Name: Sara Jones  
Ward: Llanover  
Electorate:  
Reporting Year: 2013/14

1. **Appointment to Outside Bodies**

I am a member of the **Community Chest Panel** which provides grants to local community groups looking to support sports projects. Whilst I am not a Community Councillor I regularly attend the **Llanover Community Council** and **Llanarth Fawr Community Council** meetings.

2. **Select Committees**

In 2013/14 I sat on the **Children and Young People Select Committee** and the **Economy and Development Select Committee**. Both of these groups play a key role in scrutinising the work of the Executive in the relevant areas. It is our role as Members to challenge and support the work of the Council through the democratic function of select committees.

The **Children and Young People Committee** has had a crucial role in ensuring that we monitor the progress of our directorate following the publication of the Estyn report in 2013. We have regularly scrutinised the Directorate Lead and our Cabinet Member on the direction we are facing in terms of progress made through our Post Estyn Inspection Progress Plan. As well as the regular budget scrutiny and our statutory reporting on performance and risk we have examined a number of other key policy and monitoring areas including our Youth Offer, **21st Century Schools** and placements for **Looked After Children**.

The **Economy and Development Committee** has had a busy year with a number of key areas to scrutinise as well as facing real pressure given the cuts in our local government funding imposed by Welsh Government. It is this directorate that has faced some of the heaviest cuts and we have looked at the proposals made by our Cabinet, following consultation with the public, in great detail. As well as our budget, performance and risk monitoring we have looked in close detail at leisure services, car parking and tourism and we have scrutinised SRS, CMC2 and broadband infrastructure in Monmouthshire.

3. **Constituency Matters**

It has been another busy year in the Llanover ward and I’ve dealt with a number of issues that residents have faced in relation to Council services and wider. Without listing all of the areas I have dealt with I have picked out some of the areas which I have received the most correspondence over:

**Broadband** – I’ve had a great deal of correspondence from residents over issues they have faced with broadband connectivity. This is a real problem for us in our rural locality, particularly given the rise of people who need access to the internet for their business, to work from home or to simply stay in touch with family and friends. I’ve worked with Internet Service Providers to provide support where there is an issue and I am calling on the Welsh Government to ensure Monmouthshire gets as much coverage as possible as a consequence of the rollout of Superfast Cymru.

**Flooding** – Many residents were impacted by flooding earlier in the year and I saw first-hand some of the disastrous consequences of flooding in peoples’ homes. I’ve been working closely with our
MCC team to ensure that they are made aware of the issues of flooding and for us to seek out a positive outcome. I’ve also identified to our highways team where flooding on roads has caused issues, particularly in relation to the increase in potholes and where drains need clearing.

Planning – Planning has been an issue for many residents and I’ve worked closely with our officers on various applications. By far the largest application in terms of correspondence that I have received was in relation to the solar park proposal at Llanvapley which drew a great deal of contact from residents to the Council’s planning department and to myself (and Councillor David Jones) as the local member. The appeal for this application to the Planning Inspectorate will be in August.

Highways – Given the rurality of our ward road surfacing and potholes are issues which I have a large deal of correspondence over. I’ve worked closely with our MCC team to ensure that concerns are logged and dealt with promptly and I’ve been out of site visits on numerous occasions with local residents, the community council and with our officers. The issue of speeding on the B4598 continues to dominate my inbox. We’ve made progress in terms of a 40mph limit outside Llanfair Kilgeddin School. I submitted a petition on behalf of residents asking for a speed limit of 50mph across the B4598 – this is currently being consulted on between the police and MCC. The community have recently become the first in Wales to sign up to the Community Speed Watch scheme, a fantastic scheme which has a great deal of support in the community.

4. Member of other Committees

I sit on the Bryn y Cwm Committee which is an area Committee looking at local issues within that locality. This Committee moves around wards and we’ve met in Llanfair Kilgeddin on a couple of occasions. One of the key areas of work has been examining the Whole Plan Plan. I also sit on the Democratic Services Committee which is a committee that meets on a 6 weekly basis and was set up under the Local Government Measure 2011. I was a member of the Review of Boundaries committee which has been looking at ward boundaries in relation to community council areas. I am also the Bryn y Cwm Area Domestic Abuse Champion and I was chair of the development group which examined progress against our action plan.

5. Additional Comments

2013/14 has been a busy year, as Councillors we’ve had to agree some difficult decisions predominantly on how we are going to manage the budget cuts that have been imposed on us and also, in November, approving the Local Development Plan. With the recent Williams Commission report, local government faces a somewhat uncertain future in terms of how it will look in the future with reform being a given.

I’ve enjoyed working with the community to support them and offer guidance and help on issues they face. Given the size of my ward in terms of geographical area it is not possible for me to regularly do door-to-door contact; as such I am holding monthly ward surgeries with Cllr Penny Jones of neighbouring ward Raglan. I also use twitter and facebook to try and raise awareness and connect with residents.

Finally, one of my personal highlights of the year has been being appointed a Diversity Champion by the Welsh Local Government Minister. I am committed to working to try and support those from under-represented groups to get engaged in the local politics.