

Meeting of:	Council
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 07 December 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Review of the Joint Consultative Forum's (JCF) Constitution
Purpose of Report:	To seek Council approval for an amendment to the wording of the Council Constitution and that of the Joint Consultative Forum in two areas.
Report Owner:	Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Mark Thomas, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not require consultation to be undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for decision by Full Council
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A request for Council approval for an amendment to the wording of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum and the associated areas of the Council Constitution. • The amendments apply to paragraph(s) 5.3 and 6.3 of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum, and to 13.16 (q), (3) of the Council Constitution ('RESPONSIBILITY FOR COUNCIL FUNCTIONS: COMMITTEES' TERMS OF REFERENCE') - in relation to the eligibility and membership criteria for the election of the Chairman of the Forum and the number of Directorate consultative groups to be included. • For Paragraph 5.3 of the Joint Consultative Forum Constitution and 13.16 (q), (3) of the Council Constitution – that the wording “a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor” and "by all Elected Members" be inserted; and • Paragraph 6.3 – that the number of Directorates indicated be changed from five to four. 	

Recommendation

1. THAT the change to the relevant wording as set out below be approved and the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum (paragraph 5.3) and Section 13 of the Council Constitution (13.16 (q), (3)) be amended accordingly:

"The Chairperson of the Forum will be a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor, elected at the first meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum by all Elected Members, following the local government elections for the duration of the current administration."

2. THAT a change be made to the wording of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum (paragraph 6.3) as below:

"The Council recognises that consultations should take place as close as possible to operational activity in order to resolve difficulties and improve communications. Consequently the main Forum will be supported by four Directorate consultative groups as follows:

1. Social Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Adult Services, Children and Young People's Services, Business Management & Innovation and Youth Offending Services.
2. Learning & Skills – covering all operational and employee matters within Schools, including Teachers, Strategy & Performance, Additional Learning Needs, School Improvement, Libraries, Youth Service, Adult Community Learning and Catering.
3. Environment and Housing Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Visible Services and Transport, Building Services, Housing Services and Shared Regulatory Services.
4. Managing Director and Resources - covering all operational and employee matters within Democratic Services, Financial Services, Human Resources Service, ICT Services, Legal Services, Performance and Development, Regeneration and Planning and Resource Management."

Reason for Recommendations

1. To update the relevant wording within the Council and Joint Consultative Forum Constitutions in order to reflect the appropriate criteria to become Chairperson of the Joint Consultative Forum and regarding which Members of the Forum can vote in order to elect the same.
2. To update the wording of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum in order to reflect the current number of Directorate consultative groups supporting the Forum.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's Constitution remains under review on an ongoing basis. Under Section 2.4 of the Constitution the Monitoring Officer has a duty to monitor and

review the operation of the Constitution to ensure that the aims and principles contained therein are given full effect.

- 1.2 Section 2.62 of the Constitution provides for any changes considered by the Monitoring Officer to be required to be made to remove any inconsistency, ambiguity or typographical correction to be made in a report to the next full Council meeting for information.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 A report was brought to the Joint Consultative Forum on 10th February, 2020 concerning suggested changes to the wording of parts of its Constitution (Appendices 1 and 2).
- 2.2 The suggested changes were agreed by the Forum, subject to the inclusion of additional wording regarding the Chairperson of the Forum being elected by all Elected Members (Appendix 3, pp.9-10, agenda item (p)).
- 2.3 Under paragraph 5.3 of the Joint Consultative Forum Constitution and Section 13 of the Council Constitution (13.16 (q), (3)) the wording currently reads:

"The Chairperson of the Forum will be elected at the first meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum following the local government elections for the duration of the current administration."

However, additional wording is proposed in order to clarify the criteria required to be eligible for the role of Chairperson of the Joint Consultative Forum as well as which Members of the Forum can vote in order to elect the same. Therefore, it is proposed that the paragraph should read as:

"The Chairperson of the Forum will be a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor, elected at the first meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum by all Elected Members, following the local government elections for the duration of the current administration."

This is to enable the relevant Member be elected as Chairperson and the correct Electors be specified.

