key source of feedback for committees when considering work programme formulation.

Scrutiny committees track key parts of the service plans that are included within the Council's County Plan Delivery Plan ensuring progress is monitored and challenged, issues and gaps are identified, ultimately ensuring the County Plan's priorities are being met, with service areas and teams being held responsible for achieving our wellbeing objectives.

The scrutiny function sits within the Corporate Services Service Plan because it plays a fundamental role in supporting the Council's governance, accountability and performance framework. As a cross-cutting function, scrutiny contributes to the effectiveness of all Council services by providing challenge, oversight and assurance in relation to policy development, service delivery and performance. Its inclusion within the Corporate Services Service Plan reflects its corporate role in strengthening decision-making, promoting transparency, supporting democratic accountability and driving continuous improvement across the organisation. It also

ensures that its own performance, development and effectiveness are subject to the same planning, monitoring and reporting arrangements as other Council functions. Clear objectives, activities and performance measures have been established and are reviewed annually, to assess whether existing measures continue to reflect the priorities and objectives of the scrutiny function, identify any gaps in performance monitoring, and introduce new measures where required. The annual review helps ensure that scrutiny performance is evaluated against meaningful indicators and supports a culture of continuous improvement within the scrutiny process.

Scrutiny Self-Assessment Framework

In its second year of implementation, the Scrutiny Self-Assessment Framework has continued to provide a structured approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. Developed locally following collaborative work led by the WLGA with scrutiny practitioners from across Welsh local authorities, the framework has become an established part of the scrutiny improvement process.

The annual self-assessment was completed by the Scrutiny Support Team and the findings reviewed with the five Scrutiny Chairs. This provided an opportunity to reflect on progress made since the framework's introduction, assess the effectiveness of actions taken in response to the first year's findings, and identify areas requiring further development. The year-on-year comparison of results has enabled a clearer understanding of where improvements have been achieved, where challenges remain, and where resources and effort should be focused in the coming year.

The framework has also supported greater ownership of scrutiny improvement by providing Chairs and officers with evidence-based insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current arrangements. By tracking progress against previously identified actions, the self-assessment process has helped demonstrate the impact of improvement initiatives and ensured that scrutiny continues to evolve in response to emerging needs, good practice and organisational priorities. Over time, the framework will provide an increasingly valuable evidence base to demonstrate how the effectiveness, impact and maturity of the scrutiny function are developing year on year.

Performance Monitoring

To build robust performance monitoring processes into the scrutiny function, a half yearly review of performance of the directorate was conducted by the relevant committee. This is in addition to the performance information received as a major feeder for the visioning sessions and as integral evidence bases for individual item reports.

This half yearly performance monitoring report also ensures each committee's work programme remains flexible and responsive to emerging issues.



Torfaen Council's County Plan

The County Plan highlights the Council's ambitions between 2022 and 2027. It also sets out key delivery activities for each year that will help teams and services achieve those ambitions. It has been inspired by the Well-being of Future Generations Act and aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen. It identifies four key themes: wellbeing, connectivity, sustainability and culture and heritage which underpin nine key priority well-being objectives.

Whilst scrutiny doesn't directly feed into any of the nine key priorities, effective scrutiny is vital in ensuring the Executive, Strategic Directors and service areas are making robust decisions, contributing to developing delivery plans and strategies as well as monitoring service area performance in delivering on the County Plan objectives.

Progress against the County Plan delivery plan is a key feeder used during the visioning session, by members, to develop their work programme for the following year.

The Cross Cutting Resources & Business Committee considered the delivery plan for 2026-27 in February 2026.

Each committee, through scrutiny of individual items considers how a decision will contribute to achieving our County Plan objects or whether decisions implemented/ activities undertaken are having a positive impact on delivering an objective/ set of objectives.

Action Plan for Governance & Improvement

Any service specific recommendations made by the Council's external regulators are received by the Council's Governance & Audit Committee, who will then refer the issue for monitoring by the Council's relevant overview and scrutiny committee.

Each overview and scrutiny committee reports back to the Council's Governance & Audit Committee annually with a progress update against recommendations and proposals for improvement made by our external regulators. The progress update relevant to each committee was received prior to the visioning sessions in July 2025 and the recommendations from each committee were reported back to the Governance & Audit Committee in [September 2025](#).

The 2025/26 progress update report will be prepared for each referral and will be reported back to the relevant scrutiny committees for assurance purposes in July 2026. Should the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and / or the Governance & Audit Committee highlight any concerns over the progress made in addressing the agreed recommendations, a report will be prepared for consideration by Cabinet

In 2025-26 an external regulator recommendations monitor was designed and implemented to provide a robust framework for recording, tracking, and reporting on recommendations arising from external inspections, audits, and reviews. The monitor ensures that all recommendations are assigned to responsible officers, supported by clear action plans, and regularly reviewed to monitor progress. This approach strengthens accountability, supports timely implementation of improvements, and provides assurance that all recommendations are effectively addressed and evidenced through to completion.

Joint Scrutiny / CJCS

We continue to hold membership positions on the Cardiff Capital Region Scrutiny Committee and Gwent PSB Scrutiny Committee. Our appointed members take an active role in these scrutiny committees. We are currently developing a suitable avenue to feedback from these committees to the wider Council membership, to ensure all members are aware of the work of these regional partnership bodies.

[Gwent PSB Scrutiny Committee](#) - Membership: Cllr Rose Seabourne, Cllr Williams

[Cardiff Capital Region Overview & Scrutiny Committee](#) - Cllr David Williams

Training

Members continue to be provided with monthly bulletins, some of which include training materials such as how to effectively work programme and questioning skills specific to different types of reports such as performance report questioning or policy development questioning.

