



**Garw Valley Community Council**  
**Annual Report 2021/2022**

**25<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

## **Introduction:**

This Annual Report covers Councillor Heather Griffiths' year as Chairperson of the Community Council, supported by Councillor Deb Davies as Vice-Chair, which commenced on the date of the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2021 and ran for 12 months. This is the Community Council's first Annual Report.

A Community Council is a corporate body and its lawful acts, assets and liabilities are its own and not those of its individual members. Any decisions taken by the Community Council are the responsibility of the whole council regardless of voting on a particular issue. The Community Council raises its money through the Precept - a levy which its residents pay through the Council Tax. It has powers which allows it to spend this public money on the services which it provides.

Council meetings are held on the third Monday of the month at 6.30 pm and meetings move around the Garw Valley wards so that members of the public from all wards can access face-to-face meetings or they can be joined via zoom. The exceptions to this are that the council is in recess in August and in May its Annual Meeting to take place first at 6.00 pm. The December meeting, which is a precept setting meeting, is held on a different date. Committee meetings are held on an ad hoc basis and include Finance & Resources, Events and an Employment & Disciplinary committees.

## **Objectives:**

The council's objectives are:

- To continue to serve the Garw Valley Community
- To be a competent council
- To offer equal opportunities
- To be globally responsible and environmentally friendly

## **Councillors:**

**The Garw Valley** Community Council serves 4 wards - Bettws, Blaengarw, Llangeinor and Pontycymer and is served by 13 Councillors who are either elected or co-opted. A local election takes place every 5 years. Once elected Councillors cannot act as a councillor until they've signed a formal declaration of acceptance of office form. They also undertake to abide by the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the Council and must undertake training on the Code of Conduct. At present this is the only mandatory training they must undertake.

Councillors do not receive a salary, but are entitled to claim a one-off payment of £150 per year to cover copying, printing, telephone calls etc. They can elect not to receive the payment. A list of payments made each year is published on the council's website.

Councillors must also individually make Declarations of Interest and must leave a meeting if an issue being discussed is of personal or prejudicial interest. When summoned to a meeting councillors will be provided with an agenda, minutes of the last meeting and relevant reports or papers associated with the items being discussed to enable them to prepare for a meeting properly as they are acting on behalf of the electorate and represent the views of the community in discussions. No single councillor can make a decision on behalf of the council.

The councillors serving the Garw Valley Community Council in 2021/2022 are:

### **Bettws:**

Councillor Martyn Jones (Labour)

Councillor Rees Jones (Labour)

Councillor Chris Lloyd (Independent)

Councillor Michelle Trowbridge (Labour)

**Blaengarw:**

Councillor Gareth Andrews (Labour)

Councillor Sorrel Dendy (Independent)

Councillor Marlene Thomas (Labour)

**Llangeinor:**

Councillor Deb Davies (Independent)

Councillor Graham Lloyd (Independent)

**Pontycymer:**

Councillor Maxine Lewis (Labour)

Councillor Heather Griffiths (Labour)

Councillor Clive Gillard-Sage (Labour)

Councillor Glyn Walters (Labour)

**Chairman:**

The Chairperson is elected by the members at the annual meeting held in May each year and holds the position for a year. The Vice-Chair is also elected at that meeting and also holds the position for a year. It is the council's practice that the Vice-Chair on completion of a year's service moves on to become the Chair. The Chair holds a casting vote in the event of a tied vote, but cannot make decisions on behalf of the council.

**Staff:**

The Clerk & (RFO) is employed by the council to carry out its administration, financial management, asset management, project management, health & safety and other professional duties. She is responsible for the line management of the Community Warden.

The Community Warden is the only other member of staff and is mainly responsible for the council's leased land at Parc Calon Lan and some community maintenance duties.

The Clerk takes instruction from the whole council and not individual members.

The Clerk is the council's 'Proper Officer' and all correspondence should be sent to the Clerk.

**Council Contact Details:**

Ann Harris

Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer to the Garw Valley Community Council

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Visit us at: [www.garwvalleycc.co.uk](http://www.garwvalleycc.co.uk)

**Council Assets:**

The council leases land at Parc Calon Lan (Blaengarw/Pontycymer) from Bridgend County Borough Council. There is a Visitor Centre, toilet and car park on site.

