

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 17TH DECEMBER, 2018

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 14TH NOVEMBER, 2018

“ REVIEW OF CORPORATE COMMITTEE REPORT TEMPLATE (MD) –

The Head of Performance and Development advised that the current corporate Committee report template was longstanding and since its implementation there had been a number of significant legislative developments. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 205 had come into effect in April 2016 and the Act placed particular emphasis upon ensuring public bodies thought more about the long term, worked better with people, communities and each other, looked to prevent problems and took a more joined-up approach to their work.

The Five Ways of Working set out in the Act gave a framework through which public bodies must work through to deliver the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales. The Five Ways of Working were:

- Long Term: looking to the long term so the Council did not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- Integration: taking an integrated approach so that public bodies looked at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives;
- Involvement: involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affected them;
- Collaboration: working with others in a collaborative way to find shared solutions;
- Prevention: understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring.

By working through the Five Ways of Working, public bodies ensured they were working towards the Sustainable Development Principle, which was a fundamental part of how public bodies must now operate through the Act. The principle was to act in a manner which sought to ensure that the needs of the present were met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

To aid Elected Members in their scrutiny of reports and to facilitate decision making, the revised template attached at Appendix B to the report proposed the inclusion of an introductory table. The table provided an effective overview of the key aspects of the report and a greater transparency than the current structure. An Executive Summary had been included in this table to provide an overview and to enable the most critical aspects of a report to be summarised into a small number of paragraphs. Replicating the existing report template, the Recommendations, Reasons for Recommendations, Background and Key issues for Consideration

sections were maintained in the revised template. Through keeping these sections a consistency across the report presented to differing Committees would be achieved, enabling Members to continue to effectively scrutinise report content.

To further aid Elected Members to exercise their duties under the Act and to assess whether proper and adequate consideration of the National Well-being Goals, the Five Ways of Working and the Council's Well-being Objectives had been given; a specific section had been included in the revised template.

It was being proposed that the new corporate Committee report template, once approved, would commence usage in the February 2019 cycle of Committees.

Members welcomed the revised report template and the specific inclusion of the Executive Summary proposal section within the template.

Having fully considered the report, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report and the reasons for the proposed revision of the corporate Committee report template be noted.
- (2) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet to enable the revised corporate Committee report template to be implemented in the New Year.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents contained therein and having received a detailed overview of why a revised Committee report template had been proposed.
- (2) To seek Cabinet approval for the changes to the revised corporate Committee report template.”

Attached as Appendix – Report to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee: 14th November, 2018

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee: 14th November 2018

Report of the Managing Director

Review of Corporate Committee Report Template

Purpose of the Report

1. To brief members, and to seek the views of the Committee on the proposed changes to the Council's corporate committee report template.

Recommendations

1. That this report and the reasons for the proposed revision of the corporate committee report template are noted.
2. That this Committee reviews the template and endorses its proposed revisions.
3. That this report be referred to Cabinet, subject to this Committee's endorsement of its proposals, to enable a revised corporate committee report template to be implemented in the New Year

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To give the members of this Committee a detailed overview of why a revised corporate committee report template has been proposed and its suggested revisions.
2. To enable the members of this Committee to consider and provide feedback on the proposed corporate committee report template.
3. To enable Cabinet to approve the changes to the revised corporate committee report template subject to consideration and approval of the suggested revisions by the Committee.

Background

2. The current corporate committee report template is longstanding and since its implementation there have been a number of significant legislative developments. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 came into effect in April 2016, the Act places a particular emphasis upon ensuring public bodies think more about the long-term, work better with people, communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach to their work.

3. The Five Ways of Working set out in the Act gives a framework through which public bodies must work through to deliver the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales. The Five Ways of Working are:
 - Long Term: looking to the long term so we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
 - Integration: taking an integrated approach so that public bodies look at all the well-being goals in deciding on their well-being objectives;
 - Involvement: involving a diversity of the population in the decisions that affect them;
 - Collaboration: working with others in a collaborative way to find shared solutions;
 - Prevention: understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring.

By working through the Five Ways of Working public bodies ensure they are working towards the Sustainable Development Principle, a fundamental part of how public bodies must now operate through the Act. The principle is to 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.