MAKING EFFECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of Scrutiny is to make recommendations that add value.

Recommendations should be evidenced based, outcome focussed and SMART!

- SPECIFIC** – Addressed to a specific person (Executive Member / Strategic Director) or group (Cabinet, Leadership team) and clear on what change is required
 - MEASURABLE** – Focused on a measurable change / action where progress can be tracked (*not questions or requests for seminars or updates back to committee!*)
 - ACHIEVABLE** – Recommendations should be realistic within the resources available and evidence based
 - RELEVANT** – To the required outcome / objective of scrutiny activity and the findings from that scrutiny activity
 - TIMELY** – To be made at a time when members can realistically influence decisions / policy development or recommended for implementation within a certain timeframe
- ! The recommendation section of the meeting is not the opportunity to ask questions that were missed during the course of discussions!**
- Those receiving the recommendations should respond appropriately
Scrutiny should continue to monitor the action taken as a result of recommendations



Members are reminded that should they have any training needs or suggestions to contact the Scrutiny Support Team who will identify and arrange suitable training opportunities

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement in our democratic process, specifically scrutiny activity, continues to be a key priority. Effective scrutiny should be considerate of and represent the voices and concerns of the public. It helps make the scrutiny process robust and responsive to the needs of residents by ensuring decisions, delivery, and evaluation of services are shaped by the relevant people and communities.

Public Speaking at Scrutiny

A Public Speaking at Scrutiny Protocol was introduced during the year to enhance public engagement in the scrutiny process and provide residents with a formal opportunity to raise issues, ask questions, and contribute to discussions on matters of public interest. The protocol is intended to increase transparency, strengthen accountability, and ensure that the views of residents can help inform scrutiny work and decision-making. Since its introduction, members of the public have used the protocol to ask questions at two meetings of the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12th February 2026 - *Local Authority School Improvement Service (LASIS) and Summer Outcomes* and 26th March 2026 - *Learner Progression and Cluster Working*

Public Engagement in Selecting Items for Scrutiny

The 2025-26 scrutiny year began as always with the visioning sessions, where members prioritise items for scrutiny in the year ahead. Prior to the visioning sessions, views from the public were sought via social media posts, through Get Involved newsletters and through meeting with local groups and forums, such as Torfaen Youth Forum. Many suggestions were put forward by the public as items for potential scrutiny and the following were items that were selected by committees:

- Community Safety (including anti-social behaviour)
- School Meals
- Mental health and wellbeing (inc support in schools)
- Sports/ park facilities

Development of Democracy Hub

At the tail end of the 2024-25 scrutiny year, the Scrutiny Support Team worked closely with the Communication Team to develop a new Democracy Hub

[DEMOCRACY in Torfaen | Get Involved Torfaen](#)

This new site is a much more interactive facility for residents to access information on the Council's democratic functions as well as enabling a more navigable route for engaging in our processes.

Throughout 2025-26 the Scrutiny Support Team continued to work with the Communication Team to develop the Hub to ensure ease of accessibility for the public and to promote available avenues for being a part of the scrutiny process.



Ways to get involved



About Scrutiny

Read about what scrutiny and overview is, its role, how you can attend a meeting and what to expect.

[Find out more](#)



Tell us which topics should go to scrutiny

We would welcome your suggestions on what you would like to see the committee scrutinise in the y...

[Find out more](#)



Request to speak at Overview & Scrutiny

Please use the form on this page to request to speak at an Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

[Find out more](#)

Having provided easier access to detailed information around our scrutiny process, what items are being considered by scrutiny and when and providing more opportunities to participate in our democratic processes, has successfully encouraged greater public engagement and improved the representation of diverse voices within our communities.

ANNUAL SURVEYS 2025-26

Annual Member Survey 2025-26

Each year, the Scrutiny Support Team conducts a Member's Scrutiny Survey to seek members' views on; the support they receive to fulfil their role as scrutiny members, on the scrutiny process, and on the impact and outcomes of scrutiny activity. The key findings from the 2025-26 survey are set out below (15 members responded to the survey down from 18 in 2024-2025):

Positives:

- 93.3% of members feel well or very well equipped to conduct scrutiny, an improvement on 92% in 2024-5
- 100% of members believe the visioning process results in scrutiny committees considering the right issues, consistent with 100% in 2024-25
- 85.7% of members believe the work programme is member-led, up from 84.6% in 2024-25
- 100% members responding now believe scrutiny committees fulfil their role in holding the Executive to account some to all of the time, with no members responding the feel they don't hold the Executive to account, on par with 2024-25
- 85.7% of members feel the public are adequately to well engaged in the scrutiny process, a pleasing increase from 66.6% in 2024-25
- 38.5% of members responded that they feel there are constraints to effective scrutiny, a significant decrease from 53.8% in 2024-25.
- 92.8% of members responded that scrutiny has an impact most to all of the time.

Areas for Greater Focus 2025-26

- 86.6% of members who responded, feel scrutiny committees make robust recommendations most to all of the time with 13.4% (no.2) responding some of the time
- 85.7% of members responded they were satisfied with the responses from the Executive Member, down from 92.3% in 2024-25

Executive Member Responses *(5 Executive Members responded)*

- 100% of Executive Members responded that scrutiny committees held them to account well, some to all of the time on par with 2024-25
- 80% of Executive Members felt policy development and pre-decision scrutiny works well down from 100% in 2024-25
- 100% of Executive Members felt performance monitoring scrutiny works well
- 60% (no.3) of Executive Members responded that scrutiny make robust recommendations most of the time, with the other 40% (no.2) responding some of the time
- 50% of Executive Members (no.2) feel scrutiny makes an impact most to all of the time with 50% (no.2) responding scrutiny makes an impact well, some of the time.

