Vale of Glamorgan Council
Service Plan 2016-2020

Delivering our vision for the Vale of Glamorgan

'Strong communities with a bright future'

Service Area	Democratic Services
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Director	**Rob Thomas** Managing Director
Cabinet Member	**Cllr. Neil Moore** Cabinet Member – Corporate Resources
Date signed off	12 April 2016

1. Introduction

Democratic Services forms part of the Managing Director and Resources Directorate. The Division comprises three distinct service elements:

- Democratic and Scrutiny Services
- Registration Service
- Freedom of Information / Record Management / Land Charges.

1.1 About our Service – Democratic Services

Democratic Services is responsible for developing and supporting effective decision-making processes and Scrutiny and committee arrangements and providing advice and support for elected Members, that includes the Council's Constitution, Members' Code of Conduct and Member Development. The service is also responsible for the provision Registration Services for births, death, marriages and civil partnerships.

Our broad functions are:
- Provision of a range of services relating to the Council's decision-making processes
- Provision of advice, guidance and support to develop the Council's Scrutiny and Committee Services functions and to ensure that decision-making is transparent and accessible
- Provision of a wide range of Scrutiny support, including undertaking Task and Finish Reviews, co-ordination of Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes, preparation of the Annual Reports to Council, development of guidance notes and protocols and implementation of Scrutiny Action Plans
- Provision of advice in respect of the Council's Constitution, Codes of Conduct and Register of Interests to elected Members, all Directorates and to Town and Community Councils
- Reviewing / delivering / facilitating the Council's Member Development Strategy and Member Development Programme, including training in respect of the Council's Scrutiny function and other areas relating to the Council's governance arrangements
- Responsibility for servicing independent bodies such as School Admissions Panels and the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum

- Registrations of Births, Deaths, Still-births, Marriage, Civil Partnerships, Conversions and Citizenships
- Issuing of copy certificates for all of the above type registrations.
- Taking the legal notice of Marriages or Civil Partnerships
- Recording and maintaining records of all religious marriages
- Provision of Tell Us Once service
- Carrying out of Celebratory Services, e.g. Renewal of Vows, Naming Ceremonies

- Dealing with Access to Information requests
- Provision of corporate Records Management service
- Provision of Land Charges service

1.2 The Purpose of Our Service Plan

This plan identifies how we will contribute towards achieving the Council's vision – **'Strong Communities with a bright future'**.

Our service plan outlines our key priorities for the next four years and how we will manage our resources to deliver these. The plan gives an overview of our service, what we aim to achieve, why this is important, how we will achieve it, how we will monitor progress and what success will look like.

It is important that as a Council we have shared values and our service is committed to delivering its priorities within the context of the Council's core values:

- **Ambitious:** Forward thinking, embracing new styles of working and investing in our future.
- **Open:** Open to different ideas and being accountable for the decisions we take.
- **Together:** Working together as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services.
- **Proud:** Proud of the Vale of Glamorgan: proud to service our communities and to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Our Council's priorities are contained in the Corporate Plan 2016-20 and are expressed as well-being outcomes and objectives. These have been decided upon following consultation with key stakeholders including citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan. Our well-being outcomes and objectives are:

Well-Being Outcome	An Inclusive and Safe Vale	An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale	An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale	An Active and Healthy Vale
Well-Being Objective	Reducing poverty and social exclusion	Promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment.	Raising overall standards of achievement.	Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
Well-Being Objective	Providing decent homes and safe communities	Promoting sustainable development and protecting our environment.	Valuing culture and diversity	Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living.

The well-being objectives illustrate the contribution Council services will make to achieving the Well-being Goals for Wales. The Well-being Goals have been established to ensure all relevant bodies in Wales are working towards the same vision as part of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Act is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act is intended to make public bodies think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach. The contribution our service will make to the well-being goals is highlighted throughout our service plan.

1.3 Developing Our Plan

Our service plan is informed by and reflects the environment within which our service operates. As well as contributing to the well-being outcomes and objectives from our Corporate Plan, our service has taken the following into consideration when drafting our Plan:

- The Directorate's Annual Self-Assessment which provides an overall position statement for the year based on specific issues relating to performance, customer experience, and the use of resources (workforce, financial, ICT and assets);
- Priorities identified in our Corporate Improvement Action Plan (as part of our annual self-assessment).

