

BCBC Councillor's Annual Report

Councillor Heidi Bennett

Ward: Pen-y-fai

Party: Welsh Labour and Cooperative

This report identifies my key activities during the year ending **May 2024**. It is provided for the information of all constituents and for no other purpose. The views expressed in this report are those of the Councillor and do not necessarily reflect the views of Bridgend County Borough Council.

Role & Responsibilities

From May 2023 to 2024 I served on 8 committees.

I was a member of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny, Development Control, Licensing Committee and sub-committee B, Licensing Act 2003 committee and sub-committee B, Town and Community Council Forum, and I serve as Chair of the Appeals Panel. This is in addition to monthly full council.

During this time, I actively participated in 36 committee meetings with 100% attendance rate. My committee activity serves the strategic, scrutiny and regulatory functions of Council. However equally, if not more importantly, is the activity I undertook in my ward for constituents which is outlined below.

Being a member of regulatory committee and to enable me to fulfil my role, I have completed all mandatory training. In terms of member development sessions, on subjects or issues where I have not already had training through other sources, I take advantage of the opportunities that add knowledge and value to my role.

Further information can be found by using this link:

[Councillor details - Councillor Heidi Bennett - Bridgend County Borough Council](#)

Constituency Activity

I held several local community advice surgery sessions actively engaging with residents and resolving issues personal to them. I periodically door knock to connect to residents too.

I received over 200 interactions and queries via email, telephone calls, social media and surgery sessions. Not all issues fell within the powers/remit of BCBC, but regardless of this I responded to help resolve issues wherever possible, and represented and signposted residents wherever appropriate using my local knowledge of expert organisations that provide swift assistance at the point of contact. Additionally, I submitted a further 85 formal case work reports and referrals.

Not all responses to casework have been completed. However, I assisted with a wide range of issues, some of which followed on from the previous year including: school parking issues and lack of patrol, engaging in the 20mph zoning of the village and tackling speed issues, liaising with PCSO's on these and other anti-social behaviour issues, assisting with delayed support payments to refugee hosts, fly tipping and housing issues as well as the problem of no bus service for the village.

I have also submitted reports around balancing biodiversity development and green space maintenance, missed or delayed waste collections, blocked culverts, flooding, 'springs' and drain repairs, replacement benches, road resurfacing, tree maintenance, playground repairs and potholes, to name but a few.

I have also linked residents into local planning applications, (in the ward or impacting on the ward), and provided resident observations, concerns and feedback to planning Officers and Committee where appropriate.

I formally presented to Development Control Committee on one specific development in Pen-y-Fai and Court Colman which resulted in clear restrictions and conditions being placed to counteract the concerns residents raised.

Initiatives and Special Activities

Having inputted into the introduction of 20mph roads into the village to tackle speeding issues, I continue to connect to Go Safe Wales where drivers breach this.

I worked with the school and Newcastle Higher Community Council (NHCC) to provide road safety signs to raise awareness to vehicles approaching the school and the need for caution for pupil safety. I held site visits with highways officers to look at road safety at the school and improvements are due to be made.

I have advocated for better accessibility for those with mobility issues and the 'joining up' of dropped kerbs throughout the village and replacement of inaccessible gates to our green spaces (with NHCC).

I also met with BCBC officers in relation to moving closer to achieving a safe crossing point over the A4061 as part of an active travel route which will move to public engagement in the coming year.

Working with the BCBC climate change team, I hope to get support for developing our green spaces further through a pilot plan and scheme, looking at things such as tree planting, biodiversity corridors and meadowlands balanced with well maintained spaces to facilitate play.

Checking priorities, performance and communication with residents is important to make sure I am properly representing my area. I undertook a 'snapshot' anonymised appraisal questionnaire with residents to garner opinions on my performance to seek ways to improve, and to determine residents key priorities. Being accountable is also important to me and not everyone is online, so I also delivered my annual newsletter to households to highlight work I've been involved with and my voting record.

Other Activities/Issues

I am a member of Pen-y-fai Village Community Association (PVCA) and Newcastle Higher Community Council and connect to a number of local volunteer and community groups. I work collaboratively with residents and community councillors to progress initiatives such as hanging baskets, christmas lights, community planting, monthly volunteer litter picks, fetes and celebrations and most recently, the launch of the pop-up tearoom where I host my monthly surgery sessions.

I also had additional responsibilities as Chair of Finance on Newcastle Higher Community Council and was lead Councillor supporting the new clerk with a move to a new, accessible website to improve information flow to residents.

I personally maintain a social media presence which strives to keep the community up to date on local, regional and national news.

I endeavour to be easily accessible to residents via 1-2-1 surgeries, phone, text, post, email, Facebook direct messaging and WhatsApp and aim to respond to enquiries within 48 hours.

Councillor: *Heidi Bennett*

Date: 19/06/2024