Annual Officer Survey 2025-26

14 officers responded to the first Annual Officer Survey of Scrutiny (2024-25) a welcome increase on 6 officers in 2024-25

Results show:

- ❖ 93% (n.13) of officers felt they were provided with clear guidance prior to the meeting/s to support the writing of the report/s up from 83% in 2024-25
- ❖ 100% (n.14) felt sufficiently supported prior to attending the meeting/s, particularly if this was your first experience of scrutiny up from 83% in 2024-25
- ❖ 79% (n.11) of officers felt that the correct questions were asked during the meeting/s, up from 50% in 2024-25 with 14% (n.2) responding 'somewhat' and 7% (n.1) responding no,
- ❖ 86% (n.12) of officers responded that they thought there was a sufficient level of challenge during meetings up from 66% in 2024-25
- ❖ 64% (n.9) of officers found Members to be fully prepared and informed during the meeting/s with the other 36% (n.5) responding 'partly prepared'
- ❖ 86% (n.12) of officers responded they felt appropriate recommendations were formulated by the committee the majority of the time, up from 83% in 2024-25 with the remaining 14% (n.2) responding 'only some of the time'

An action plan will be developed setting out steps and proposals to address the findings of the member and officer surveys which will be regularly reviewed and progressed in consultation with Chairs of scrutiny committees, at the Informal Chairs Meetings.

ADULTS & COMMUNITIES O&S COMMITTEE

Membership & Attendance

Average Committee Attendance 61%



Cllr Catherine Bonera
(Chair)
6 of 6 meetings



Cllr Lynda Clarkson
4 of 6 meetings



Cllr Steven Evans
6 of 6 meetings



Cllr Karl Gauden
3 of 6 meetings



Cllr Nick Horler
6 of 6 meetings



Cllr Gaynor James
0 of 6 meetings



Cllr Rosemary Matthews
0 of 6 meetings



Cllr Alan Slade
4 of 4 meetings



Cllr David Williams
4 of 6 meetings

Cllr David Thomas - 0 of 2 meetings (prior to political balance changes)

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
Information Advice Assistance – Flow <i>(Performance)</i> <i>What impact is the redesigned AS front door (IAA) having in effectively managing flow through the Adult Care system and reducing demand for longer term care solutions and are there further activities that should be included with the front door service?</i>	18th September 2025
Library Strategy <i>(Policy Development)</i> <i>How will the public consultation inform the development of an effective strategy to shape the future delivery of our library services</i>	13th November 2025
Community Safety <i>(Performance)</i> <i>How is the preventative activity undertaken by the Council, partners and communities improving community safety throughout the borough?</i>	22nd January 2026
Major Third Sector Grants <i>(Policy Development)</i> <i>Will the recommendations for redesign of the Third Sector Major Grants system effectively aligns to the Advice, Assistance & Prevention requirements in each of our communities?</i>	19th March 2026
EIP <i>(Performance)</i> <i>How is the work of the EIP and the support provided by communities, impacting the number of referrals to statutory services?</i>	16th April 2026

- Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Total Number of Recommendations Made	23	45	45
Number of Recommendation Accepted	70% (n16)	71% (n.32)	67% (n.30)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	30% (n7)	22% (n.10)	27% (n.12)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	0	7% (n.3)	6% (n.3)

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

As Chair of the Adults & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, I am pleased to present this summary of the Committee's work during 2025/26.

Over the course of the year, the Committee undertook a comprehensive programme of scrutiny focused on improving outcomes for adults, supporting stronger communities and ensuring that Council services remain responsive to the changing needs of Torfaen residents. Members provided robust challenge and constructive support to officers and Cabinet Members, helping to strengthen accountability, transparency and continuous improvement across the Adults & Communities Directorate.

A significant area of focus during the year was the transformation of Adult Social Care services. The Committee examined the effectiveness of the redesigned Adult Social Care Front Door, including the Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Hub and Integrated Reablement Service, reviewing how these arrangements support residents to access timely advice, maintain independence and reduce the need for longer-term interventions

The Committee also considered the development of the Council's Library Strategy, recognising the important role libraries play as community hubs that support digital inclusion, lifelong learning, access to information and community wellbeing. Members examined how the service is responding to changing patterns of use, the opportunities for partnership working and innovation, and how the strategy will ensure that library services remain sustainable, accessible and responsive to the needs of residents across Torfaen. Through its scrutiny, the committee sought assurance that the future direction of the service would continue to support wider community wellbeing objectives and reduce barriers to access.



Visit to Cwmbran Library

Community safety was also a significant area of scrutiny during the year. Members received evidence on the challenges facing local communities, including anti-social behaviour, community cohesion and partnership arrangements aimed at keeping residents safe. The committee explored how the Council works with key partners, including the police and other agencies, to prevent harm, support vulnerable individuals and respond effectively to local concerns. Members welcomed the opportunity to examine these issues, including a visit to see the positive work at a Blaenavon Youth Group and provide constructive challenge to ensure community safety remains a priority for the Council and its partners.



Visit to Blaenavon Youth Group

At our March meeting, committee received an overview of the current Third Sector Major Grants (TSMG) scheme so that members were able to provide input into the review and re-design of the system.

At the last meeting of the scrutiny year, members considered the development of the Early Intervention and Prevention Hub and scrutinised the year 1 progress in ensuring that changes were delivering positive outcomes for residents while making best use of available resources.