- Our budget, including planned service savings and efficiencies and the implementation of the Council's Reshaping Services Change Programme;
- Delivery of the Scrutiny Action Plan associated with the *Wales Audit Office's "Good Scrutiny? Good* Question!" Review 2014.
- Taking into account implications for Scrutiny as a result of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the proposed Local Government Bill.
- Our planning arrangements for the Welsh Local Authority elections (e.g. in terms of preparation of a Candidates' Guide, initial elected Member induction and ongoing Member Development).
- Findings from Internal Audit reports on Data Sharing and Declarations of Members' Interests.
- Taking into account any learning from complaints and or the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- Taking into account any national or regional guidance from the General Register Office (GRO).

2. Our Priorities for 2016-20

2.1 Corporate Plan Priorities

Our service will take the actions outlined below to contribute to the Well-being outcomes and objectives during 2016/17.

Well-being outcome	Well-being objective	Ref	Action	During 2016/17 we will:
WO3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale	O6: Valuing culture and diversity	AC12	Implementing the Welsh Language Standards to improve access to services and information. (2019/20)	Produce Council and Committee agendas in Welsh. Facilitate arrangements for the use of Welsh language at meetings as and when required.

Appendix A contains the detailed plan which illustrates the actions we will undertake in the coming year to deliver our priorities. The action plan includes information relating to the way we will measure performance against our targets and the resources we will deploy.

2.2 Integrated Planning Priorities

Our service is committed to maximising the use of resources so that we can deliver sustainable and cost-effective services that best meet people's needs. In order to achieve this, we have identified any that will support us to deliver the key outcomes identified in the Corporate Plan. The key area of focus for our service will be:

Ref	Action	During 2016/17 we will:
CP1	Deliver the Council's transformational change programme, Reshaping Services to enable it to meet the future needs of citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan within the context of unprecedented financial challenges. (2019/20)	Undertake the preparatory work to ensure the service contributes to finding the £1.4m savings required from the Resources Directorate in 2017/2018. (Tranche 2) Support delivery of the Corporate work stream projects involving Town and Community Councils.
CP2	Align the workforce plan to the Reshaping Services strategy ensuring staff have the necessary skills and training to adapt to the changes in how services are planned and delivered.	Review and strengthen the performance management and support arrangements in relation to sickness absence within the service. Deliver our key workforce development priorities for the coming year as outlined in Appendix B (WDS1-WDS4).
CP7	Review the current arrangements to support effective scrutiny and facilitate more robust	Implement a joint approach to work programme planning and management to

	challenge and improved accountability. (2016/17)	promote better alignment between Cabinet and Scrutiny business. Implement a framework in relation to setting out the roles, responsibilities and relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny Members. Undertake a restructure of Scrutiny Committees with a more holistic/outcome focussed remit aligned to the Corporate Plan. Implement joint Scrutiny arrangements for the regionalisation of Regulatory Services.

Appendix B contains the detailed plan which illustrates the enabling actions we will undertake in the coming year to deliver our priorities. The action plan includes information relating to how we will maximise our key resources through integrated planning in order to achieve our priorities.

3. How We Work & Our Resources

The following section sets out how we will manage our resources to achieve the actions in our service plan and support our service.

3.1 Sustainable Development

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act puts in place a 'sustainable development principle' which tells organisations how to go about meeting their duty under the Act:

"You must act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, by taking account of the sustainable development principle".

The sustainable development principle means considering how actions are taken to support continuous improvement by:

* Looking to the **long term** – for us this means planning for the future and taking a strategic approach to ensure services are sustainable and that we understand the future need and demand for services.
* Taking an **integrated** approach – for us this means thinking about the needs of our customers and working with our partners.
* **Involving** the population in decisions – for us this means engaging with our residents and customers, including the business community and ensuring that we are listening to a wide range of views to inform our thinking.
* Working in a **collaborative** way – for us this means recognising we can achieve more and deliver better services by working as part of a team, for example by working with the Third Sector, Town and Community Councils and neighbouring authorities.

- Understanding the root causes of issues and **preventing** them – for us this means being proactive in our thinking and understanding the need to tackle problems at source for example by undertaking needs assessments to inform our priorities.

These considerations are reflected in the actions we will take as a service to deliver the Council's priorities.

3.2 Integrated Planning – Managing Our Resources

The following provides a summary of the key priorities for the coming year. The following information has been taken from existing reports, including our Workforce Plan 2016-20, sickness absence and staff turnover reports, budget reports and the service Asset Management Plan.

