

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 28TH NOVEMBER, 2024

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 23RD OCTOBER, 2024

“527 RESHAPING PROGRAMME UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet was presented by the by the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to enable the Committee to consider the report and for Cabinet to consider the views of the Committee.

The appended report set out the next phase of the Council’s transformational change programme, Reshaping. The report referred to reshaping with the community, talking to communities and looking at ways to provide better services.

The timing of this refresh of the transformation programme came at a critical time for the Council, not only due to the financial forecast for coming years, but also as the Council’s new Corporate Plan for 2025-2030 which was now developed and about to be consulted upon. These two exercises had been developed in tandem, with the Corporate Plan setting out what the organisation wanted to achieve by 2030, and with Reshaping articulating the way the Council would need to change how it worked in order to deliver those ambitions. This was against a backdrop whereby the Council would need to deliver public services at a time of increasing demands and diminishing resources.

Appendix A provided Members with the Reshaping Prospectus, and the key parts to this were outlined to Members, including the background to developing the prospectus, such as extensive internal and external consultation and engagement with various stakeholders, through to the five key transformation themes, the criteria and guidance for service projects to be prioritised, governance, partnership and scrutiny arrangements for the Programme, as well as the next steps for this process, such as the discussions on the priorities and other opportunities identified as part of this process during the forthcoming budget working groups over October and November.

Subsequently, a number of comments and queries were raised at the meeting, which included the following.

The Chair referred to the ‘Brilliant Basics’ approach and the benefits of this in providing better service delivery to residents.

Councillor Franks, whilst supporting the Community Asset Transfer process, was concerned about certain aspects of this, with what he felt were significant challenges

to having community involvement, a lack of transparency and engagement as well as the pressures on Council resourcing. The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources stated that the asset transfer process could be a challenge for local communities and to ensure the sustainability of these efforts required skilled or technical input. The new relationship agreement would help, as well as looking to review this process and to have a meeting with Councillor Franks and Council officers to look at the specific examples and areas of concern he had. The Chair endorsed this by referring to similar concerns raised at a meeting of the Committee previously, where it was recommended or suggested that more support and guidance was provided to local communities in running assets and buildings in a commercially viable way, and there was now an opportunity and room to discuss this.

Councillor Dr. Johnson asked about the timescales on implementation and prioritisation of the measures for the Reshaping Programme, as well as the governance and decision-making processes surrounding this and the potential benefits of the Council utilising a Zero-Based Budgeting approach in helping with the Reshaping Programme and Council budgeting or prioritisation of services. It was explained that the officers involved with putting together the Programme's prospectus were fully conscious of the scale and breadth of reshaping work, as was Cabinet, which had set ten priorities to be linked with the areas of greatest risk, in order for those critical areas to be prioritised and focused upon first. On the Zero-Based Budgeting approach and the related feedback from the Councillor and his colleagues, this had already started to be considered and implemented within Corporate Resources, by looking at budgets and seeing how these could be spent efficiently and effectively. This could also be seen around the preparatory work that the Directorate Management Teams would be undertaking of their budget working groups this year and to look at the statutory and discretionary elements of services and having a more forensic look at how individual Directorate budgets were spent at Operational Manager and Head of Service level. Although many budgets still faced the challenge of facing both statutory and financial constraints, and the zero-based approach needed to target those budgets most suited to this more forensic approach.

The Vice-Chair referred to the 'Brilliant Basics' approach and asked why the decision had been made to undertake a task and finish and was this being led by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). He also referred to service level transformation and asked about the decision making / prioritisation processes involved, particularly around statutory and discretionary services. On the considerations around statutory and discretionary services and their inclusion in the prospectus, the Director of Corporate Resources replied that with the considerable portion of the budget that needed to be focused on the key services of education and social care and the related financial pressures, there was a need to reshape and transform the Council's workstreams in these areas and others, forensically, in order to protect funding and to look at alternative delivery models. On the task and finish group, this had been drawn from staff across the Council, in order to look for efficiencies, streamlining and look at what processes could help to improve the Council's interactions with services users and residents, and internally through management development sessions and disseminating the Reshaping Programme to Council staff.

On the Vice-Chair's follow up question around the accountability model on the above approach, it was explained that this was a piece of work that had recently gained momentum and had been undertaken discreetly and, as part of this, Council team leaders had been supported by SLT and others. This tied in with the work around the twenty resident journeys and how residents accessed services.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources stated this approach was exciting and had the potential to make a positive difference to residents and Council staff in terms of changing, improving and streamlining services.

Following the discussions on this item, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the following comments from the Committee be shared with Cabinet for consideration:

- The potential benefits of the Council utilising a Zero-Based Budgeting approach in helping with the Reshaping Programme and Council budgeting or prioritisation of services;
- The benefits and importance of the Council adopting the 'Brilliant Basics' approach and priority in order to provide better service delivery to residents.

(2) T H A T a meeting be set up to discuss the comments and concerns raised at this Committee meeting about the Community Asset Transfer process, the potential complexity of, the community involvement with, and Council officer resourcing to support, this process.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) For Cabinet to consider the views and feedback of the Committee on the report.

(2) In order to consider and review the Community Asset Transfer process in light of the comments and concerns raised at the Committee meeting.”