Members of the Committee meeting the EIP Team Members

I would like to thank all Members of the Committee for their commitment, diligence and thoughtful contributions throughout the year. I also extend my thanks to officers, Cabinet Members, partners and community representatives who provided evidence and expertise to support our work.



Cllr Catherine Bonera

Chair

Adults & Communities O&S Committee

CHILDREN & FAMILIES O&S COMMITTEE

Membership & Attendance

Average Committee Attendance 76%



Cllr Alan Slade
(Chair)
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Jon James
0 of 5 meetings



Cllr Janet Jones
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Caroline Price
3 of 4 meetings



Cllr Rose Seabourne
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Chris Tew
3 of 5 meetings



Cllr Colette Thomas
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Jayne Watkins
4 of 5 meetings



Cllr Lucy Williams
4 of 5 meetings

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
FOSTER CARE <i>(Policy development)</i> <i>What activities will be developed to progress and improve our Foster Care service and expand the number of in-house foster care provision?</i>	8 th October 2025
DATA SHARING <i>(Policy review)</i> <i>How confident are we, that in collaboration with our partner agencies, we develop a comprehensive 'single view' of every child presenting to our statutory services?</i>	5 th February 2026
CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER STRATEGY <i>(Performance)</i> <i>How will the actions set out within our Children Looked After Strategy and priorities identified through out AIG process, deliver a reduction in Torfaen's Children Looked After population?</i>	18 th March 2026
CHILDRENS SERVICES STRUCTURE REDESIGN <i>(Policy review)</i> <i>Has the Children Services structure redesign delivered a more focussed and progressive care planning system with the ability to provide enhanced support to families at an earlier stage and to avoid drift for children looked after?</i>	30 th April 2026

- Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Total Number of Recommendations Made	16	18	n/a
Number of Recommendation Accepted	100% (n.16)	100% (n.18)	n/a
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	0	0	n/a
Number of Recommendations Rejected	0	0	n/a

- Due to the change in committee portfolios, there are no comparable data for recommendations for 2023-24

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

It's been a privilege to Chair the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee this past year and I would like to thank fellow committee members for their enthusiasm and hard work and the officers from the Scrutiny Support and Democratic Services teams for their professionalism and diligence in managing the work programme and the efficient running of our meetings.

The topics under consideration during 2025/26 were:

- **Foster Care**

The fostering service had been subject of a positive Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) inspection, with just one key area for improvement highlighted. Following the CIW report, a service improvement plan was developed with all aspects of the fostering service being addressed.

As part of the plan, Children and Family Services has been restructured with the intention of reducing and controlling demand on the service and improving outcomes for our children and young people. This includes ensuring that our children / young people are residing within the placement that best meets their needs and ensuring that we have sufficient placements available to meet the needs of all of Torfaen's children and young people if they are unable to remain in the care of their parents/ family members.

The committee also heard that the Authority is making significant progress towards safely reducing the number of children we look after and achieving our ambition to have a rate equal to or lower than the Wales national average by 2028/29.

Overall, the committee were satisfied that the activities proposed would address the recommendation from CIW in respect of our Foster Care Service and further improvement of our Foster Care Service could be expected together with an increase in our in-house provision.

The Committee expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the commitment and dedication of our Foster Carers and wished to record their thanks especially to those who met with them at the Foster Carer Support Group. Their contributions and experiences were invaluable to members scrutiny activity.

- **Data Sharing**

Multiple high-profile inquiries and reviews into child protection over the years have identified the need for better information sharing between agencies and in response to this, Torfaen County Borough Council has contributed to a project to develop a proof of concept Single View of Child dashboard.

This project is being delivered in partnership with the SRS and its partner organisations (Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire and Newport Councils) and is being developed using data from Newport City Council for the purposes of proving the technology can be put in place to input, cleanse, match and visualise data from different data sets, to form a single view of the child.

The committee heard that the project has been successful in proving that the objectives can be achieved, leading to the development of a unified data platform available to all SRS partners. Work is now progressing to refine the proof of concept Single View of Child Dashboard into an operational dashboard.

Work being progressed also includes exploration of opportunities to access other partner's data to improve the effectiveness of the dashboard e.g., Police and Health.

A Data Protection Impact Assessment is in place to support this work and the committee commented that child protection must be prioritised above data protection.

- **Children Looked After Strategy**

The committee heard that Torfaen has achieved a sustained reduction in the number of Children Looked After yet whilst progress has been made, further reduction at least in line with the Welsh average remains a key strategic objective.

The Children Looked After Reduction Strategy aligns with Marmot principles and "The Deal" Missions by prioritising early support, reducing inequality, promoting family / community-based care, and improving outcomes for children and young people in Torfaen

The Committee were informed that focused governance through an Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) provided challenge and oversight during the improvement phase of the strategy, with key actions and monitoring arrangements now transitioned into core 'business as usual' governance.

The strategy provides a strengthened focus on prevention, early intervention and risk reduction and this has supported both a reduction in unnecessary entry into care and planned, safe exits from care where risks have reduced.

Service restructuring and workforce development have aligned skills and expertise to key stages of the child's journey, supporting improved decision making, and more consistent care plan progression. While challenges remain, particularly in relation to placement sufficiency, targeted recruitment activity, ongoing performance monitoring, partnership working and established scrutiny arrangements are in place to promote continued improvement.

The Committee commended the Children's Services teams for their hard work and commitment to changing service delivery / adopting new processes and the wider service culture to deliver a safe reduction in our Children Looked After Population. The committee look forward to further reports in subsequent years to monitor and review the impact of the strategy.