Workforce Development

Key Service Statistics 2014/15					
Average headcount 2014/15	FTE 2014/15	Average days sick		Average days sickness per FTE	Turnover (no of leavers)	PDR completion rate (%)
		Long term	Short term			
20.5	20.18	0.67	2.43	3.10	1	100

As at 9th March 2016, 100% of Personal Development Reviews for Democratic Services have been completed

As at January 2016, the service reported an average sickness absence rate of 10.14 days per employee against an annual target of 7.5 days. Whilst short term sickness absence improved, long term sickness absence increased to 8.53 days. In line with corporate direction we will continue to review and strengthen the performance management and support arrangements in relation to sickness absence within the service.

It is important for us that we continue to maintain and develop the workforce necessary to meet future service needs, both in terms of the numbers employed and the skills and competency required of those employees. It remains a priority for Democratic Services to continue to support staff development and succession planning, despite the pressures of budget and staffing reductions. Our key workforce development priorities for the coming year are:

- Building resilience in our workforce through effective succession planning and (in the case of the Registration Service) ongoing recruitment of relief staff over the next few years to manage the challenges and changes we face in a flexible and sustainable manner;
- Putting in place effective structures, processes and practices to support a flexible workforce to provide the strength and resilience needed to meet the ongoing changes. Reducing (removing) bureaucracy will help support us to make these radical changes;
- Focusing on role flexibility in light of a reduction in staff numbers with an increased emphasis on learning and development, innovation, improved performance and staff engagement;
- Putting in place succession planning to address issues associated with an ageing workforce and reliance on small numbers of key staff;
- Shifting towards developing new skillset/competencies within teams; and

- Embedding a new culture that better supports the wider change programme (Reshaping Services agenda) and enables our staff to develop a renewed sense of corporate identity.

ICT

In line with Corporate direction we continue to use ICT to work smarter and more flexibly. Our significant projects for the coming year are:

- Increasing mobile/agile working across the service through the use of tablets and SMART phones in order to access emails and documentation as well as continuing to utilise home working; and
- Focusing on promoting sustainable IT usage by using technology that uses less space and power.
- Implementing a Land Charges system that will improve interface and integration across Directorates, whilst making savings.
- Pilot project for Hybrid Mail solution.

Finance

The net revenue budget for our service area for 2016/17 is £454,000. This net cost reflects the income generated within the Registration Service and the Land Charges service. Over the following three years, the service is required to deliver the following savings:

Scheme	2016/17 (£000)	2017/18 (£000)	2018/19 (£000)	Total (£000)
Registration Service - review of income and expenditure.	13	0	0	13
Land Charge fee.	10	0	0	10
Reshaping Services – Tranche 2 savings for Resources Directorate		*1,400*		*1,400*
Total	**23**	**1400**	**0**	**1,423**

Italicised figures indicate savings targets that have been set for the whole directorate in which this service area is based.

Agreed savings performance targets will be monitored quarterly from Q1 2016 as part of new corporate health reporting arrangements.

Assets

In line with the Corporate Strategy, we are focussing on ensuring the suitability and sufficiency of our assets to meet service and corporate objectives by targeting any underperforming assets; reducing the amount of accommodation used to deliver services; and identifying opportunities to provide multiple service delivery from an asset (co-location). Our key areas of focus for 2016/17 are:

- The Space project which will have a significant impact on staff movement over the coming year, with relocation of staff and reduction in the amount of accommodation used to deliver services.

Procurement

In line with corporate guidance we are committed to promoting effective procurement using innovative, sustainable and modern practices to deliver value for money, effect savings and contribute to the achievement of corporate well-being outcomes. Our significant projects for the coming year are:

- Procuring and implementing a new Land Charges system
- Procurement of new downstream Postal Services provider
- Pilot project for Hybrid Mail solution.

Consultation and Engagement

We proactively engage with our key stakeholders with a particular focus on working closely with Elected Members as well as our residents. Highlighted below are our planned activities for the coming year.

