



Safer, vibrant, resilient

Abertillery & Llanhilleth
Community Council and
the Well-being of Future
Generations 2022-23



Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council's impact on the Well-being of Future Generations



The Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area is the poorest part¹ of the poorest borough² of the poorest nation in the United Kingdom³.

An area that was home to 32 collieries over a period of more than 170 years now has no major employer. Communities that were once defined by their shared work, shared religious observance and shared cultural and sporting pursuits now struggle to find a common identity.

While Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council has signed up enthusiastically to all of the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, its most pressing responsibilities are focused

on the well-being goals of protecting and rebuilding cohesive and socially-resilient communities. To these ends, the majority of the council's expenditure in 2022-23 was concentrated on the Blaenau Gwent well-being objectives of:

- Ensuring early years of future generations are healthy, happy, free from harm and ready to succeed;
- Creating safer communities; and
- Creating a vibrant area.

In total, nearly 95 percent of Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council's non-staff expenditure in 2022-23 was aimed at making a positive local impact on Wales's national well-being indicators.

¹ *Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation*, statswales.gov.wales, 2019

² *Regional gross disposable household income: local authorities/Wales*, ons.gov.uk, October 2022

³ *Average (median) gross weekly earnings by UK country*, statswales.gov.wales, December 2022

Cohesive communities

Building attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities

Safer communities

In 2019, Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council conducted a public survey, the responses to which demonstrated that its local communities wanted the council both to do more for children and young people and to address the issue of youth anti-social behaviour. The council subsequently invested heavily in two local initiatives that aim to confront apathy, disenchantment and unrest among our young people, opening up a dialogue with a sector of the community who had felt forgotten, neglected and tarred with the brush of negativity associated with anti-social behaviour.



Off The Streets

In 2022-23, the community council funded the work of detached youth teams working face-to-face with young people: the Off The Streets project in Llanhilleth and Swffryd; and the Blaenau Gwent Youth Team in Abertillery and Cwmtillery. The council's total investment in the projects during the financial year was £74,000 – more than forty percent of its total non-staff funding during the year.

Off The Streets saw a huge increase in the number of children and young people – from as young as three years of age up to eighteen-year-olds – attending its provision in 2022-23. During the year, the project remodelled its program to suit the community's needs, working, not just as youth workers, but also as play workers and community development officers, in order to facilitate early intervention and to provide preventative measures.



Engaging with young people

Off The Streets continued to build key partnerships with local police, schools, community centres, sports clubs and churches. The project's work focuses on reducing risk-taking behaviours, as well as working on skills such as listening and social interaction, mental health and well-being and community cohesion. Mindful of the material deprivation facing some of the project's attendees, it even feeds all children and young people at each session. The Blaenau Gwent Youth Team works through a multi-agency approach in addressing concerns and providing increased services for young people in order to tackle anti-social behaviour within Abertillery town centre and surrounding areas. The team was commissioned by the community council to provide a detached youth service for five evenings a week. The model not only complements existing provision, but also enhances opportunities to engage more young people who would not attend any youth provision, while also

ensuring a visible presence on the streets to act as a deterrent against anti-social behaviour.

Since the council began investing in this work, anti-social behaviour in the community council area has fallen dramatically by more than fifty percent.



Off The Streets

From having the highest levels of reported youth anti-social behaviour in Blaenau Gwent, by the end of 2022-23, the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area had the lowest in the borough⁴. Local Police Community Support Officers have also reported a visible difference in the behaviour of young people.

Well-connected communities

In 2022-23, Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council began a major piece of work to address the issue of social isolation in its communities. While loneliness is most often associated with the elderly, research by council officers revealed that social isolation driven by poverty disproportionately affects families with young children in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area. In

addition, issues such as mental health problems, disability, caring responsibilities and bereavement were found to often have a greater impact than age on loneliness within the area.

In a ground-breaking move, the community council brought together representatives from disparate clubs and community initiatives to propose the formation of a support network between initiatives that find themselves facilitating much-needed social interaction for their users, even if that was never the primary purpose of the group. Work has begun on establishing a database of such groups and the sharing of information that will enable them to refer their members and users to further clubs, societies and projects, thereby increasing participants' social engagement. The network includes clubs such as gardening and allotment societies, arts and craft groups, parent and toddler groups as well as community centres and special-interest groups.

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council also distributed major 'Loneliness Project' grants. The Ebbw Fach Community Group received funding to support its Men's Well-being Group that facilitates peer-to-peer support by bringing local men together through a shared interest in carpentry, handiwork, gardening and outdoor skills.