- **Children's Services Structure Redesign**

In October 2024 an Accelerated Improvement Group (AIG) Programme Board was established to oversee improvement projects and initiatives across Children & Family Services in response to the continued high rate of children looked after and associated unsustainable spend.

The AIG determined that a review of the service structure was required to support the service to meet its improvement objectives and a new structure was implemented in Children's Services in August 2025.

The Committee heard that the redesigned structure aims to enable more focussed interventions and progressive care planning with a greater focus on children and families subject to a voluntary care and support plan. It is hoped that the number of children escalating through the system will reduce.

The Committee heard that a staff consultation had been undertaken and early feedback had been positive, and that there are indications that the new structure is supporting improved recruitment and stability of caseloads.

Whilst early indications are positive, it is likely too soon to make any definitive determination as to the impact of the new structure on outcomes for children and families, although demand is clearly being managed more effectively.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank the Executive Member for Children, Families & Education, the Head of Children's Services, and Group Managers for their attendance and contributions to our meetings. Also, a special mention to the Head of Customer, ICT & Digital Services and members of the Foster Carer's Support Group for their engagement and support when the committee reviewed Data Sharing and the Foster Care service respectively.



Cllr Alan Slade

**Chair
Children & Families O&S Committee**

ECONOMY & ENVIRONMENT O&S COMMITTEE

Membership & Attendance

Average Committee Attendance 71%



Cllr Lynda Clarkson
(Chair)
5 of 5 meetings



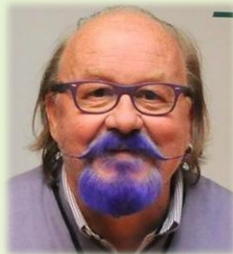
Cllr Stuart Ashley
3 of 5 meetings



Cllr Karl Gauden
1 of 5 meetings



Cllr Elizabeth Haynes
2 of 5 meetings



Cllr Nick Horler
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Norma Parrish
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Alan Slade
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr David Williams
3 of 5 meetings



Cllr Nathan Yeowell
3 of 5 meetings

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
Economy & Place – Blueprint for Growth <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>How will the Economy & Place Blueprint for Growth support the aspirations of the federated Councils to drive future investment in ‘people and place’ and does the draft brief align with the County Plan priorities, Marmot masterplan and Members’ expectations?</i>	2nd October 2025
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Programme <i>(Performance)</i> <i>What lessons have been learned from the delivery and management of the UKSPF Programme and how will they help to inform and improve the Council’s future approach to delivering programmes of externally funded activity?</i>	27th November 2025
Sports Lease Policy and Provision and Maintenance of Play Areas <i>(Performance / policy development / policy review)</i> <i>To what extent do Council policies ensure that play parks are fun, stimulating and safe for children and sports leasing is equitable and consistent and encourages effective and sustainable utilisation?</i>	29th January 2026
Economy & Place – Blueprint for Growth <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>To what extent does the draft Economy & Place Blueprint for Growth support the aspirations of the federated Councils model, specifically around growth, investment and regeneration?</i>	12th March 2026
Destination Torfaen (incl. Pontypool Indoor Market, World Heritage Centre and the Canal) <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>How will Council strategies enhance the offer associated with Destination Torfaen, particularly those attributed to Pontypool Indoor Market, the World Heritage Centre & the Canal?</i>	23rd April 2026

- Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Total Number of Recommendations Made	29	45	45
Number of Recommendation Accepted	66% (n.19)	71% (n.32)	67% (n.30)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	34% (n.10)	22% (n.10)	27% (n.12)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	0	7% (n.3)	6% (n.3)

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

It has been a privilege to chair the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the year 2025/26.

I extend thanks to the members of the Committee for their contributions, the Scrutiny Officers for their professionalism and assistance in facilitating our workload and the efficient running of our meetings, and the Officers and Executive Members who attend to present their reports, answer our questions and take our recommendations forward. I would also like to thank the outgoing Chair, Cllr Stuart Ashley for his many years of commitment to the scrutiny process and setting the scene of how we currently work.

It has been a challenging year for the Scrutiny Committee with important areas to scrutinise in regards to the progression of the County Plan, The Deal, and the newly federated approach to joint working and local governance with Blaenau Gwent Borough Council.

Our first meeting in October 2025 considered a pre-draft version of 'The Blueprint for Growth', which when fully published, will support how the newly federated Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Borough Councils drive future aspiration and investment in people and place. Our task was to consider if the proposals align with The County Plan, Marmot principles and Members' expectations. The Committee was pleased to have the opportunity of early scrutiny of the Blueprint.

Recommendation included ensuring a clear focus on active travel, road infrastructure and public transport in order to link communities, industry and destinations. Clarity around accountability and governance required to meet environmental and housing growth target and a review of SMART measures and indicators to enable more frequent and accurate review of progress. A clear emphasis on development plans around tourism and exploring the potential for a Gwent wide approach. With regard to Community Asset Transfer, close working with Communities and the establishment of safeguards was recommended to achieve fairness and equity. The Committee also requested it be further engaged in finalising the Community Asset Transfer Policy.

All 8 of the recommendations made were accepted for implementation or consideration by Officers. We requested that the final draft version return for further scrutiny prior to its presentation to Cabinet for approval.

Our January 2026 meeting scrutinised proposed changes to the Council's Sports Lease Policy and the Provision and Maintenance of Play Areas. The changes to Sports Leasing Policy had already gone out to consultation with relevant Sports Clubs, the outcomes of which were considered by the Committee. Members with established links to local sports teams bought firsthand insight to the discussions on the day. Members were in agreement with the updated policy but requested a 'right of appeal' be provided which was accepted for actioning.