Consultation Activity Planned 2016/17	Brief Description of the Purpose of the Consultation
Consultation with Group Leaders and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen on the implementation of new Scrutiny Committee Structure and the development of a new Performance Management Framework for the Council.	To enable Elected Members to guide and inform the implementation of the new Scrutiny Committee structure and the development of a Performance Management approach that is more outcome-focused and better aligned to our new Corporate Plan 2016-20.
Undertake consultation with Town and Community Councils as part of the Reshaping Services agenda.	To establish the level of interest and capacity/ support for the transfer of services to Town and Community Councils.
Consultation with members of the public who have participated (public speaking) at Scrutiny and Planning Committees.	To understand the customer experience and impact of the new public speaking protocol and to identify any aspects of the protocol that require improvement.

Collaboration and Partnerships

We continue to explore and promote opportunities for working collaboratively locally and regionally in order to deliver improved services for customers and deliver savings. Highlighted below are our planned activities for the coming year.

Activity Planned 2016/17	Brief Description of the Purpose and intended outcomes from the Partnership/ Collaborative Activity	Governance Arrangements and Details of Partners
Joint Scrutiny of the Shared Regulatory Service.	To explore and develop joint scrutiny arrangements for the Shared Regulatory Service.	Cardiff and Bridgend Councils.

Risk Evaluation

Highlighted below are our key risks as a service over the coming year. In identifying these risks we have also shown how we plan to manage them.

Risk	Likelihood score	Impact score	Mitigating controls
Reduction in experience, service knowledge and resilience as a result of staff retirements.	4	2	A strategic approach to managing budget reductions will be undertaken to ensure that the necessary organisational change is supported and achieved. Implementation of the Workforce Plan.

Inability to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff in key areas.	2	2	Development and implementation of the Workforce Plan. Greater emphasis on recruitment of multi-disciplinary staff who have a wide range of skills to meet the evolving needs of the Council.
Risk of not having the skill base to deliver the Reshaping Services agenda.	2	2	Strong and effective programme and project management with realistic goals. Work with external support where the skill base is not available and ensure that there is effective knowledge transfer to equip staff. Implementation of staff development initiatives e.g. Leadership Cafe, Management Competency Framework.
Inability to deliver the Welsh Language Standards and associated fines and reputational damage for non-achievement.	2	2	Continue to raise awareness amongst staff and Members around the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards. A corporate action plan is in place to support us in complying with the Welsh Language Standards Scheme and an annual monitoring report is produced to assess progress in its implementation.

Scoring service risks	
Likelihood score	Refers to how likely it is that the risk will occur, that is, the probability of the risk happening. The scoring ranges between 1 and 4, with 1 being very unlikely, 2 - possible, 3 - probable and 4 being almost certain to happen or has already happened.
Impact score	Refers to what the impact would be if the risk occurred. Again the scoring ranges between 1 and 4, with 1 being low, 2 - medium, 3 - high and 4 being catastrophic. Impact would include things such as financial costs, public wellbeing, environmental/ social impact, damage to reputation, health and safety etc.

Appendix B contains the detailed plan which illustrates the enabling actions we will undertake in the coming year to deliver our priorities. The action plan includes information relating to how we will maximise our key resources through integrated planning in order to achieve our priorities.

Democratic Services Action Plan 2016/17

Well-being Outcome 3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale	Objective 6: Valuing culture and diversity

Well-being goals	A Resilient Wales	A Healthier Wales	A More Equal Wales	A Wales of Cohesive Communities	A Wales of Vibrant Culture & Thriving Welsh Language	A Prosperous Wales	A Globally Responsible Wales

Our ways of working	Long term	Integrated	Involving	Collaborative	Preventing

Ref	Action	Outcome & key milestones 2016/17	KPI (where relevant)	Officer responsible	Start date	Finish date	Resources required
AC12 RDS1	Produce Council and Committee agendas in Welsh.	Welsh Language Standards relevant to the service area are met.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	April 2016	Cost of any external translation provision will need to be met.
AC12 RDS2	Facilitate arrangements for the use of Welsh language at meetings as and when required.	Welsh Language Standards relevant to the service area are met.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	April 2016	Cost of any external translation provision will need to be met.