Six Bells Over-50s Club

Six Bells Community Centre was supported to host an over-50s club, a child-minding group, a slimming club and a gardening

⁴ Minutes Full Council 27 October 2021, abertilleryandllanhilleth-wcc.gov.uk

group that all include some members for whom the groups are their only social interaction. A major grant was provided for a National Childbirth Trust 'Bumps and Babies' Group in Llanhilleth enabling it to double its activities in the area for isolated young parents.



Bumps and Babies

The community council also funded the award-winning work of the Zion Miners Chapel in Llanhilleth that holds sessions for families affected by dementia and supports local refugees from Ukraine as well as holding a Friendship Club specifically targeted at local people who live alone. Funding was provided to lower the kerb outside Aberbeeg Community Centre in order to remove a physical barrier to wheelchair users and other local people with restricted mobility, thus enabling easy access for a sector of the local community that is disproportionately affected by social isolation.

In addition, Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council has worked to arrange and support major events that actively set out to bring local communities together and to facilitate social interaction around a shared experience.

The community council invested more than £12,000 in a Party in the Park event staged at the rugby club in Abertillery Park over the Platinum Jubilee weekend. A free event targeted at families with young children who might not be able to afford paid-for leisure activities, the event attracted hundreds of local people despite mixed weather. As well as providing energetic activities for children, the event showcased local musical talent alongside professional performers and offered a shop window for local community groups and societies.



Zion Miners Chapel

The council funded local Jubilee celebrations in Aberbeeg and Brynithel that brought the local community together and provided financial support to the inaugural Aber Rocks event that attracted a sell-out crowd of a thousand local young people.

The community council has a long-established close relationship with the community group Ffrindiau Tyleri and, again, supported the group's Winterfest, Springfest and Aberfest events that provide fairground rides and attractions to draw people to come together as a community in Abertillery town centre.



Party in the Park

Resilient communities

Supporting social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change

Economic resilience

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council has worked to strengthen its links with established community projects, providing support to ensure the resilience of vital safety nets in communities facing material deprivation.

The council provided grant funding to the Ebenezer Baptist Church Food Cupboard that not only supplies food parcels to struggling families but also offers 'pre-loved' school uniforms for children whose parents are finding it difficult to make ends meet.



Not only do the area's community centres provide a base for local special interest groups and societies, during the winter fuel price crisis, they were able to offer physical comfort. The community council provided major funding to support the replacement of radiators at Six Bells Community Centre and to pay for a modern, energy-efficient boiler to be installed at the William Powell Memorial Hall in Bournville.

Early-years

As well as its funding of two major youth projects, the council provided bespoke funding for projects that support the early-years development of future generations. These included Clwb Llan in Llanhilleth, which engages with local children aged 3-16 facing disadvantage to enable them to have access to sports, cultural, leisure and educational activities. It provides sessions after-school and during school holidays

aimed at raising aspirations, addressing specific needs, reducing isolation and enabling children to become more involved in their community.



Clwb Llan

The council also supported Abertillery's Allsorts Parent and Toddler Group. The group is run by qualified volunteers and relies on ad hoc charitable support. The council provided funding to replace broken toys and to purchase sensory equipment to stimulate the development of very young children and those with special needs.

Creating a vibrant area

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council continued its major investment in the natural environment through its on-going funding of the area's Town and Village in Bloom initiative.

The project has provided and maintained more than a hundred wooden planters and hanging baskets throughout the community council area and it gained an added dimension in 2022-23 with the launch of an initiative to encourage local groups to adopt floral displays in their neighbourhoods. Bespoke funding was provided to community groups in Brynithel, Gelli Crug, Aberbeeg and Cwmtillery to take over the care of their local planters with their displays often out-doing even those of the

professional Town and Village in Bloom contractor.



Town in Bloom

In Abertillery, well-known local author Neil Milkin showed another string to his bow when he used community council funding to transform a local patch of waste ground into a community floral display. Inspired by this, the council funded the attendance of one of its members at a one-day conference on 'Creating resilient spaces for nature' and began work in 2022-23 to investigate the possibility of adopting other unused parcels of land in the community council area for planting with wildflowers and other native species.

The council provided funding to Llanhilleth Tenants and Residents Association's 'Friends of Granny's Wood' project. The funding enabled the group to extend public access to the wood, to provide educational access for pupils of St Illtyd's School, to improve access for disabled people and to develop an off-road cycle track. Developed with advice from Blaenau Gwent County

Borough Council's Ecology and Bio-diversity Officers, the project aims to use green space and woodland to promote physical, psychological and social well-being. The funding also covered City & Guilds-accredited bush-cutting training.

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council has a long-standing tradition of helping its local communities to stage vibrant Christmas celebrations.