4. In 2016, the Council restructured its Scrutiny Committees, aligning Committees to the Well-being Outcomes set out within the Corporate Plan. This was undertaken as part of the Council's early work in response to the Act. Following the restructure, briefing sessions were held with Elected Members to give an overview of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, its implications for the Council and Members' duty to undertake scrutiny of its implementation; this again formed an aspect of briefings for Elected Members following the 2017 Local Government Elections.
5. In July 2018, the Wales Audit Office (WAO) published its review of overview and scrutiny arrangements in Wales - 'Fit for the Future?' (which can be found at Appendix A to the report on the agenda entitled "Auditor General for Wales Overview and Scrutiny Fit for the Future?"). Within the report for the Vale of Glamorgan, the WAO have set out seven Proposals for Improvement. The revised corporate committee report template (attached as Appendix B to this report) should act to aid the work that is being undertaken to meet these proposals; in particular Proposals for Improvement three and four which relate to the function of scrutiny.
6. The revised template has been refined through a process of consultation with senior and chief officers from across service areas. The revised template was initially presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to receive direction and to ensure that the proposed template would satisfy the requirements of each service area. The template has then been refined in consultation with the Insight Board before the final iteration was reported back to CMT and presented to this committee for review.

Relevant Issues and Options

7. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act set out effective transparency as a key part of improving the delivery of public bodies. The Act requires public bodies to communicate and explain the process of selecting its Well-being Objectives and why these Objectives have been chosen, how decisions are taken in line with these Objectives and what difference these Objectives have made. In line with these requirements, the revised committee report template has sought to ensure that the reports produced are accessible and enable our citizens to establish the linkages

between the Council's Well-being Objectives, its Scrutiny procedures and the decisions taken by Committee.

8. The consideration of, and how proposals will contribute to the delivery of the seven Well-being Goals for Wales and developed through the Five Ways of Working should be evident throughout a Committee Report. The revised template has been structured to ensure that when scrutinising reports Elected Members are able to more easily identify how proposals are embedded in the Ways of Working, and will deliver the Well-being Objectives the Council has set in its Corporate Plan.
9. To aid Elected Members in their scrutiny of reports and to facilitate decision making, the revised template proposes the inclusion of an introductory table. The table gives an effective overview of the key aspects of a report and provides a greater transparency than the current structure. An Executive Summary has been included in this table to provide an overview and to enable the most critical aspects of a report to be summarised into a small number of paragraphs. Replicating the existing report template, the Recommendations, Reasons for Recommendations, Background and Key Issues for Consideration sections are maintained in the revised template. Through keeping these sections a consistency across the reports presented to differing committees will be achieved, enabling Members to continue to effectively scrutinise report content.
10. To further aid Elected Members to exercise their duties under the Act and to assess whether proper and adequate consideration of the National Well-being Goals, the Five Ways of Working and the Council's Well-being Objectives has been given; a specific section has been included in the revised template. Section 5 of the revised template is titled ' How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?' and has been included to enable report writers to evidence how proposals have been developed through the Five Ways of Working and how they will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Objectives and in-turn the Well-being Goals for Wales. This section will provide Members with the detail needed to effectively scrutinise report proposals through the framework of the Act and if necessary, to challenge proposals. In addition, this section will enable citizens to gain a better understanding of how proposals sit within the Council's corporate priorities, how proposals will help deliver the Council's Well-being Objectives and how this work will meet the Council's legislative duties.
11. Effective involvement of people and communities forms a critical aspect of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The importance of involving people in decisions that affect them is one of the Five Ways of Working; involving people and a diversity of people should form a key aspect of a report if appropriate. The detail of how proposals have been developed with citizens, how engagement feedback has been reflected and the outcomes of any consultation activity should form a central part of the body of a report. In addition, within Section 5 evidence will be provided of stakeholder engagement including with local ward Member and Trade Unions, how people with protected characteristics have been engaged on proposals and the detail on any Equality Impact Assessment that has been completed. To reflect the importance of effective involvement in the development of Council work, and the need to effectively evidence this involvement it is suggested that the 'Consultation (including Ward Member consultation) section of the previous report template be removed. Where consultation has been undertaken with senior offices and Elected Members on the report itself, a section has been included in the introductory table.