- 2.4 Under paragraph 6.3 of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum the wording currently reads:

"The Council recognises that consultations should take place as close as possible to operational activity in order to resolve difficulties and improve communications. Consequently the main Forum will be supported by five Directorate consultative groups as follows:

1. Social Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Adult Services, Children and Young People's Services, Business Management & Innovation and Youth Offending Services.
2. Learning & Skills – covering all operational and employee matters within Schools, including Teachers, Strategy & Performance, Additional Learning Needs, School Improvement, Libraries, Youth Service, Adult Community Learning and Catering.
3. Environment and Housing Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Visible Services and Transport, Building Services, Housing Services and Shared Regulatory Services.
4. Managing Director and Resources - covering all operational and employee matters within Democratic Services, Financial Services, Human Resources Service, ICT Services, Legal Services, Performance and Development, Regeneration and Planning and Resource Management."

However, updated wording is proposed in order to reflect the correct number of Directorate consultative groups supporting the Joint Consultative Forum (four not five groups as previously stated above):

"The Council recognises that consultations should take place as close as possible to operational activity in order to resolve difficulties and improve communications. Consequently, the main Forum will be supported by four Directorate consultative groups as follows:

1. Social Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Adult Services, Children and Young People's Services, Business Management & Innovation and Youth Offending Services.
2. Learning & Skills – covering all operational and employee matters within Schools, including Teachers, Strategy & Performance, Additional Learning Needs, School Improvement, Libraries, Youth Service, Adult Community Learning and Catering.
3. Environment and Housing Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Visible Services and Transport, Building Services, Housing Services and Shared Regulatory Services.
4. Managing Director and Resources - covering all operational and employee matters within Democratic Services, Financial Services, Human Resources Service, ICT Services, Legal Services, Performance and Development, Regeneration and Planning and Resource Management."

This is to ensure that the correct, current, number of consultative groups are detailed in the wording of the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum.

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

- 3.1** The amendments directly contribute to the long-term future by ensuring that the Council's and Joint Consultative Forum's Constitutions continue to operate with full effect.

The amendments also contribute to the prevention of the Council's and Joint Consultative Forum's Constitutions becoming obsolete or non-effective in achieving its aims and principles.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no employment implications as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** The Council is required to comply with the Local Government Act 2000 and subordinate legislation in the drawing up and subsequent operation of the Constitution.

5. Background Papers

Constitution for the Council and Joint Consultative Forum.

~~AGENDA ITEM~~

MEETING OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM
10th February 2020

REVIEW OF THE JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM'S CONSTITUTION

The Forum is being asked to review its Constitution.

Amendments will require agreement by Full Council.

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM CONSTITUTION

1. Title

- 1.1 The Forum shall be known as the “Joint Consultative Forum” hereafter referred to as “The Forum”.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 Within the Cabinet system of administration to provide a formal mechanism for joint consultation between elected members, employee representatives and management of the Council in order to maintain good employee relations.
- 2.2 To examine and discuss matters of mutual concern.
- 2.3 To provide a means of regular communication between members, management and staff on problems and proposals that impact on the effective delivery of Council services.

3. Status

- 3.1 The Forum will make recommendations to the Cabinet of the Council through the auspices of the appropriate Cabinet member.

4. Functions

- 4.1 The Forum will make recommendations on the following:
- Matters relating to the principles of the Council’s terms and conditions of employment.
 - Matters requiring formal agreement between the employer and employee representatives of the Council.
 - any matter referred to the Forum.
- 4.2 The Forum will receive summary reports on matters regarding the Health and Safety of employees for information, from the Corporate Occupational Health and Safety Committee.
- 4.3 The Forum will not deal with any issues:
- relevant to a personal or individual nature
 - which have not been considered through the appropriate directorate consultative forum or through other relevant procedures/forums/groups
- 4.4 Neither will it arrive at a decision that conflicts with the Council’s standing orders, financial regulations or statutory responsibilities.
- 4.5 Acting as a consultative body the Forum will have the ability to make recommendations to the Cabinet.

5. Composition

- 5.1 The Forum shall consist of seven elected members of the Council. In the event of an elected member being unable to attend the place will be taken by the Member's named substitute.
- 5.2 The employee representatives shall consist of a total of twelve representatives in the employ of the Council nominated collectively by the appropriate Trade Unions with the Teaching Association Trade Unions being provided with four representatives. In the event of an employee representative being unable to attend a meeting a substitute member in the employ of the Council can be nominated.
- 5.3 The Chairperson of the Forum will be a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor, elected at the first meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum following the local government elections for the duration of the current administration.
- 5.4 The Vice Chairperson of the Forum will be elected by the Trade Unions representatives and will chair the Forum in the absence (and at the request) of the Chairperson.
- 5.5 The **quorum** at a meeting will be three elected members and six trade union/employee representatives.
- 5.6 The Standing Joint Secretary to the Forum will be the Head of Human Resources. (In his/her absence the Operational Manager for Human Resources will act as substitute). The Joint Secretary for the employee representatives shall be nominated on an annual basis by the appropriate trade unions.