**Finance & Accounts:**

Each year the council's accounts undertake an internal and external audit. In 2020/21 the council received an unqualified audit from the Auditor General for Wales who raised no concerns or issues with the council's accounting process and accounts. The full audit statement is published on the council's website and is dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The council's internal audit was carried out and again no concerns or issues were raised, this was dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

**Budget:**

The budget for 2021/22 includes the precept and other income from VAT reclaims, bank interest, refunds for footpath work and maintenance of the Community Path from Pontycymer up the valley under an Agency Agreement with Bridgend County Borough Council and the balance carried forward from the previous year which is split into general reserve and earmarked reserves. The full budget is published each year on the council's website. The council has maintained its precept at a constant level in recent years based on council tax band D. The Budget for the 2021/2022 year and the annual statement of accounts for the last audit which is for 2020/2021 are shown at the end of this document.

**Income:**

The council's main income is its precept - in 2021/22 this was £120,001.

### **Financial Donations:**

Included in its budget each year is a sum for financial donations to be used following receipt of requests from the community.

In 2021/22 the council donated £1,300 to the following:

- Bettws Café for the Mayor's Event
- Bridgend Carers Centre
- Children's Wales Air Ambulance
- Garw Valley Basketball Club
- Garw Tennis Club
- Pontycymer Men's Shed
- Urdd Cymru

### **Memberships and Representatives:**

The council maintains an annual membership of One Voice Wales, the Town and Community Council sector's voice which liaises with the Welsh Government. This membership ensures that the council's opinions on consultations by the Welsh Government is heard, it provides appropriate training for staff and councillors, including Code of Conduct training which is mandatory. It also gives the Clerk/council guidance on legislation and procedures and ensures the council is compliant with new legislation.

In addition there is an opportunity for a councillor to be a representative on the One Voice Wales area committee, the larger council's committee and the national conference.

The council is also represented by one of its councillors on the Bridgend County Borough Council Forum.

### **Policies and Guidelines:**

New policies are prepared and adopted at council and new process have been put in place to ensure the council is data compliant.

All the council's policies and guidelines are published on its website.

These include:

- Standing Orders
- Financial Regulations
- Complaints Procedure
- Vexacious Complaints Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Social Media Policy

Agendas, Minutes, Accounts and Contact Details are also available on the council's website.

### **Global Responsibility:**

The Council recycles its waste paper and ink and toner cartridges are disposed of responsibly. In addition, a programme of footpath maintenance and an agency agreement with Bridgend County Borough Council as well as environmental maintenance of trees and hedgerows and grass cutting and floral displays that encourage bees and aid the environment are a priority.

### **Welsh Language:**

The council's Clerk & RFO and one of its Councillors is a Welsh speaker and can respond to verbal and written communication.



### **Community Engagement:**

The council arranges children's activity schemes during the school holidays, children's events at Easter, Halloween and Christmas time and is mindful of the importance of Remembrance Sunday. The Chair and members attend Remembrance services within the Pontycymer ward and the local area. The council has good relationships with local organisations within the valley, V2C, BCBC and South Wales Police including the local PCSOs. The council also provides a Christmas display of decorations, lights and trees in all 4 wards and in 2021/2022 and each year tries to improve the provision.

### **Achievements in 2021/2022:**

- To provide a remembrance memorial and reflective area within each of the 4 wards. This was achieved with the installation of 4 remembrance benches, 1 in each ward.
- To improve the environmental provision within the Garw Valley. This was achieved with on-going maintenance in Parc Calon Lan floral display baskets, flower beds, grass cutting, footpath maintenance, weed spraying, tree and hedge maintenance. The council also agreed to take part in a litter education scheme called Love It, Don't Trash It, working in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council.
- To improve Parc Calon Lan. This was achieved by putting provision in the budget for the lakes at Pontycymer and Blaengarw to be cleared of pondweed and the reeds cut back every other year. In 2021/22 work was carried out to the lake in Blaengarw. Improvements were also made to the steps to the picnic area at Pontycymer lake and to the monument at Parc Calon Lan.
- To increase its children's activity scheme provision in 2021/2022 by increasing the budget provision for this activity.
- To design a new family walk leaflet. This was achieved through working in partnership with Ramblers Cymru.
- To improve the exterior of Bettws Life Centre to mirror the new schools opposite. This was achieved through working in partnership with Awen Cultural Trust and Bridgend County Borough Council and using match funding from all 3 organisations.
- To improve the second MTB trail.

### **Plans for 2022/2023:**

- To further improve the footpath network by working in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council by project managing and procuring footpath work to a footpath and culvert in Bettws.
- To further improve its provision of Christmas decorations and lights in the valley.
- To replace the four paths around the monument area in Parc Calon Lan once grant funding is obtained.
- To asset transfer Blaen Park/The Strand to the community council and improve the area with floral displays, new benches and bins and a commemorative plaque working in partnership with the local AS.
- To repair two wooden bridges in Parc Calon Lan in the Pontycymer lake area.
- To increase the provision of floral baskets in Llangeinor.