12. Consideration of the Five Ways of Working and the Sustainable Development Principle should be central to proposals and be detailed throughout any report. The Resources, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Equal Opportunities and the Sustainability and Climate Change Implications sections have been integrated to form Section 6 of the revised template titled 'Resources and Legal Considerations'. Through this integration Members will be able to gain an overview of the considerations highlighted as requiring scrutiny when appraising a report's proposals. It is intended that rather than having to consider the six differing sections currently included in the current committee report template, Elected Members can consult this section and gain an integrated overview of the differing implications which require consideration by members in their decision making.
13. Should this Committee endorse this revised corporate committee report template it is anticipated that it will be implemented in January 2019 with reports being presented to committees in this format from February 2019. A briefing for Elected Members on the revised template will be included in the programme for the Member's Expos planned for November 2018. In addition, end-to-end guidance has been developed to ensure that officers will have an in-depth knowledge of the requirements and a clear understanding of what should be included in the reports. This will ensure consistency in the standard of reporting to Committee. In addition, a series of officer briefings and training sessions will be undertaken across the service areas.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

14. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

15. The revised corporate committee report template should enable effective consideration and scrutiny of how the Council is working to through the Five Ways of Working and the Sustainable Development Principle as set out by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

16. The Council has a legal duty to implement the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Crime and Disorder Implications

17. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

18. There are no direct equal opportunities implications associated with this report.

Corporate/Service Objectives

19. The revised corporate committee report template should ensure that proposals set out within reports are set within the context and evidence contribution to the Council's Well-being Objectives and Corporate priorities.

Policy Framework and Budget

20. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

21. Due to the corporate nature of this report, no ward member consultation has been undertaken.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

22. Corporate Performance and Resources

Background Papers

Appendix A: Overview and Scrutiny - Fit For the Future - Vale of Glamorgan Council

Appendix B: Proposed Revised Committee Report Template

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Officers Consulted

Corporate Management Team

Insight Board

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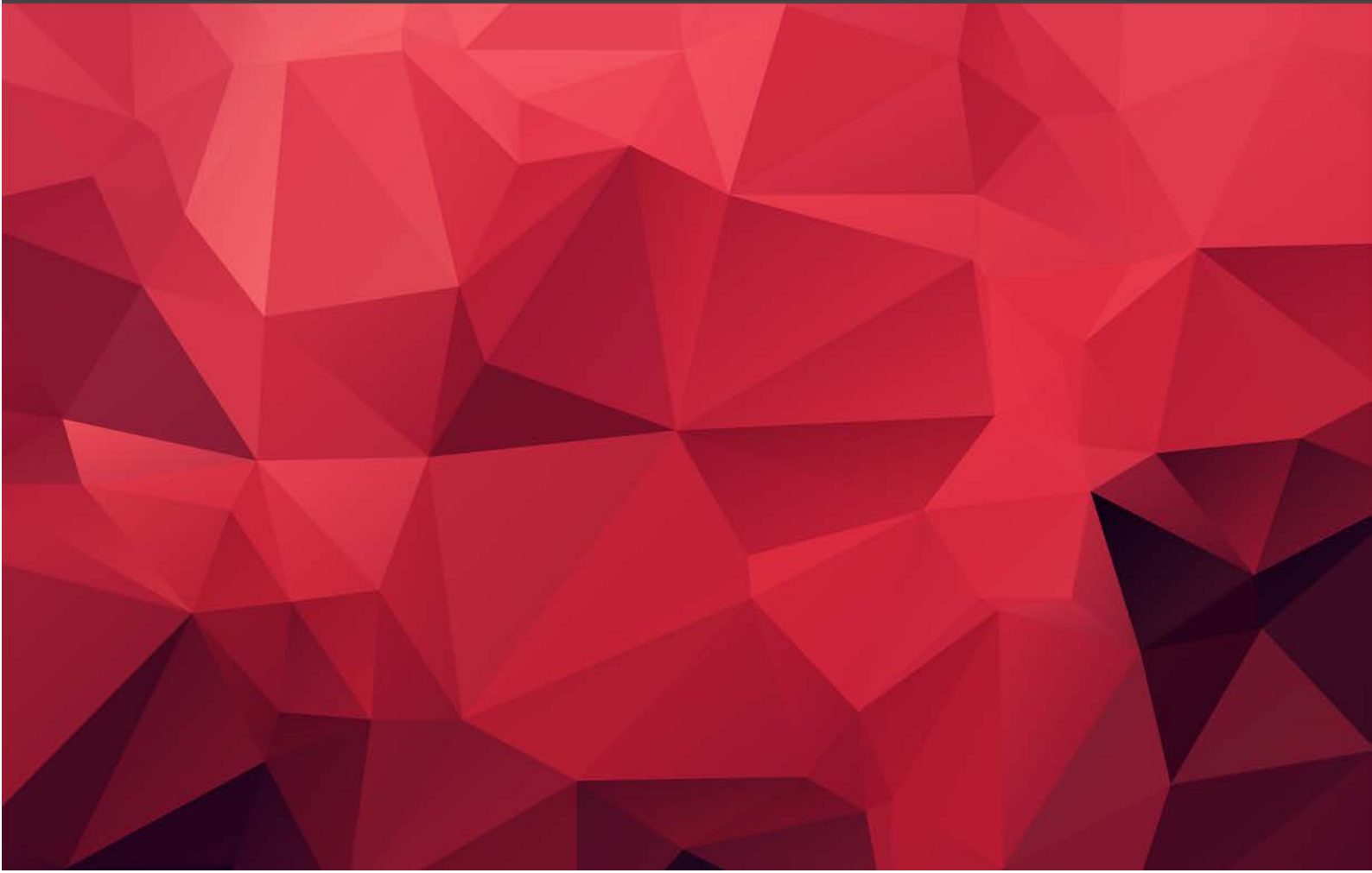
Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Overview and Scrutiny – Fit For the Future? – **Vale of Glamorgan Council**