6. Consultative Structure

- 6.1 The Forum will meet at least three times per year on dates set out at the first meeting of the Forum at the beginning of the Municipal Year.
- 6.2 The Chairperson, in consultation with the Joint Secretaries, may convene a special or additional meeting of the Forum at any time following due notice (7 working days excluding weekends and bank holidays)
- 6.3 The Council recognises that consultations should take place as close as possible to operational activity in order to resolve difficulties and improve communications. Consequently the main Forum will be supported by ~~five~~four Directorate consultative groups as follows:
 1. Social Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Adult Services, Children and Young People's Services, Business Management & Innovation and Youth Offending Services.

2. Learning & Skills – covering all operational and employee matters within Schools, including Teachers, Strategy & Performance, Additional Learning Needs, School Improvement, Libraries, Youth Service, Adult Community Learning and Catering.
 3. Environment and Housing Services - covering all operational and employee matters within Visible Services and Transport, Building Services, Housing Services and Shared Regulatory Services.
 4. Managing Director and Resources - covering all operational and employee matters within Democratic Services, Financial Services, Human Resources Service, ICT Services, Legal Services, Performance and Development, Regeneration and Planning and Resource Management.
- 6.4 The Directorate consultative groups will be management and employee representative meetings convened on a regular basis to key into the main Forum arrangements
- 6.5 Directorate consultative groups will resolve all matters that can be resolved. Unresolved items to go to appropriate Director in the first instance and then the Joint Consultative Forum if no agreed outcome achieved.
- 6.6 To assist in and improve the above processes of consultation, Directors and/or Service Heads will attend Forum meetings to address specific service related matters.

7. Working Arrangements

- 7.1 Employer initiated items will be submitted to the Forum through the Head of Human Resources. Employee initiated items will be submitted through the Trade Unions Joint Secretary. Items should be submitted by no later than 15 working days (excluding weekends and bank holidays) before the date of the Forum and be supported by sufficient information to enable the parties to know the nature and scale of the items to be discussed.
- 7.2 Prior to each main Forum meeting the Head of Human Resources will convene an informal meeting between the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Trade Union Joint Secretary to discuss any outstanding matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting or issues relating to the sequencing and management of agenda items for the forthcoming meeting
- 7.3 Substitutes for the above informal meeting can be nominated subject to 2 working days notice prior to the Forum (excluding weekends and bank holidays).
- 7.4 The Forum agenda will be circulated five working days in advance of the meeting (excluding weekends and bank holidays).
- 7.5 Urgent items (not otherwise on the agenda) will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and with the prior approval of the Chairperson. Such items should be submitted through the Head of Human Resources and

no later than 1 working day before the date of the Forum (excluding weekends and bank holidays). Such items should be submitted in writing and supported by sufficient information to enable the Chairperson to determine the urgency of the item.

- 7.6 The meeting can be adjourned for short periods during the meeting at the discretion of the Chairperson following requests from either employer or employee representatives to allow discussion on agenda items.
- 7.7 The draft minutes of the Forum will be agreed by the Joint Secretaries within ten working days (excluding weekends and bank holidays). If necessary a meeting may be convened within the ten working day timescale to agree the minutes. Where there is a failure to agree the minutes the matter will be decided and concluded by the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson.
- 7.8 The minutes of the Forum will be referred to the Cabinet. No recommendation shall be regarded as carried unless it has been approved by a majority of both elected members and employee representatives of the Forum present at the meeting.
- 7.9 Recommendations of the Forum will be referred to Cabinet or the appropriate Officer.
- 7.10 The Head of Human Resources will ensure appropriate feedback to the Employees representatives (through the Joint Secretary) on issues referred to Cabinet by the Forum.
- 7.11 Minutes of the Directorate Groups and the Corporate Occupational Health and Safety Committee along with any unresolved items from the Directorate Groups will be referred to the Joint Consultative Forum.

HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

October 2015

CM/HR/JCF/CONSTITUTION/JCF191015

JOINT CONSULTATIVE FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on 10th February, 2020.