With regard to Play Areas provision and maintenance, Officers provided information regarding how they liaise with Communities and young people, partnership working, regular inspection and maintenance and highlighted some of the challenges faced regarding funding, ASB and vandalism. Questioning was thorough and recommendations focused on how to achieve improvement, increased collaborative working and exploring joint funding opportunities, and that potential prevention measures to overcome the challenges be further identified and explored. It

was suggested that a full Members Seminar would be appropriate to update all Members and hear their views on these issues.

All 6 recommendations were accepted for implementation or consideration by Officers and the Cabinet Members.

At our March 2026 meeting, we revisited The Blueprint for Growth in its draft version prior to wider consultation. Engagement to date was outlined by Officers and further detailed information presented in the report. Following question and answers, a number of suggestions and recommendations were made including areas of further consultation, high level clarification of responsibility of work streams, the potential for more distinct geographical areas for Place Planning in Torfaen, preparation of an easy-read version of the report and that a joint Members Seminar be held to update and hear the views of all Members of Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent CBC. An annual monitoring report was requested to ensure ongoing scrutiny of progress is achieved.

All 6 recommendations were accepted for action or consideration by Officers.

Our final meeting of the year in April, was regarding 'Destination Torfaen'. A pre-draft situational presentation was given by Officers to enable Members to make suggestions and recommendations relevant to a future Destination Management Plan.

Recommendations included consideration of an annual reporting mechanism of progress to all Members and interested parties. Consideration of dedicated Officer time and resources to ensure accountability and progress is achieved. The development of 'joined up' day visitor opportunities and use of QR codes to promote them. Further areas for consultation. Identifying areas of improvement needed regarding connectivity, promotion and collaborative partnership working. All 9 recommendations made were accepted for action or consideration by Officers.

Pre-notice of our meetings are advertised on social media and any comments made by residents are noted during our discussions.

Full details of all meetings of the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, minutes, and outcomes can be viewed on the TCBC website at this link: <https://moderngov.torfaen.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeeld=438>



Cllr Lynda Clarkson

**Chair
Economy & Environment O&S Committee**

EDUCATION O&S COMMITTEE

Membership & Attendance

Average Committee Attendance 78%



Cllr Rose Seabourne
(Chair)
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Alfie Best
0 of 5 meetings



Cllr Liam Cowles
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Janet Jones
5 of 6 meetings



Cllr Mark Jones
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Stuart Keyte
4 of 4 meetings



Cllr Nicholas Simmons
2 of 5 meetings



Cllr Colette Thomas
5 of 5 meetings



Cllr Jayne Watkins
5 of 5 meetings

Cllr David Thomas - 0 of 1 meeting (prior to political balance changes)

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
Additional Learning Needs (ALN) <i>(Performance / policy review)</i> <i>To what extent are the Council's ALN policies and support arrangements improving outcomes for Torfaen learners?</i>	11th December 2025
LA School Improvement Service (LASIS) and Summer Outcomes <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>How confident are we that the LA School Improvement Service (LASIS) will support Torfaen schools to improve learner outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and reduce the attainment gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners?</i>	12th February 2026
Learner Progression <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>What approaches are being taken within Torfaen in order to develop learner progression pathways to encourage lifelong learning?</i>	26th March 2026
School Catering <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>How are we ensuring that the school meals on offer within Torfaen are healthy and of high quality, whilst also remaining affordable?</i>	6th May 2026

- Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Total Number of Recommendations Made	14	35	37
Number of Recommendation Accepted	100% (n.14)	89% (n.31)	89% (n.33)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	0	8% (n.3)	8% (n.3)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	0	3% (n.1)	3% (n.1)

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee during the 2025–2026 municipal year. I thank Committee Members, Cabinet Members, officers, school leaders, governors and partners for their commitment to improving education and outcomes for children and young people across Torfaen.

Throughout the year the Committee provided constructive challenge and support, scrutinising performance, policy and financial decisions. Key areas included school improvement, behaviour, Additional Learning Needs, learner progression, safeguarding, school catering, budget monitoring.

Through scrutiny activity, committee paid particular attention to the financial pressures facing education services, seeking assurance that resources continued to protect frontline provision and deliver value for money.

A significant feature of the year was the meeting of Joint Scrutiny Meetings with the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This session strengthened democratic oversight by ensuring effective partnership working with partner agencies to improve mental health support for children and young people in our borough. Joint scrutiny reduced duplication and enabled Members to take a holistic view of the services supporting children and families.

The Committee maintained a strong focus on continuous improvement, requesting follow-up reports where necessary and ensuring recommendations from inspections and reviews were implemented effectively.



Croesyceiliog School
08.12.25



Greenmeadow Primary
19.03.26



Cwmbran High
01.05.26

I thank all Members, the Cabinet Member for Education, the Director of Education, senior officers, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officers for their professionalism and support throughout the year. I would also like to thank the input of the Youth Forum and community in suggesting items for scrutiny

Looking ahead, the committee will continue to focus on improving educational standards, attendance, inclusion, support for learners with Additional Learning Needs, safeguarding, financial sustainability and delivery of the Council's strategic priorities.

Effective scrutiny is fundamental to good governance. I am proud of the work undertaken during 2025–2026 and remain committed to ensuring that every child and young person in Torfaen has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.