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Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

The team who delivered the work comprised Ian Phillips, Gareth Jones and Sara-Jane Byrne under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Summary report

Summary

- 1 This review explored with each of the 22 councils in Wales how ‘fit for the future’ their scrutiny functions are. We considered how councils are responding to current challenges, including the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 (WFG Act) in relation to their scrutiny activity, as well as how councils are beginning to undertake scrutiny of Public Service Boards (PSBs). We also examined how well placed councils are to respond to future challenges such as continued pressure on public finances and the possible move towards more regional working between local authorities.
- 2 As part of this review we also reviewed the progress that councils have made in addressing the recommendations of our earlier National Improvement Study **Good Scrutiny? Good Question?** (May 2014) (see [Appendix 2](#)). We also followed up on the proposals for improvement relevant to scrutiny that we issued in local reports including those issued to councils as part of our 2016-17 thematic reviews of Savings Planning and Governance Arrangements for Determining Significant Service Changes.
- 3 Our review aimed to:
 - identify approaches to embedding the sustainable development principle into scrutiny processes and practices to inform practice sharing and future work of the Auditor General in relation to the WFG Act;
 - provide assurance that scrutiny functions are well placed to respond to current and future challenges and expectations;
 - help to embed effective scrutiny by elected members from the start of the new electoral cycle; and
 - provide insight into how well councils have responded to the findings of our previous Scrutiny Improvement Study.
- 4 To inform our findings we based our review methodology around the Outcomes and Characteristics for Effective Local Government Overview and Scrutiny that were developed and agreed by scrutiny stakeholders in Wales following our previous National Improvement Study **Good Scrutiny? Good Question!**¹
- 5 We carried out our fieldwork between October 2017 and February 2018. We undertook document reviews, interviewed a small number of key officers and ran focus groups with key councillors to understand their views on Vale of Glamorgan Council’s (the Council) current scrutiny arrangements and in particular how the Council is approaching and intends to respond to the challenges identified above.

¹ [Good Scrutiny? Good Question! Auditor General for Wales improvement study: Scrutiny in Local Government May 2014](#)

- 6 We observed a sample of scrutiny meetings and reviewed relevant meeting documentation provided to members to support their scrutiny role, such as reports and presentations.
- 7 In this review we concluded the Council has changed its scrutiny arrangements but should consider opportunities for its scrutiny function to work differently to respond to current and future challenges and have greater impact. We came to this conclusion because:
- The role of scrutiny in council governance is clearly defined, but in practice scrutiny committees do not routinely hold the Cabinet to account as effectively as they could and there is scope to review the type of scrutiny support
 - Scrutiny committee meetings are generally well-run, but the focus of scrutiny activity and methods used could be strengthened to make more effective use of resources; and
 - The Council monitors and reports on the work of its scrutiny function, but evaluation is not fully focussed on the impact and value that it can add.

Proposals for improvement

- 8 The table below contains our proposals for ways in which the Council could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its overview and scrutiny function to make it better placed to meet current and future challenges.

Exhibit 1: proposals for improvement

Proposals for improvement	
P1	Skills and Development: The Council should further consider the skills and training that scrutiny members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and develop and deliver an appropriate training programme.
P2	Form and Governance: The Council's scrutiny committees should ensure that where appropriate Cabinet members rather than council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions in accordance with statutory guidance ²
P3	Function: The Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges.
P4	Function: The Council should explore different and more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.