Appendix B

Integrated Planning

Our ways of working	Long term	Integrated	Involving	Collaborative	Preventing

Ref	Action	Outcome & key milestones 2016/17	KPI (where relevant)	Officer responsible	Start date	Finish date	Resources required
CP1	Undertake the preparatory work to ensure the service contributes to finding the £1.4m savings required from the Resources Directorate in 2017/2018. (Tranche 2).	Proposals for making the required levels of savings are agreed and ready for implementation		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Within existing resources.
CP1	Support delivery of the Corporate work stream projects involving Town and Community Councils.	Delivery of cost-effective and sustainable council services into the longer term.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Within existing resources.
CP2	Review and strengthen the performance management arrangements in relation to sickness absence within the service.	Reduction in sickness absence rates in line with 2016/17 targets.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Within existing resources.
CP7	Undertake a restructure of Scrutiny Committees with a more holistic/outcome focussed remit aligned to the Corporate Plan.	Scrutiny committees are more outcome focused and are aligned with Corporate Well-being outcomes. 1. Consult with Group Leaders and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen. 2. Democratic Services Committee and full Council to consider and, subject to their		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	Sept 2016	Within existing resources.

Ref	Action	Outcome & key milestones 2016/17	KPI (where relevant)	Officer responsible	Start date	Finish date	Resources required
		approving, revised arrangements to be introduced from the start of the 2016-17 Municipal Year.					
CP7	Implement a joint approach to work programme planning and management to promote better alignment between Cabinet and Scrutiny business.	Annual Work Programmes are published at the beginning of the Municipal Year and updated quarterly. 1 Agree format of Annual Work Programme and quarterly updates. 2 Arrange for publication of the above.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Within existing resources.
CP7	Implement a framework in relation to setting out the roles, responsibilities and relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny Members.	Consistent practices and protocols in place which clarify and "formalise" roles, responsibilities and relationships.		Jeff Wyatt	May 2016	Sept 2016	Within existing resources.
CP7	Implement joint Scrutiny arrangements for the regionalisation of Shared Regulatory Services (SRS).	Scrutiny arrangements for the SRS to be developed and agreed by CCC, BCBC and the VoGC.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Within existing resources.
WDS1 RDS3	Increase size of existing pool of Relief Registrars.	Service resilience is increased and capable of meeting increasing demand for service. 1. Superintendent Registrar to deliver initial training programme for new staff. 2. Superintendent Registrar to deliver ongoing training programme for new staff.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	June 2017	Within existing resources.

Ref	Action	Outcome & key milestones 2016/17	KPI (where relevant)	Officer responsible	Start date	Finish date	Resources required
WDS2 CDS1	Continue to explore (with Cardiff and Bridgend Councils) options for formal joint scrutiny arrangements in respect of the Shared Regulatory Service.	Formal joint scrutiny arrangements are in place. 1. Officer discussions to be concluded. 2. Options to be submitted to Council for consideration. 3. Joint Scrutiny Committee established.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	October 2017	Dependent on agreement amongst constituent Local Authorities.
WDS3 RDS4	Continue to develop the skills of specific staff within the Scrutiny and Democratic Services with skills to enable full interface across the Scrutiny and Committee Services functions.	Increased service resilience within the team and part of succession planning process. 1. Review work allocations and current split of roles/responsibilities 2. Provide 'on the job' training and development opportunities to the relevant members of staff.		Jeff Rees	April 2016	Sept 2016	Within existing resources.
WDS4 RDS5	Continue to develop succession planning arrangements at management level.	Minimise recruitment and retention challenges and ensure business continuity. Key milestones: 1. Operational Manager to meet with individual Team Leaders to review existing (and any anticipated changes) to service provision. 2. Succession planning arrangements to be drawn up.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	May 2017	Within existing resources.

Ref	Action	Outcome & key milestones 2016/17	KPI (where relevant)	Officer responsible	Start date	Finish date	Resources required
ITDS1 PDS1	Implement a new Land Charges system.	Improved interface and integration across Directorates, whilst making savings.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	July 2016	Within existing resources.
DS1	Facilitate the Member Development Programme informed by the outcome of Member Personal Development Interviews and the related Training Needs Analysis.	Member Development Programme reflects where practicable, collective and individual needs identified as well as covering emerging priorities and legislative requirements. 1. Produce a Training Needs Analysis. 2. Facilitate Member Development Programme.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	March 2017	Combination of existing resources, external delivery and facilitation by, e.g. Welsh Local Government Association.
DS2	Continue to respond to budgetary savings as targets required.	Savings targets for 2016/17 achieved.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	April 2017	Existing Resources.
AC10	Improve equality monitoring data so that services can make more informed decisions about service delivery	Accurate and timely data which informs proposals and decisions about service delivery. Key milestones: - Service collects and analyses data for use in EIAs and service improvements. - More data included in EIAs to inform decisions.		Jeff Wyatt	April 2016	April 2017	Officer time/ within existing service resources