Present: Councillor N.C. Thomas (Chairman); Councillors Dr. I.J. Johnson, M.G.J. Morgan, A.R. Robertson and L.O. Rowlands.

Representatives of Trade Unions: Mr. K. Armstrong (Unison), Mr. T. Greaves (GMB), Mr. G. Pappas (Unison) and Ms. S. Townsend-Ryan (Unison/Vice-Chairman).

Officers: Ms. J. Ballantine, Mr. L. Bonni, Mr. T. Bowring, Mrs. A. Davies, Mr G. Davies, Mrs. T. Dickinson, Mrs. P. Ham, Ms. E. Morgan and Mr. M. Thomas.

(a) Apologies for Absence –

These were received from Councillors Mrs. P. Drake and G. John; M. Canavan (NEU), L. Lancaster (NASUWT) and G. Southby (Unison).

(b) To Receive Notification from the Trade Unions of the Name of the Vice-Chairman –

RESOLVED – T H A T S. Townsend-Ryan be appointed to the position of Vice-Chairman for the duration of the current Administration.

(c) Minutes and Matters Arising –

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 29th July, 2019 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment – Mr. K. Armstrong should be shown as a representative of Unison and not GMB.

(d) Declarations of Interest –

Councillors Dr. I.J. Johnson, A.R. Robertson and L.O. Rowlands declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 12(ii) – Reshaping Services. The nature of their interest was that these Councillors were Members of Town or Community Councils and had received dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on such matters.

(e) Chairman's Announcement –

The Chairman asked the forum to observe a minute's silence for the former Vale of Glamorgan Councillor Janice Birch, who recently passed away.

(f) Trade Union Items –

No items were received.

(g) Minutes of Directorate Consultative Groups (for information) –

The Forum considered the minutes relating to Learning and Skills held on 16th October, 2019; Social Services on 23rd May, 2019; Environment and Housing on 4th September, 9th October, 6th November and 4th December, 2019; and, presented as supplementary information, Social Services Consultative Forum from 6th September, 2019.

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Directorate Consultative Groups be noted.

(h) Minutes of Corporate Health and Safety Meeting –

The Forum considered the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Meeting held on 23rd January, 2020. Mr. Pappas (Unison) queried the implementation of fire breaks as part of the remaining fire stopping work to be done in Council offices. The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager replied that this work had now been approved. Mr. Greaves (GMB) also asked whether the related health and safety assessment had been completed, to which the Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager replied they would need to find out and reply to him.

AGREED – T H A T the minutes of the Corporate Health and Safety Meeting be noted.

(i) Dates of Future Directorate Consultative Groups for Noting –

AGREED – T H A T the following dates for the Directorate Consultative Groups as detailed below be noted:

- Learning and Skills: 26th February, 17th June and 21st October, 2020;
- Resources: TBA;
- Social Services: TBA;
- Visible Services: Meetings scheduled for first Wednesday of every month.

(j) Volunteering Policy – Verbal Update –

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development informed the Forum that the Volunteering Policy would allow Vale of Glamorgan staff to take one day off for volunteering within the Vale of Glamorgan community which would work out as one per leave year. This could be done on an individual basis or as part of a group event, for example World Oceans Day or National Recycling Day. She queried with the Head of Policy and Business Transformation whether this Policy had gone to the Insight Group, to which he replied yes. The Head of Human

Resources and Organisational Development went on to say that the information would be passed on to Trade Unions shortly.

It was

AGREED – T H A T the policies and procedures as outlined in the Volunteering Policy update be noted.

(k) Management of Attendance Update –

The Operational Manager Employee Services informed the Forum this was a report on the Management of Attendance figures for the Quarter 3 period (1st April to 31st December, 2019) and comparative data for the same period in 2018. This provided an overview of corporate absence. The 2019/20 performance outcome for Quarter 3 was at 7.63 days lost per FTE. This tied in with previously noticed trend where sickness increased over the second half of the year. Of particular note was the currently monthly figure of 7.63 days lost per FTE and the current end of year forecast for 2019/20 which was 11.1 days lost per FTE – which was against the annual target of 9.2 days lost per FTE. However, the Operational Manager for Employee Services pointed out that the increase was mirrored across other similar Local Authorities. He went on to inform the Forum around the data concerning days lost per Directorate as well as Appendices A and B to the report which drilled down to individual Directorates. This data had been disseminated via internal meetings, Directorates and Scrutiny Committees.

