

ANNUAL REPORT

MAY 2014 - MAY 2015



Councillor Keith Reynolds

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ELECTORAL WARD: Aberbargoed

PARTY: Labour

PROFILE:

Leader of Council

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Council

Cabinet

Appointments Committee (Chief Officer Related Posts/Heads of Service)

SUBCOMMITTEES/WORKING PARTIES/PANELS

Bargoed Town Centre Management Group

Joint Consultative Committee

NNDR Committee

OUTSIDE BODIES AND ASSOCIATIONS

Welsh Local Government Association

Consortium of Local Authorities Wales (CLAW)

Local Government Association

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Member of the Governing Body of Aberbargoed Primary School

ATTENDANCE

From May 2014 to May 2015 my attendance at Council meetings was as follows:

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>No. Attended</u>	<u>No. Held</u>
Appointments Committee	2	2
Bargoed Town Centre Management Group	1	3
Cabinet	24	26
Council	12	12
Joint Consultative Committee	2	3
Non-Domestic Rate Payers Committee	0	1

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

I undertook the following training and development seminars and courses: -

Bargoed Town Centre Management Group (Annual)
 Microsoft Upgrade IT Training
 Constitution (Mandatory)
 Information Governance (Mandatory)
 Appointments (Mandatory)
 Pensions/Compensation (Mandatory)
 Medium Term Financial Plan (Seminar) (x2)
 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (Seminar)
 Caerphilly Collection Services (Seminar)
 20mph Zones (Seminar)
 Roles and Responsibilities of Cabinet Members (Recommended)
 Webcasting
 Performance Objectives

ACTIVITY AS LEADER OF COUNCIL

As Leader of the Council, I am responsible for developing and providing the strategic direction and overall policy of the Council. I am assisted by the Deputy Leaders, other Cabinet Members and Officers and have to ensure that all elements of the Community and Corporate Plans are enacted, monitored and reviewed. As the key spokesperson for the Council, I have to develop good relationships with all of the Council's partners.

We started this year by publishing the Council's Improvement Plan, which is a key strategic document. The six Improvement Objectives are key as they help keep the organisation focused on specific goals and outcome areas.

There have been a number of successes in many areas over the past year, such as the results of the Welsh Government's National Survey for Wales which shows Caerphilly came top out of all 22 authorities, in the list of how satisfied local residents were with the services provided by their local council and in the question as to how well people felt they were kept informed by their local authority.

Regeneration and job creation remains a priority and we have made particular progress this year with the following schemes; Newbridge town centre regeneration scheme, the move of the Contact Centre into the former Woolworth building in Bargoed, the park and ride scheme in Rhymney and the Vibrant and Viable Places project in Rhymney, which had involved the

development of a multi-agency resource centre in the Hafod Deg Centre and environmental improvements at Rowan Place.

I have in recent months taken part in a number of discussions with Leaders in South East Wales over the future of the Cardiff Capital region. These have included the possibility of a City Deal for the region which could attract up to £1billion of investment in infrastructure and economic development initiatives. This has the potential to be one of the fastest growing local economies in Wales and we need to do everything we can to make that happen.

The Authority has continued to invest in school buildings through the 21st Century Schools Programme and almost completed construction works at the Gwyndy site, part of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. The design and tendering works for the new Islwyn West Comprehensive School, which is to be built on part of the reclaimed Oakdale Colliery site is almost finalised and there are plans to build a new primary school to replace the Abertyswg and Pontlottyn Primary Schools. Investment continues in projects to help parents support their children from an early age and the new Early Years Centre was opened in Risca earlier this year.

One of the biggest new projects this year was in leisure, with the opening of the new Centre for Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach. This centre has proved a great success and has already, in one year, welcomed over 10,000 people through the door. Because of the quality and exceptionally high standard of the facilities, this centre has attracted many televised matches and several international games in both soccer and rugby. It is putting Caerphilly County Borough on the map and giving our local young people access to facilities that are truly world class.

We continue to be one of the highest performing authorities in Wales in terms of recycling this year. Targets for recycling rates are increasing and the strategy is under review. We are continuing, subject to financial restraints imposed, with numerous road and transport improvements. These include improvements to the traffic light system at the busy junction in Crumlin, Pwllypant roundabout in Caerphilly and to an improved Park and Ride Scheme in Ystrad Mynach.

On Governance, we have put a huge effort into reviewing and updating our decision making and democratic process over the past year. No authority in the country can have done more in this field over the past 18 months and I believe we have emerged from this as a much stronger council. We had the results from the Wales Audit Office follow-up Inspection of Corporate Governance which confirmed this fact. We are now working on our Scrutiny Review to further improve the accountability and effectiveness.

Poverty and Welfare Reform is another area of great concern and an Anti-Poverty Strategy has been agreed, which will identify ways to address the issue. I went on a tour of Lansbury Park with local Members and local residents, a Project Group has now been established to look at all the elements of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - incomes, education, crime and so on. Other wards such as Twyn Carno, which also ranked poorly in the index, will also be considered.

Housing remains one of the highest priorities and I was pleased to announce that the pace of implementation of the £200 million plus investment in our 10,000 council homes has increased, although there are still challenges to meet the demanding targets for completion by 2020.

We have also looked at ways to ensure that Members are fully equipped to undertake their roles as effectively as possible and have been successful in renewing our WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development status. In particular, I have recognised that Senior Members, including Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs, have an important role in the authority and I have introduced a Performance Development Review Procedure for Senior Members and a bespoke training programme in conjunction with the WLGA which involves in-depth portfolios and 6 Saturday workshops.

The current financial situation is a difficult one, with the Authority needing to make a further £25 million worth of savings over the next 2 years. There will be difficult decisions to be made and a requirement for innovative solutions in some areas, to enable services for the public to be protected. Despite this threatening financial backdrop, I believe that we are better placed than most to meet this challenge. I firmly believe that with our dedicated and talented workforce and the continued commitment of members and officers, we can meet these challenges head on and continue to deliver first class, value for money services to the residents of Caerphilly County Borough.

CONSTITUENCY ACTIVITY

I do not hold surgeries my constituents prefer to contact me by telephone and email.

I attended quarterly meetings with the Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Having worked to secure funding for the Skate Park for the young people of the area we are now looking forward to its official opening in June 2015.

I continue to provide ongoing advice and support to residents and tenants regard the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act.

I am pleased to able to confirm that the new Fire Station is now fully operational and I was happy to attend its official opening. I am pleased to say that this incorporates a conference room facility for community use.

I also meet regularly with Assembly Members, Members of Parliament, the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding Caerphilly County Borough priorities.