Cllr Rose Seabourne
**Chair
Education O&S Committee**

JOINT CHILDREN & FAMILIES AND EDUCATION OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Average Committee Attendance 50%



Cllr Rose Seabourne
Joint Chair
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr Alan Slade
Joint Chair
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr Alfie Best
0 of 1 meeting



Cllr Liam Cowles
0 of 1 meeting



Cllr Jon James
0 or 1 meeting



Cllr Janet Jones
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr Mark Jones
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr Caroline Price
0 of 1 meeting



Cllr Nicholas Simons
0 or 1 meeting



Cllr Chris Tew
0 of 1 meeting



Cllr Colette Thomas
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr David Thomas
0 of 1 meeting



Cllr Jayne Watkins
1 of 1 meeting



Cllr Lucy Williams
1 of 1 meeting

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
Healthcare, Education and Children's Services Supporting the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People in Wales (including Learner Wellbeing) <i>(Performance / policy development)</i> <i>How is the Council ensuring effective partnership working with partner agencies to improve mental health support for children and young people in our borough?</i>	16th October 2025 (Joint with Children & Families O&S Committee)

- Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY	
	2025-26
Total Number of Recommendations Made	5
Number of Recommendation Accepted	60% (n.3)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	20% (n.1)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	20% (n.1)



Cllr Alan Slade

**Chair
Children & Families O&S Committee**



Cllr Rose Seabourne

**Chair
Education O&S Committee**

CROSS CUTTING RESOURCES & BUSINESS O&S COMMITTEE

Average Committee Attendance 60%

Councillor Alan Slade	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Alfie Best	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor Caroline Price	2 of 5 meetings
Councillor Catherine Bonera	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Chris Tew	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor Colette Thomas	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor David Thomas	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor David Williams	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Elizabeth Haynes	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Gaynor James	0 of 5 meetings
Councillor Giles Davies	0 of 5 meetings
Councillor Janet Jones	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Jason O'Connell	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Jayne Watkins	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor Jon Horlor	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Jon James	0 of 5 meetings
Councillor Karl Gauden	2 of 5 meetings
Councillor Liam Cowles	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor Lucy Williams	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Lynda Clarkson	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Mark Jones	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Nathan Yeowell	1 of 5 meetings
Councillor Nicholas Simons	2 of 5 meetings
Councillor Nick Byrne	1 of 5 meetings
Councillor Nick Horler	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Norma Parrish	3 of 5 meetings
Councillor Ron Burnett	0 of 5 meetings
Councillor Rose Seabourne	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Rosemary Matthews	0 of 5 meetings
Councillor Steven Evans	5 of 5 meetings
Councillor Stuart Ashley	4 of 5 meetings
Councillor Stuart Keyte	3 of 5 meetings

ITEM(S) FOR DISCUSSION	DATE OF MEETING:
Communications Strategy – The Deal <i>The opportunity to scrutinise, challenge, influence and make suggestions to the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Approach for development of the Council's Deal with the Community.</i>	23rd September 2025
Climate Change & Nature Emergency <i>To provide the Cross Cutting & Resources Business O&S Committee with an update on the work undertaken to deliver the actions set out in the Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan.</i>	23rd October 2025
Financial Planning 2026/27 <i>To provide the Cross-Cutting Resources and Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to review and comment upon the initial 2026/27 draft estimates.</i>	18th November 2025
Budget 2026/27 <i>To provide an update to the Cross-Cutting Resources and Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Welsh Government's provisional Local Government settlement announcement as it affects the Council and the impact that this has had on the initial estimate position</i>	3rd February 2026
The Torfaen Deal - Communication and Engagement with the Community <i>To give the Cross Cutting Resources and Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to scrutinise, challenge, influence and make suggestions to the ongoing Communications and Engagement Strategy for Council's Deal with the Community. To provide councillors with an update on outputs from The Deal Survey and The Deal Citizen Assembly and the next steps for The Deal.</i> County Plan Delivery Plan 2026-27 <i>To present to members an update on the development of the Council's County Plan. Members are invited to consider the information to make clear comments or recommendations on the Draft County Plan Delivery Plan 2026-27</i>	17th February 2026

- *Click on the links included in the above table to access the reports, minutes recommendations and their responses*

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY			
	2025-26	2024-25	2023-24
Total Number of Recommendations Made	25	19	23
Number of Recommendation Accepted	96% (n.24)	89% (n.17)	87% (n.20)
Number of Recommendations Noted for Consideration	4% (n.1)	11% (n.2)	13% (n.3)
Number of Recommendations Rejected	0	0	0

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

The Cross Cutting Resources and Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee has the clear role of bringing together backbenchers across all groupings in the Council to scrutinise the Executive (Senior Officer) plans and Cabinet. Given this remit, I have been honoured to be Chair for a second year.

Much of the committee's agenda is set, providing scrutiny opportunity at key points of the Council year, such as the Council budget setting process and final budget, as well as major cross cutting strategies that set the direction of the Council over the medium term (three to five years).

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all members for their attendance and contributions at the meetings held over the past year. It has been positive to see a wider spread of questions from members this year, which has presented the positive challenge (for me) of seeking to keep meeting business to the time allotted!

The committee focuses on keeping an active oversight on topics that impact across the whole Council. During the 2025/26 scrutiny year, the Cross Cutting Resources & Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee has covered the following subjects in our work programme:

The Torfaen Deal – 23rd September 2025

Climate Change and Nature Emergency – 23rd October 2025

Financial Planning - 18th November 2025

Budget and County Plan Delivery Plan – 3rd February 2026

The Torfaen Deal – 17th February 2026

I would like to thank all the officers involved, some of whom have been quite new to the Council, for the effort and work carried out in preparation for and during the meetings, as a wide range of questions were raised over the course of committee meetings.