The Operational Manager for Employee Services highlighted that 75% of all absence was long term – this was defined as four weeks or more and as a result, this statistic needed to be targeted. This would include initiatives such as the review of the current Attendance and Wellbeing Policy as well as looking at information coming from the Scrutiny Committees such as a review of sickness as a result of musculoskeletal and mental health issues in order to help tackle these.

An Elected Member stated that a more detailed version of this report had been presented at a recent Scrutiny Committee meeting and had been thoroughly discussed by Committee Members. However, it was also important to hear the input from the Trade Unions regarding this as well.

The Chairman voiced concerns around the high levels of non-work related issues impacting on work attendance as well as citing the issues around musculoskeletal problems such as staff having to deal with overloaded black bags as part of refuse waste collection. The duty of care that the Council and management had towards staff meant they needed to be alert to such issues occurring.

Mr. Pappas stated that the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development had put together a Wellbeing Group to help with the issues raised at this meeting. He also stated that in terms of front line services the main issues were around musculoskeletal and mental health or stress related issues. There was a slow but steady change or improvement in the work force culture in raising such issues, but other issues were also starting to emerge such as an aging work force.

Discussions concerning these issues were being held over at the BCRS and Depot facilities.

An Elected Member questioned how non-work related issues could be picked up within the work place environment. Mr. Pappas replied that in such cases where it was identified, people were signposted to the relevant teams or organisations. He added that this was all that could be done at present until the process changed.

The Chairman added that it was difficult for some people to seek help until issues had come to a head which could manifest itself in an increase in sickness or in the drop in work quality. It was necessary for management and other supervisory to be alert for such signs which could indicate stress or mental health issues within or outside the work place.

An Elected Member stated there was a need for greater awareness and promotion of people speaking to management and others regarding issues around health and wellbeing. The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager replied that measures such as the Time to Talk Days had been promoted via StaffNet with staff participation within both the Civic and Dock Offices. The Elected Member responded by saying that it was also necessary to look at wider social media as well as StaffNet, such as Twitter or Facebook. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development stated that the Elected Member's suggestions around the wider social media would be taken on board and tablets would be provided in areas such as the Alps Depot and elsewhere in order for staff to access StaffNet or StaffNet Plus which could also raise awareness around mental health issues, wellbeing and persons they could contact about these. She also added that mentors would be trained and utilised by either GMB or Unison Unions as well as looking to increase break out spaces and areas for multi-faith worship.

Mr. Pappas stated that domiciliary care and the Alps were areas where there were insufficient mentors, and staff faced a variety of issues such as homelessness and illiteracy. There was a need to look at these issues in order to improve things. The Chairman agreed, stating it was important to look at corporate responsibility with regard to these areas. Mr. Pappas added that both GMB and Unison were working together in order to provide literacy, digital and numeracy courses for frontline services staff but needed Council help in order to increase the funding and roll out of this.

The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager added that an Occupational Health Nurse would be going to the Alps in order to do health screening and this could provide an opportunity for members of staff to speak to an independent person. An Elected Member commented that staff may find it difficult to come forward due to pride and other factors, and that the Vale of Glamorgan Council should be more proactive in encouraging people to make contact regarding health issues. The Health and Safety Wellbeing Manager replied that, for example, posters had been put up in the Alps facility in order to get interest for attending the Occupational Health Nurse and thereby encourage people to come forward with any issues.

It was

AGREED – T H A T that the Management of Attendance Update be noted.

(l) StaffNet Plus Presentation –

The Operational Manager for Employee Services presented to the Forum this item and explained this had been previously discussed in July, but which had now gone live after an initial soft launch. He presented the front page which also accessed various key pages on the website, such as staff benefits. The Operational Manager for Employee Services added that this would be a means for employees to get quick access to key areas via any private device such as a smartphone or tablet in order to access information such as their pay slips and would provide a cheaper and more efficient way of viewing these – but, with the caveat that hard copies would be provided to those who struggled with IT and until such time as they were trained up. Other areas that could be accessed were health self-referral, staff benefits page which offered company discounts for all Vale of Glamorgan Council and Schools staff as well as accessing training and purchasing annual leave. It also provided a link to key Council policies and 'Cycle to Work' (in the near future).

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development also stated that Care First was also available online in order to provide easy accessibility for staff to access this at any time regarding issues around health and wellbeing. The Care First helpline was 24 hours.

It was

AGREED – T H A T the StaffNet Plus presentation update be noted.

