

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 11TH JULY, 2024

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 19TH JUNE, 2024

“154 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2030, PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 6th June, 2024 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

The Cabinet report presented the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar for 2024/25 which outlined the activities that would be subject to consideration by Members throughout the year. The report also outlined how engaging with Elected Members was proposed in shaping the processes, key plans and reports aligned to the Annual Performance Calendar to enable the performance requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E) to be met and contributed to the national goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WCFG).

The Director advised that there were two additional aspects of the Performance Calendar that required consideration this year – the development of a new Corporate Plan and the arrangements for undertaking a Panel Performance Assessment (PPA).

The report also set out, at paragraphs 2.2 – 2.7, the approach being taken to develop the new five-year Corporate Plan 2025-2030 which would be published in April 2025. Work on a new Corporate Plan would include the development of new Well-being Objectives and a more outcome focused approach.

The report detailed the scope and indicative timetable (paragraph 2.8) for undertaking the Council's PPA in Autumn 2024. Introduced by the LG&E Act, the purpose of the PPA was to provide independent, external challenge to help inform the Council's improvement journey by building on its own annual self-assessment. The PPA would assess the extent to which the Council was meeting the performance requirements (that was, exercising its functions effectively, using its resources economically, efficiently, and effectively and exercising good governance) and also presented the opportunity to consider work being undertaken as part of the development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30. It was proposed that the focus for the PPA concentrated on the changes being made and the approach being taken to deliver what was needed to make the outcome more future focused and able to increase the organisation's resilience.

The Director added that key findings and learning from the review of last year's Annual Self-Assessment approach were also detailed within the report as were proposals to further enhance the process in readiness for the 2023/24 self-assessment.

The Council's Self-Assessment covering the period 2023/24 would be published in December 2024 and this timeline aligned with the existing performance management arrangements and would enable key performance and governance related insights to be brought together throughout the year into a summary judgement on how well the performance requirements of the LG&E Act were being met.

In conclusion, the Director referred to Appendix A of the report which contained information regarding the rolling programme of collaborative work with Members throughout the 2024/25 Annual Performance Calendar to develop their skills and knowledge and strengthen their involvement in shaping and refining the key plans, reports and processes that would support them in their key role of assessing whether the Council was achieving its Well-being Objectives, delivering value for money and improving the well-being of its citizens.

Following the Director's presentation of the report, the Chair requested that the Committee consider the report in three sections, as was reflected within the report structure. Therefore, Committee was requested to raise questions in relation to the development of the Corporate Plan ("the Plan") in the first instance, then any questions in relation to the Panel Performance Assessment and finally in relation to the Council's Self-Assessment process.

In relation to development of the Corporate Plan 2025-30, Members of the Committee raised questions as follows:

- Had the current 2020-25 Corporate Plan served its purpose and, if not, what had not worked?
- Would the new Corporate Plan include specific objectives that could be measured against?
- Was consideration being given to changing how the Council currently produced reports and plans in relation to its performance monitoring processes to ensure that progress was accountable but also an appropriate use of officer resources?
- What steps were the Council taking following recent surveys to improve public engagement and also how the Council would monitor if engagement activities had been successful or not?
- Would the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be able to see how the Council had set objectives within the new Corporate Plan from the various sources of evidence gathered during the development period?

In response, the Director of Corporate Resources advised that the current Corporate Plan had served its purpose from the perspective of grounding the Vale of Glamorgan Council over a significant period of time and political administrations. The existing objectives within the current Plan were very wide ranging but had been written prior to a pandemic and the subsequent recovery period. The current

Corporate Plan had helped to guide the Council through the pandemic recovery period, the declared climate emergency, the increase in housing demand as well as helped to improve on the Council's public engagement work. Moving forward, Members would have further opportunity to reflect on the success of the current Plan in the self-assessment process, which was due to be reported in the Autumn of 2024, and therefore, it was felt that the current time was the most effective time to refocus on the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Director also advised that the 2025-30 Corporate Plan had not been written yet and that all Members would have the opportunity to feed into new Plan. It was recognised that there needed to be a clear set of objectives linked to the relevant impact for Vale of Glamorgan residents set out within the Plan under the context of making savings which was essential. The new Plan would include a new set of outcomes including as a result of the Council's collaborative work and therefore, this would differ to the previous Corporate Plan, as the current Plan would only set out outcomes that the Council was solely responsible for. Therefore, the new Plan would include Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would underpin the objectives within the Plan that Members would be in a position to approve and hold the Council accountable for. The objectives within the new Plan would be broad but the performance measure framework would include significant detail.

It was proposed that the current large number of Service Plans be consolidated down to 5 Directorate level plans to support delivery of the Corporate Plan and to support with producing performance monitoring reports. It was recognised that KPIs should be meaningful to demonstrate how service areas were working effectively and to demonstrate the impact of such work for members of the public to see. In response to a subsequent comment raised by the Chair of the Committee on the importance of service users being placed at the centre of the Council's efforts, the Director advised that they would be happy to bring further information back to Committee for its consideration to demonstrate how the new Plan's objectives and performance management framework had been drafted as well as the relevant information used to inform the drafts.