Christmas lights

The council provided total funding of nearly £18,000 to provide Christmas lights displays in communities throughout the community council area. This included thousands of pounds of extra funding to renew the lighting infrastructure in Llanhilleth to ensure that the village can continue to be illuminated at Christmas for years to come. The council also supplied hundreds of lanterns that were distributed to the children and families who came together to take part in the local community's Winterfest Christmas precession organised by Ffrindiau Tyleri in Abertillery.



Granny's Wood

A vibrant culture

Promoting and protecting the arts, sport and recreation

The area has boasted a strong sporting and musical culture for more than 150 years. In 2022-23, Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council worked to build social value partnerships with some of the area's most go-ahead sporting and cultural clubs and societies to help them develop as community hubs, broadening their impact on the wider community.

Sports and recreation

Once again, the community council was asked by Community Green Energy CIC to allocate a community grant fund of £35,000 arising from the company's Hafod y Dafal solar photovoltaic farm in Aberbeeg. The criteria set by the community council for Solar Farm Grants requires the funding to be allocated to community projects that are sustainable, have a lasting legacy for future generations, have a positive impact on the environment and are for wide community benefit.



Six Bells Tennis Club

In 2022-23, the funding allocated by the community council enabled two sporting clubs to extend the pivotal role that they play in their local communities. A grant of £20,000 enabled Six Bells Tennis Club to restore a dilapidated building next to the village's tennis courts into the award-winning Six Bells Park's first ever community activity space for use, not just by the tennis club, but by any local community group. Powered by solar panels and fitted with a rainwater recycling

system, the timer-framed, fully-insulated structure is integrated with the park's refreshment kiosk area that has long been an intergenerational mixing point between children and parents and elderly visitors to the park. The tennis club has been able to extend its impact beyond the immediate area as the new building means that it is now able to host diverse school groups.



Abertillery BG RFC

The tennis club has since gone on to expand its central role within the community by voluntarily taking over (with financial help from Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council) the thankless task of running Six Bells Park's public toilets.

A Solar Farm Grant of £15,000 enabled Abertillery BG RFC to convert an unused, overgrown, waste area into a covered, outdoor area seating area complete with energy-efficient LED lighting and wooden decking within Abertillery Park – a beautiful community resource in Cwmtillery, among the ten percent most-deprived wards in Wales. The facility has enabled the rugby club to extend the facilities it offers as a venue to local charity and voluntary groups and to expand the range of community events staged at the park. In addition to the community council-funded Party in the Park, the club has now played host to a charity event in conjunction with Abertillery and Blaina Rotary Club to raise funds for Motor Neuron Disease, the Slugfest charity

punk and rock weekend and family-oriented events such as the Welsh Rugby Union's 'Little Legends' initiative.



Abertillery Excelsiors Youth FC

In addition, the Solar Farm Grant enabled the club to tidy and remove rubbish from a stretch of the Ebbw Fach river and to undertake the planting of a wildflower meadow.

Smaller sports clubs also benefited from grant funding from Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council including Abertillery Excelsiors Youth FC who were supported to purchase first aid equipment for each of the club's ten age-group teams.

The arts

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council continued its patronage of local community arts. The community council-funded Party in the Park showcased the talents of local performers including

members of the Abertillery Youth Drama and Musical Society, which also received funding to support the staging of a major production at Abertillery's Metropole Cultural and Conference Centre. The community council also supported a community production at The Met by the Abertillery Amateur Dramatic and Music Society as well as providing grant funding to smaller groups such as Six Bells Crafts. The council also continued its support for the Abertillery Rock and Blues Festival.



Abertillery Rock & Blues Festival

In addition, the community council organised and funded two major charity concerts in Abertillery in 2022-23 featuring the town's choirs, brass band and young performers from its musical societies. The events raised hundreds of pounds for the work of the Stroke Association in the Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council area.



Abertillery Youth Drama & Music Society

Global responsibility

Making a positive contribution to global well-being

In 2022-23, the community council adopted two major initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of its activities on the global environment. Firstly, the community council adopted a single-use plastics policy that obliges officers to select non-single use plastic alternatives, as far as is reasonably practicable, when procuring products (e.g., office supplies, furniture etc) or services for the council. The council also adopted a policy for paperless meetings aimed at reducing the annual energy costs of council meetings by more 60,000 watt-hours.

Abertillery and Llanhilleth Community Council also began work on exploring the opportunities for a number of volunteer-led environmental projects in its local communities. A major site meeting was conducted with officers and councillors from Blaenau Gwent County Borough



Abertillery mural

Council to investigate the feasibility of a joint project to save and restore a unique mosaic mural depicting Abertillery's industrial and cultural past and to reopen the long-overgrown 'Green Walk' public path linking the mural to the town.