(m) Matter Which the Chairman had Decided was Urgent –

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chairman had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

(n) Whistleblowing Policy –
(Urgent by reason of the need to have the item concerning the Whistleblowing Policy on the Agenda to be discussed by the Forum)

The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development provided an update to the Forum concerning the draft Whistleblowing Policy. She explained that the Whistleblowing Policy had been in existence in one form or another since 2014, but since 2019 and in conjunction with Audit and the Staff Survey there had been a review to ensure individuals within the Council had an opportunity to raise issues. As part of this review, the new draft Whistleblowing Policy had been written – using a much simpler and easier to understand format in order that it was accessible to all, whether they be Council staff or Elected Members. As part of this a dedicated "Speak Out" telephone line and e-mail address would be available for Vale of

Glamorgan staff, Elected Members and others such as employees of a Local Authority school or School Governors and contractors. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised Members that the related process flow chart for whistleblowing would be distributed to them shortly.

An Elected Member stated this matter had been raised at the Audit Committee and the main comment there had been the need to include the process flow chart in the report and whistleblowing document.

Mr. Pappas stated the main issue around the Whistleblowing Policy was the reluctance of staff and others to come forward and he asked how this could be overcome. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that this indeed was a difficult issue and was a common challenge for all businesses and other organisations. Key here was the need to co-operate with Unions over this in order to reassure staff and to reinforce the fact that they would be protected. She also noted that whistleblowing figures were relatively low within the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

An Elected Member, following up on the previous comment by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, asked what were the figures in terms of whistleblowing reports. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied that it was approximately 7 to 8 cases reported within the previous year but would circulate the actual figures to Members as soon as possible.

Another Elected Member mentioned that he believed that there were approximately 18 cases of whistleblowing over the last five years within the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development replied and in order to add context that some of these were upheld but others were not, but she would distribute the relevant figures to Forum Members as soon as possible. The Elected Member replied that it would be difficult to assess the whistleblowing process without comparative data but going forward it would be useful to home in on figures generated via the anonymous line or e-mail address. He added that there was a potential concern around possible under reporting but in part this could be as a result of the present culture within the work place.

Mr. Pappas added that there would be staff concern around what would happen should they whistle blow as well as the level and quality of investigation undertaken as a result of a whistleblowing case.

The Chairman stated that there were some examples recently within the media where people were hounded at their work place as a result of whistleblowing. He also referred to page 6 of the draft Whistleblowing Policy, in particular around the discouragement of anonymous reporting and highlighted the need to provide support to staff as a consequence of this.

Finally, an Elected Member stressed the need for an ongoing discussion between Trade Unions and the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development in relation to this Policy.

It was

AGREED – T H A T the draft Whistleblowing Policy and update be noted.

(o) Updates –

(i) **Corporate Plan**

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation informed the Forum that the current Corporate Plan was now at the end stage and a new one would be introduced shortly. As part of this, it was important to look at how things could be done differently and move more towards a focus on outcomes rather than service activity. After the consultation in relation to this had been undertaken, the Council would be looking at a more integrated approach so that Directorates could see how they contribute towards the overall Council vision. This proposed new Corporate Plan would be reviewed by Cabinet shortly and then on to Full Council.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation went on to speak about the feedback from the consultation process on the new Corporate Plan and the overall theme was that the Plan sounded good, but respondents were interested to see details on how this would be implemented. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated the actual implementation would be presented in the Annual Delivery Plan and this would be consulted on in March. He added that it was a useful process to review the Corporate Plan and to set ambitious goals. He also wanted to thank the Trade Unions for their input and support in this process.

(ii) **Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24**

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation informed the Forum that the draft Strategic Equality Plan would set for the next four years (2020-24) the move to ten equality objectives aligned with the Annual Development Plan. The consultation process had involved various groups such as the Equalities Consultative Forum, Vale Youth Cabinet, New Horizons and Vale People First, as well as through online surveys and social media campaigns. The progress against each of the actions would be reviewed and reported every six months. As part of the consultation process and to tie in with the equality objectives, certain key areas had been highlighted such as improving access to disabled citizens, more accessible public transport and to consider the gender pay gap and any ethnic minority pay gap for the staff within the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

The Chairman spoke in relation to the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Equality Plan, stating that there seemed to be quite a low response rate that certainly did not signify a statistically significant number. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation replied that the online response was only one part of the consultation process so as well as taking onboard the comments

generated there, the comments made in the wider consultations such as with the Vale 50+ Forum, Youth Cabinet, etc. were also taken into account. He added it was important to have an ongoing conversation on issues raised with the public, for example climate change. This was also the same with the Equality Plan, such as consultation with the Equalities Consultative Forum. There would also be additional consultation with regard to the amended Annual Delivery Plan.