The Director went on to apprise the Committee on the questions posed in the Self-Assessment survey to deliberately identify issues to understand the priorities of individuals engaging with Council services. This was a good starting point and would lead into engagement events over the summer months as well as online consultation to allow officers to draft the new Corporate Plan in the autumn of 2024. Officers had also taken steps to try to simplify language within the new Plan draft in order to resonate more with readers and to reflect that the outcomes of the Corporate Plan were not just a numbers game.

In summary, the Director advised that the Committee would be able to see how the Council had set objectives from the evidence gathered and that a draft Corporate Plan would be presented in the autumn of 2024.

The Chair then invited questions in relation to the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) which could be summarised as follows:

- Was the Panel process the first time the Council was undertaking said process and would be it timely?
- Who would be appointing the membership of the Panel and was consideration being given to the political balance of its members?

In response, the Director of Corporate Resources confirmed that it was the first time the Council had undertaken the PPA process and that it was the right time to undertake the process as this had been introduced as a requirement by the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act in 2021. The current timing was late enough to allow drafting of the new Corporate Plan based on meaningful objectives but still allowed the Council adequate time to respond to the Panel assessment for which the Council was required to publish a response.

In terms of the Panel membership, the membership criteria set out within the report were the minimum requirements but could be increased upon. The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) were supporting with the first phase of membership appointments to help facilitate the process by providing a list of useful contacts, however, the decision on the membership would be a decision of the Council's Cabinet. A PPA report would be presented to Full Council in due course. The Elected Members on the Assessment Panel would be external to the Vale of Glamorgan to ensure that the Panel brought external challenge with the purpose of peer led improvements. The Director would discuss with the WLGA the matter of political balance on the Panel, to ensure a balance of experience and perspective on the Panel, based on what the WLGA was seeing in other Local Authorities.

With the Committee's permission, the Leader of the Council added to the officer's response by advising that the Administration welcomed constructive feedback as this helped to make progress and highlighted that the Council was already in the Self-Assessment process, with the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees invited to take part. The Council invited external views, as well as in-house, and that recent Estyn report success commended the Council on being very honest in its assessment processes. The Vale of Glamorgan Council worked across boundaries in Wales, with other local authorities, as there was a recognised mutual agreement that all public services were working towards a common goal to the benefit of local residents. There was also a number of established and professional peer assessors based across Wales which the Vale of Glamorgan would be considering as part of its Assessment Panel independent member membership.

In conclusion, the Chair summarised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council needed the best people for the job irrespective of their political affiliation.

The Chair then welcomed questions in relation to the third section of the report on the Council's Self-Assessment process and raised the single question presented on what the Council was going to do differently this time round?

In response, the Director advised that when performance monitoring reports were presented to Committee, the covering report would also be supported by an easy-read summary of the assessment alongside the covering report. Reports would also include more case studies to bring to life the impact the Council's work was having.

Committee would be provided with a further Self-Assessment report with additional details in the near future.

In response to a subsequent point raised by the Chair as to the timetable for the self-assessment, and the timings stated for public engagement being over the summer months, the Director acknowledged the Chair's concern with regards to timing and advised that officers were going to extend the engagement period by bringing it forward two weeks and that by going to well attended events over the summer there was potential to engage directly with residents as well as using the results of the Let's Talk survey. Members would be consulted on any judgements made following public engagement in a future report to Committee.

The Council was currently assessing the technical processes and approaches for the new Corporate Plan rather than being at the point of making fundamental decisions and therefore, it was felt that the current time was a good opportunity to go out for public consultation and events to engage with service users.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be referred back to Cabinet as follows:
 - In addition to the membership criteria for the Performance Assessment Panel, as set out in paragraph 2.12 of the report, consideration also be given, alongside advice received from Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) colleagues, to whether political balance of the Panel should be sought, to ensure a wide range of experience and perspective prior to the Panel being appointed by Cabinet.
 - Consideration be given to the scheduling of consultation activities, for the Self-Assessment and Corporate Plan, to maximise levels of engagement over the July – October 2024 period, which also covers both the political recess and academic holiday period.
 - The Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be presented with a report, at the appropriate time within the development process for the 2025-30 Corporate Plan, to demonstrate how the Plan Objectives and Performance Management Framework have been drafted as well as the information used to inform the drafts.

Reason for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and appended report to outline the approach to developing a new Corporate Plan for 2025-2030, arrangements and proposed scope for the Panel Performance Assessment and to present the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar for 2024/25.

(2) To ensure the Council fully discharges its duties under both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to publish annual Well-being Objectives, keep performance under review and consult and report on our performance through an annual self-assessment relating to the previous financial year.”