² National Assembly for Wales, Guidance For County And County Borough Councils In Wales On Executive And Alternative Arrangements 2006, July 2006, Paragraph 2.1.8

Proposals for improvement

P5 **Function:** The Council should consider how its scrutiny activity can focus on those areas where it would have most value.

P6 **Function:** The Council should be more innovative in how it engages the public in its scrutiny activity.

P7 **Evaluation:** The Council should strengthen its evaluation of the impact and outcomes of its scrutiny activity and to learn from this in order to shape the future work of its scrutiny function.

Detailed report

The Council has changed its scrutiny arrangements but should consider opportunities for its scrutiny function to work differently to respond to current and future challenges and have greater impact

The role of scrutiny in council governance is clearly defined, but in practice scrutiny committees do not routinely hold the Cabinet to account as effectively as they could and there is scope to review the type of scrutiny support

- 9 The role of scrutiny is clearly defined, both in the Council's constitution and in the Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities Protocol. Broadly, the role of scrutiny is defined as being: pre-decision scrutiny; making recommendations to full Council and/or Cabinet, policy development; considering matters affecting the local area; and post-decision scrutiny.
- 10 The Protocol also sets out the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny and the ways in which scrutiny committees can hold Cabinet to account. This includes the ability of scrutiny committees to call-in a decision, to call the Cabinet member to give evidence and identify areas of interest from the Cabinet forward work programme.
- 11 The Council particularly values the role of its scrutiny committees in its performance management arrangements. One of the objectives of the Council's Scrutiny and Cabinet roles and responsibilities protocol is 'to create a culture of holding the Cabinet to account on behalf of the electorate, by monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's policies and through the regular review of its performance in relation to service delivery, with a view to ensuring service improvements.' In 2016, the Council restructured its scrutiny committees as part of its early work in response to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WFG Act). The work of the scrutiny committees is aligned to the Council's well-being outcomes and scrutiny committees receive performance information that relate to one of the Council's well-being outcomes.
- 12 Each scrutiny committee receives quarterly performance reports. The Council has recently changed the way it reports performance to its scrutiny committees making the information more visual and easier to understand the complexity of the

Council's activities, how they contribute to the outcomes contained in the Council's corporate plan and the national well-being goals and to properly assess whether outcomes are being achieved.

- 13 However, our review suggests that there is scope to ensure that scrutiny roles are strengthened in practice, in particular in relationship to holding Cabinet to account. We found that officers, rather than Cabinet members, generally attend scrutiny committees to present reports and answer questions and be held to account. The Cabinet members are, therefore, not routinely being held to account by the Council's Scrutiny committees. For example, we would expect Cabinet members to be called to be held to account when performance reports are being considered by scrutiny.
- 14 We analysed the pattern of Cabinet member attendance at the Council's scrutiny committees since the May 2017 election to the end of February 2018. We found that attendance by Cabinet members was variable between the five scrutiny committees. One scrutiny committee had a Cabinet member in attendance for all meetings whereas another scrutiny committee did not have any Cabinet Member in attendance for any meetings during the year.
- 15 In order to fulfil their role effectively, Scrutiny Committees need to ensure they regularly invite Cabinet members to attend in order to hold them to account appropriately. The **National Assembly for Wales Guidance For County And County Borough Councils In Wales On Executive And Alternative Arrangements (2006) No. 5** (see Footnote 2) may act as a useful reference for the Council to consider, which states: "Overview and scrutiny committees are able to require officers to attend to answer questions about and discuss the discharge of executive or non-executive functions. The executive and overview and scrutiny committees should always bear in mind that it is for the elected executive to answer questions about its policies and decisions. When officers appear to answer questions their contribution should, as far as possible, be confined to questions of fact and explanation relating to policies and decisions....." This Guidance also identifies that the role of councillors exercising overview and scrutiny includes: "to hold the executive to account for the efficient exercise of executive functions – especially the performance of the executive as measured against the standards, objectives and targets set out in the policies and plans which it is implementing."
- 16 In addition, our 2014 national improvement study report **Good Scrutiny? Good question!** (see Footnote 1) stated that 'Scrutiny committees are unlikely to effectively hold the executive to account if Cabinet members are rarely invited to attend scrutiny committee meetings to answer questions or provide evidence'.
- 17 To gain an understanding of the environment in which scrutiny operates, we also looked at the training opportunities available to scrutiny members. The Council provided an extensive and well-attended member development programme following the local government elections in May 2017. The programme was well-received by members and covered topics, such as questioning, Treasury Management and scrutiny chairing skills.

- 18 The training programme also included sessions on the WFG Act. Most members we spoke to as part of this review felt well-placed to consider WFG implications in their scrutiny role. However, most members would also welcome further training in scrutinising budgets. There is also scope for the Council to consider what skills and knowledge scrutiny members need to respond to current and future challenges, such as continued pressure on public finances and the potential for increased collaborative working partners, and to provide appropriate training. This will be particularly important as the Council's Reshaping Services programme continues to cover more transformational aspects. It is a matter for the Council to determine the content of training programmes. However, there is an opportunity for the Council to consider whether further training in areas such as options appraisals, financial analysis, scrutinising regional, collaborative and commercial arrangements, and engaging ward members and stakeholders in scrutiny work would enable councillors to be better placed to meet current and future challenges.
- 19 As part of our review, we considered the support available to scrutiny members. We found that scrutiny members value the support provided by the Council's Democratic Services officers. This support tends to consist of organising meetings, preparing reports and undertaking research. However, there has been one long-term vacancy within Democratic Services, which has recently been filled, but it has meant that capacity has been reduced. Our **Corporate Assessment** report published in August 2016³ identified that "scrutiny officer capacity has limited the number of 'task and finish' scrutiny reviews in recent years." This remains the case. During the course of our latest review, members expressed the view that they would like to run more task and finish groups but the lack of scrutiny officer capacity was preventing this from happening. With reduced capacity and in light of current and future challenges, the Council should consider the type of support needed for its scrutiny activity in order to make best use of this support. This is linked to the point we make in paragraphs 25 and 33 of this report, which challenges the Council to consider different and more innovative ways of carrying out scrutiny activity.
- 20 As part of our review, we also considered how councils are beginning to undertake scrutiny of Public Service Boards (PSB). The Council's Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee is principally responsible for scrutinising the PSB and has undertaken some early scrutiny of the PSB. The Council plans for the other four scrutiny committees to become involved in scrutinising the PSB depending on the subject matter.

³ [Vale of Glamorgan Council: Corporate Assessment Report 2016](#)

Scrutiny committee meetings are generally well-run, but the focus of scrutiny activity and methods used could be strengthened to make more effective use of resources

- 21 The scrutiny committee meetings we observed were well-ordered and business-like. The atmosphere was constructive and the chairing of meetings was generally effective.
- 22 The Council recognises it needs to do more to facilitate public involvement in its scrutiny activity, and it has published a **Scrutiny - Public participation guide**⁴. It is positive that members of the public have been engaged in matters of particular local significance, such as the Dinas Powys bypass and the Biomass waste issues. However, public participation in the work of scrutiny committees was described to us by some members as 'variable to low'. There is scope for scrutiny committees to be more innovative in how they engage the public in their work. This could include, for example, finding out what concerns the public have as an integral part of how scrutiny committees plan their work.
- 23 As part of our review, we also looked at the scrutiny committees' work programmes and the range of items considered by the Council's scrutiny committees. In our national local government study report **Good Scrutiny? Good Question!** (see **Footnote 1**) published in May 2014 we recommended that councils should further develop scrutiny forward work programing to :
- provide a clear rational for topic selection;
 - be more outcome focussed
 - ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and
 - align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements.
- 24 The Council's scrutiny support staff develop the scrutiny committees' forward work programmes together with the Scrutiny Committee Chairs, Vice Chairs, officers and relevant Directors.
- 25 The Council's Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities Protocol states that 'Scrutiny is most effective when it is focused on a limited number of in-depth topics and priorities. When considering agenda items, Scrutiny Committees should have regard to the likely value and impact gained from any report or review. This will need to be carefully balanced against the time and resources required to undertake the activity.' We found that Scrutiny committees generally consider a balance of agenda items, including pre-decision and post-decision scrutiny but there remains scope for the Council to improve the prioritisation and focus of scrutiny committees' forward work programmes. For example, some agenda items are described in the

⁴ [Vale of Glamorgan Council Scrutiny Public Participation Guide](#)

covering reports as simply being for the scrutiny committees to note and lack an outcome focus. In line with the recommendation made in our May 2014 **Good Scrutiny? Good Question! Report (see Footnote 1)**, the Council needs to ensure items are outcome focused and that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired. We found limited evidence that scrutiny committees reflect on the best method of scrutiny activity before considering topics.

- 26 As such, Scrutiny members need to take greater ownership of the scrutiny committees' forward work programmes and agendas so that they are focused on those areas where they can add most value. Some other councils have limited the number of agenda items considered by its scrutiny committees or consider one topic per meeting to enable more detailed consideration of those items. Limiting the number of items might also enable the Council's scrutiny function to consider a wider range of views and evidence in relation to each topic.
- 27 In our report **Good Governance When Determining Significant Service Changes** published in July 2017⁵, we made a proposal for improvement that the Council should include more information in Cabinet and Scrutiny forward work programmes of the detail and purpose of forthcoming items (including, but not limited to, service changes proposals) to improve the transparency of arrangements and opportunities for stakeholders to engage in decision making. The Council publishes its scrutiny committee work programmes on its website and those forward work programmes specify which items also form part of the Cabinet forward work programme. Similarly, the Cabinet forward work programme sets out if an item has been subject to scrutiny consideration or not. However, we also found that the forward work programmes continue to lack detail. For example, the work programmes do not set out the rationale for items or how the item will be scrutinised. This does not facilitate public engagement. The Council has therefore not yet fully addressed our proposal for improvement from our report in July 2017.
- 28 We are also aware that there have been recent examples where scrutiny members did not have an opportunity to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of some items, such as the Income Generation and Commercial Opportunities Strategy 2017-20 and an item about the procurement of refit works for Council assets. These items were subsequently called-in by scrutiny. The Council may need to consider whether there is a need to improve dialogue between the Cabinet and scrutiny committees to enable committees to contribute to decision-making in a more timely manner.

⁵ [Vale of Glamorgan Council: Good Governance when Determining Significant Service Changes July 2017](#)

The Council monitors and reports on the work of its scrutiny function, but evaluation is not fully focussed on the impact and value that it can add

- 29 In our **Good Scrutiny? Good Question!** local government study report (see Footnote 1), published in May 2014, we recommended that councils ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes.
- 30 The Council's scrutiny committees submit an annual report to full Council that summarises the work of the scrutiny committees during the year. The Scrutiny annual report 2016-17⁶ was taken to Council in September 2017. The annual report describes some of the outcomes achieved from scrutiny activity, such as the scrutiny function's influence over service changes like the meals on wheels service, the ongoing accountability of underperforming schools and the role of scrutiny in the decision making process regarding the proposed closure of the Rhoose Road respite facility. However, the report largely describes the activities of scrutiny committees rather than evaluating the impact of their activities.
- 31 In addition to its scrutiny annual report, each scrutiny committee receives a quarterly report setting out the progress with the recommendations and requests they have previously made. This is a useful mechanism which the scrutiny function could draw upon to inform its annual report and to better evaluate the impact of its scrutiny activity.
- 32 During our review, members and officers cited some examples where the scrutiny function has had a positive impact and added value to the Council's arrangements. Examples provided included the Dinas Powys bypass and Biomass development issues. However, the examples provided were not extensive.
- 33 In common with many other councils in Wales, the majority of scrutiny activity takes place at formal committee meetings where officer reports are considered. The outcome of discussion of agenda items at these scrutiny committees meetings is not always evident or with no obvious outcome as a result of the scrutiny activity. Linked to our point in paragraph 25 above, there is scope for the Council to consider the methods and focus of the work of the scrutiny function on items that it can have most influence and impact. For example, the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee regularly receives civil parking enforcement updates, but the extent to which scrutiny members can influence this issue is limited. The Home and Safer Communities Scrutiny Committee has also received presentations from Housing Solutions and Llamau Services but it is unclear what the role of scrutiny was in receiving these.
- 34 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out that 'We recognise the need to listen to our citizens and partners and to embrace innovation in order to maintain priority local

⁶ [Vale of Glamorgan Scrutiny Annual Report 2016/17](#)

services and deliver our vision'. In order to do this, the Council has a transformational programme (Reshaping Services) and as part of this is exploring ways to enhance its digital solutions and opportunities for income generation. In this context, there is scope for the scrutiny function to play a more impactful and useful role in helping to drive the Council's transformation agenda.

- 35 **The 2017 Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) report Accountability and Scrutiny – The issues for local government in a changing political environment**⁷ found that one of the main barriers to scrutiny adding value was a lack of creativity. Whilst the Council has changed its scrutiny arrangements, scrutiny activity continues to be undertaken largely through formal committee meetings. The Council would benefit from exploring different and more creative ways of undertaking scrutiny activity to make the most effective use of available resources.

⁷ Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) report: Accountability and Scrutiny – The issues for local government in a changing political environment

Appendix 1

Outcomes and characteristics for effective local government overview and scrutiny

Exhibit 2: outcomes and characteristics for effective local government overview and scrutiny

Outcomes	Characteristics
What does good scrutiny seek to achieve?	What would it look like? How could we recognise it?
1. Democratic accountability drives improvement in public services. 'Better Services'	Environment i) Scrutiny has a clearly defined and valued role in the council's improvement arrangements. ii) Scrutiny has the dedicated officer support it needs from officers who are able to undertake independent research effectively, and provide Scrutiny members with high-quality analysis, advice and training. Practice iii) Overview and Scrutiny inquiries are non-political, methodologically sound and incorporate a wide range of evidence and perspectives. Impact iv) Overview and scrutiny regularly engages in evidence based challenge of decision makers and service providers. v) Scrutiny provides viable and well evidenced solutions to recognised problems.

Outcomes	Characteristics
<p>What does good scrutiny seek to achieve?</p>	<p>What would it look like? How could we recognise it?</p>
<p>2. Democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust. 'Better decisions'</p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Scrutiny councillors have the training and development opportunities they need to undertake their role effectively. ii) The process receives effective support from the Council's Corporate Management Team which ensures that information provided to scrutiny is of high quality and is provided in a timely and consistent manner. <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) Scrutiny is Member led and has 'ownership' of its work programme taking into account the views of the public, partners and regulators whilst balancing between prioritising community concerns against issues of strategic risk and importance. iv) Stakeholders have the ability to contribute to the development and delivery of scrutiny forward work programmes. v) Overview and scrutiny meetings and activities are well-planned, chaired effectively and make best use of the resources available to it. <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi) Non-executive Members provide an evidence based check and balance to Executive decision making. vii) Decision makers give public account for themselves at scrutiny committees for their portfolio responsibilities.
<p>3. The public is engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services.</p>	<p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Scrutiny is recognised by the Executive and Corporate Management team as an important council mechanism for community engagement. <p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Scrutiny is characterised by effective communication to raise awareness of, and encourage participation in democratic accountability. iii) Scrutiny operates non-politically and deals effectively with sensitive political issues, tension and conflict. iv) Scrutiny builds trust and good relationships with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders. <p>Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v) Overview and scrutiny enables the 'voice' of local people and communities across the area to be heard as part of decision and policy-making processes.

Appendix 2

Recommendations from the report of the Auditor General's national improvement study 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question?' (May 2014)

Exhibit 3: recommendations from **Good Scrutiny? Good Question?** Scrutiny Improvement Study

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
R1 Clarify the role of executive members and senior officers in contributing to scrutiny.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R2 Ensure that scrutiny members, and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R3 Further develop scrutiny forward work programming to : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a clear rationale for topic selection; • be more outcome focussed • ensure that the method of scrutiny is best suited to the topic area and the outcome desired; and • align scrutiny programmes with the council's performance management, self-evaluation and improvement arrangements. 	Councils
R4 Ensure that scrutiny draws effectively on the work of audit, inspection and regulation and that its activities are complementary with the work of external review bodies.	Councils, Staff of the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW, Estyn
R5 Ensure that external review bodies take account of scrutiny work programmes and the outputs of scrutiny activity, where appropriate, in planning and delivering their work.	Staff of the Wales Audit Office, CSSIW, Estyn

Recommendation	Responsible Partners
R6 Ensure that the impact of scrutiny is properly evaluated and acted upon to improve the function's effectiveness; including following up on proposed actions and examining outcomes.	Councils, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association
R7 Undertake regular self-evaluation of scrutiny utilising the 'outcomes and characteristics of effective local government overview and scrutiny' developed by the Wales Overview & Scrutiny Officers' Network.	Council
R8 Implement scrutiny improvement action plans developed from the Wales Audit Office improvement study.	Councils
R9 Adopt Participation Cymru's 10 Principles for Public Engagement in improving the way scrutiny engages with the public and stakeholders.	Councils

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Agenda Item:

Name of Committee:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	29/06/2018
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	
Purpose of Report:	
Report Owner:	
Responsible Officer:	
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	
Policy Framework:	
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

Agenda Item:

1. Recommendations

1.1

2. Reasons for Recommendations

2.1

3. Background

3.1

4. Key Issues for Consideration

4.1

5. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

5.1

6. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

6.1

Employment

6.2

Legal (Including Equalities)

6.3

7. Background Papers