An Elected Member stated that it was important to have sufficient statistical data come out of this consultation as there needed to be both qualitative and quantitative information. Also, for both the Corporate Plan and the Strategic Equality Plan it was the case that the public would wholeheartedly agree with the statements made within, and ethos of, these Plans but the actual issue for this audience would be how they could be implemented.

Another Elected Member stated that it appeared the response rate for these consultations were less than 1% of the population of the Vale of Glamorgan. This could lead to potentially other issues that had an impact on the local population not being registered. The Elected Member went on to say that the Vale of Glamorgan had a rising elderly population and this would mean certain key issues being generated around public transport, particularly within the rural Vale. The Member also referred to a previous report which indicated a large increase in the older population by 2035 within the Vale. This would require greater consultation on the needs of older people within the Vale and to reach out to them.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation replied that as part of the consultation and review of objectives it had been essential that concerns identified were relevant and that consultation had been undertaken with various groups including the Vale 50+ Forum. The Elected Member added that the key word or phrase now used in the Plans was sustainability and as part of this it was essential to making the rural Vale much more sustainable.

(iii) **Reshaping Services**

This provided the Forum with action updates for the overall process as well as specific projects by the Head of Policy and Business Transformation as well as the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

Mr. Pappas asked about the overall Reshaping Services process and whether it was making efficiencies and savings. The Head of Policy and Business Transformation replied that Reshaping Services had already made some significant pieces of change within the Vale of Glamorgan Council with financial savings, for example significant cost savings had been made recently through the establishment and launch of The Big Fresh Catering Company. Overall, Reshaping had resulted in savings of approximately £12m. He added that in terms of budgetary issues resulting from the Reshaping Services, these would be looked at by the Vale of Glamorgan Council in order to resolve where this was necessary and achievable. He

stressed the need to look to the future – in order to learn from the successes as well as those areas not so successful – and to look at next year with future-proofing and protecting key services over the next three to five years.

An Elected Member stated that a recent uplift from the Welsh Government needed to be looked at in the context of whether this was an ongoing, sustained, uplift year on year or a stand-alone one in terms of Welsh Government funding. He added that it would be useful for Trade Union representatives to attend Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny and Audit Committee meetings as this would help to give an alternative view on budgets and other financial aspects. He also added that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was in a fairly good financial position whereby areas of overspend were balanced by savings made elsewhere. The Elected Member agreed with the Head of Policy and Business Transformation about looking at priorities in terms of Reshaping Services and felt that the Trade Unions should feed into this.

The Head of Policy and Business Transformation stated that he and his team would continue to liaise with the Trade Unions and that further updates concerning Reshaping Services would be fed back to Cabinet.

It was

AGREED – T H A T the updates on Draft Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24, Reshaping Services and the Corporate Plan be noted.

(p) Review of the Joint Consultative Forum's Constitution –

The Democratic Services Officer advised the Forum there was a need to revise the Constitution for the Joint Consultative Forum in two areas:

- Paragraph 5.3 – that the wording “a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor” be inserted; and
- Paragraph 6.3 – that the number of Directorates indicated be changed from five to four.

An Elected Member also asked around the quorum as set out in the Constitution for the Forum as key Members of the quorum had previously had difficulties in attending. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development would look to assist the relevant Members to attend future Forum meetings.

The Chairman also asked that wording be added to Paragraph 5.3 regarding the Chairperson of the Forum being elected by all Elected Members, to which the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer stated he would arrange for this to be inserted.

It was

AGREED – T H A T the proposed changes to the Joint Consultative Forum's Constitution be endorsed subject to the inclusion in Paragraph 5.3 of a need for the Chairperson to be elected by all Elected Members.

(q) Future Meeting Dates –

AGREED – T H A T the Joint Consultative Forum meetings for 2020/21 be held on:

- 6th July, 2020;
- 12th October, 2020;
- 18th January, 2021; and
- 19th April, 2021.

The forum also wished to thank Mrs A. Davies for her service, as this would be the last time she would attend the Joint Consultative Forum due to her retirement in the near future.