The Council's annual Budget proposal is always an item members take a key role in actively scrutinising, with Initial Revenue Estimates 2026/27 being considered by the committee in November 2025 and Financial Planning 2026/27 in January 2026, once TCBC had received its provisional settlement from Welsh Government. Overall, the committee were satisfied with the budget position including mitigations and made recommendations for consideration before budget and council tax setting went before full Council in March 2026. I appreciate the commitment and the challenge from scrutiny members, who have taken part in these conversations to support the council to use its resources as wisely as possible.

A new topic this year was the Torfaen Deal and the link made with the Torfaen Citizen Assembly. The committee first looked at the Deal – essentially a new, long term focused way of working with citizens and communities, drawing on good practice examples from across the UK – in September 2025. This focused on the proposed communications and engagement strategy for the Deal with partners, public and communities.

An important element that then went ahead was the bringing together of a group of people in Torfaen, through a random and representative recruitment process, as a Citizen Assembly. I had the opportunity to meet with the Citizen Assembly to explain the Council scrutiny process at a session held on 14th February 2026.



Also, two Assembly representatives attended a subsequent Committee scrutiny meeting on 17th February. This sought to review how the engagement process had developed. The representatives took a full part in responding to member questions, and I would wish to record my thanks for their valuable contributions.



This committee has a very specific role of being a critical friend to the Cabinet and the Executive Officer group and a key role of the Chair is to enable all voices to be heard and assist in ensuring clear recommendations are drawn up and agreed by members.

I am grateful to colleagues for endorsing my continuation as Chair for 2026/27, the final year of the term for this current Council. I also hope that we will continue to see citizen input to the overall scrutiny process in Council, as an important theme for the Torfaen Deal.



Cllr David Williams

Chair

Cross Cutting Resources & Business O&S Committee

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The following activities will be taken forward as priorities in the year ahead...

Annual Scrutiny Survey Action Plan

An action plan will be developed, setting out steps and proposals to address the findings of the member and officer surveys which will be regularly reviewed and progressed in consultation with the scrutiny committee chairs.

Public Speaking at Scrutiny

Continued promotion of the Public Speaking at Scrutiny Protocol to inform the public of this additional way in which they can play a part in the Council's democratic processes.

Regional Scrutiny Monitoring

With the Gwent PSB and the Cardiff Capital Region operating regional scrutiny arrangements, it is important to develop an appropriate reporting mechanism to facilitate our appointed representatives feeding back the outcomes from the regional committees to local members. This mechanism has been developed and will be consulted on with the Chairs of Scrutiny before being rolled out more widely to all members

Elections 2027 Induction Training

A module on the Role of Overview & Scrutiny will be developed in preparedness for the new intake of members following the Local Elections in May 2027. This training will be developed and consulted on with scrutiny members to ensure the training is comprehensive and covers all the points members feel important to build their knowledge in how to deliver effective scrutiny within the Council's governance structure

Joint Scrutiny with Blaenau Gwent

Future development will focus on strengthening collaboration between Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Scrutiny Committees to enable joint scrutiny of shared priorities, regional services, and cross-boundary issues. By establishing opportunities for joint work programming, shared evidence gathering, and collaborative scrutiny sessions, both authorities can enhance their collective oversight and challenge function. This approach will support the sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources, helping to avoid duplication, improve scrutiny outcomes, and ensure a coordinated response to issues that have a common impact on residents across both council areas.

PSED

To strengthen the Council's approach to equality and human rights considerations, elected members will be supported to utilise the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Challenge Framework as part of the scrutiny process. Developed in collaboration with the Welsh local government sector, the framework provides practical prompts to help members effectively review and challenge Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring that the potential impacts of proposals on protected groups are robustly considered, questioned, and reflected in decision-making in a constructive and proportionate manner.

LEGISLATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Scrutiny plays an important role in ensuring that Council decisions are transparent, evidence-based and reflect the needs of Torfaen communities. In carrying out this role, scrutiny must consider a range of legislative and policy requirements.

Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

The Act aims to strengthen local democracy, increase public participation and improve openness in local government.

For scrutiny, this means ensuring that residents and stakeholders have opportunities to engage with Council decision-making and that scrutiny processes are accessible and transparent. The Act supports the Council's Participation Strategy, the broadcasting of meetings and the use of multi-location meetings, helping more people to observe and contribute to local democracy.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact of decisions and how they contribute to the well-being of current and future generations.

When reviewing policies, services and decisions, scrutiny should consider whether proposals support the Council's well-being objectives and contribute to the wider economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Torfaen and Wales.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

The Council's Integrated Impact Assessment process helps decision-makers understand the potential impacts of policies, strategies and service changes before decisions are made, many of which are linked to the Council's legal duties

Scrutiny has an important role in challenging and reviewing whether appropriate impact assessments have been completed and whether any risks or negative impacts have been identified and addressed. The IIA process considers a range of factors, including:

- Equality and protected characteristics;
- Socio-economic impacts;
- Well-being of Future Generations goals;
- Council priorities and objectives;
- Armed Forces considerations; and
- Community safety impacts.

By considering the findings of impact assessments, scrutiny can help ensure that decisions are fair, inclusive and support positive outcomes for Torfaen residents.

Together, these legislative requirements help ensure that scrutiny supports effective decision-making by promoting transparency, public involvement, equality, accountability and long-term thinking across the Council's activities.



Further information on the Council's overview and scrutiny function is available to
view at:

<https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/CouncillorsAndDemocracy/Overview-and-Scrutiny/Overview-and-Scrutiny.aspx>

<https://getinvolved.torfaen.gov.uk/hub-page/democracy-in-torfaen>

For further information about overview & scrutiny, or if you
would like this document in an alternative format please
contact:

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This document is available in Welsh
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg