

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 2ND NOVEMBER, 2023

REFERENCE FROM GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 23RD OCTOBER, 2023

“474 FINAL DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022/23 (REF) –

The Cabinet reference from 19th October, 2023 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

The Director advised that Cabinet had considered comments made by the Governance and Audit Committee and comments made by the Council’s Scrutiny Committees.

Governance and Audit Committee was being asked to review the Final Draft Annual Self-Assessment report for 2022/23 and refer any comments to Cabinet for its consideration on 2nd November 2023.

In being asked to comment, Members of the Governance and Audit Committee raised the following comments and observations:

- Councillor M. Hooper referred to the previous comments made by the Governance and Audit Committee and in particular comments related to accessibility of the report which he held the opposing view particularly as there were complexities around the way that certain opinions were expressed in the report, particularly in relation to a rise in Council Tax and a decrease in services. Councillor Hooper also referred to the sentence relating to Brexit, and he stated that further detail was required around the impact so more depth was required. Councillor Hooper also referred to commentary relating to the development of Hybrid meetings, and he stated that there were some ambiguity to that as the Council was unable to hold a hybrid meeting.
- Councillor E. Goodjohn referred to public engagement stating that he was looking forward to the full data sets and the outcomes of the public opinion survey. Councillor Goodjohn stated that it was important for the Council to communicate with the public around its priorities and critical challenges. In addition, he stated that the Council could do more to promote public understanding of how the Council used its resources and to explain in more detail the delivery of actions as contained in Service Plans. There needed to be an honest assessment of how the Council was using its resources and how it engaged with the public.
- The Chair, Mr. G. Chapman, stated that it was important for the Council to outline to the public that most of its budget was spent on education and social services which meant that along with those departments, it meant that the other service Directorates were facing extreme financial pressures.

Therefore, the public may be unaware of where the Council spent its money and also the level of (limited) discretion that the Council had.

- Councillor J. Protheroe referred to agency staff and welcomed that the Director had indicated that a further analysis was underway to better understand how and why the Council spent such a large amount of money on agency staff.
- Councillor J. Norman stated that most people only appreciated the services that they used, and most were unaware of the full range of services that the Council financed. It was therefore important to make the public aware that the Council did not just fund potholes and street lights as there were statutory services that the Council was required to provide.

Having considered the reference from Cabinet it was

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be advised of the views of the Governance and Audit Committee, those being:

- Accessibility – that it be clarified that there was an opposing view that the document was easily accessible as it was felt that the document may be difficult to read for some members of the public as there was some complexities around the way that certain opinions were expressed in the report, particularly in relation to a rise in Council Tax and a decrease in services.
- Brexit – for further detail to be included regarding the impact of Brexit or for Cabinet to consider removing this reference.
- Hybrid meetings – for the self-assessment document to reflect that the Council has not implemented a hybrid meeting solution and that this was now an urgent matter to resolve. The second reference in the assessment was felt to be more accurate than the first.
- Public engagement and communication – for commentary to outline to the public how the Council spends its money and the priority areas that the money was allocated to as part of communicating the Assessment and in particular the Council's budget. To also clearly highlight that the majority of the Council's budget (around 75%) was allocated to education and social services which meant that along with those departments, all other service areas were under extreme budget pressures.
- Agency staff – for a detailed in-depth review to be undertaken to understand the how's and why's of the areas that the Council spends on agency staff. For this to be undertaken as part of the development of the Council's budget proposals for 2024/25.

Reasons for decisions

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.”