

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 24TH OCTOBER, 2022

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 20TH OCTOBER 2022

“C104 FINAL DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL-SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2021/22 (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – ALL) –

The report sought Cabinet endorsement of the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment Report 2021/22, incorporating the key findings from engagement with key stakeholders.

The Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report (Appendix A) drew on a wide range of information sources (including the views of key stakeholders) to assess the progress made by the Council in meeting its Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22 as aligned to Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. The findings would identify how to further enhance internal processes and use of resources to improve and support achievement of the Annual Delivery Plan commitments and Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Annual Self-Assessment report was a new requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which required the Council to keep performance under review, consult on and then publish a report setting out the conclusions of self-assessment once in respect of every financial year.

In line with new performance duties, the Council had engaged with key stakeholders and asked them what they thought about achievements over the past year and the areas which needed focus in the coming year. Having considered progress with the Annual Delivery Plan, stakeholders were also asked whether the Council’s four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives continued to remain relevant.

A programme of engagement activities were undertaken during August-October 2022, targeting local people, Council staff and other key stakeholders via an online survey, various social media communications, as well as attendance at a number of public events across the Vale of Glamorgan. The Draft Self-Assessment report was also widely circulated with a request for comments from key partners including recognised Trade Unions via the Joint Consultative Forum.

A summary of the consultation findings (appended at Appendix B) presented a mixed picture. When asked whether the Council had achieved the objectives set in the previous year, public respondents generally responded more positively to the themes of, ‘Providing Care and Support’ and ‘Improving infrastructure’. They were least positive about ‘Responding to the Climate Change Challenge – Project Zero’ and the ‘Cost-of-Living Crisis’. Council staff respondents were most positive about ‘Providing

Care and Support' with 'Project Zero' and 'Involving our Communities' received the least positive responses.

A majority of respondents (public and Council staff) agreed that the Council's Well-being Objectives remained relevant. In terms of areas for future focus, again, the majority of all respondents were in agreement with the proposed areas of future focus identified for each of the six Annual Delivery Plan themes. The additional areas of focus suggested by respondents broadly fell within the areas of focus proposed for each of the six Annual Delivery Plan themes, giving further assurance to the Council's self-assessment findings and proposed direction for 2023/24.

The consultation received 125 individual responses to the survey, and whilst around 2,500 people looked at the social media communications and animations, 30 comments were received across the various animations. A further 20 responses were received from Council staff. Despite the low response rate, a summary of all respondents' views has provided a snapshot of stakeholder views and gives useful insights which would help to shape next year's (2023/24) Annual Delivery Plan priorities and associated Service Plans for the same period.

It was clear from the public survey analysis that there was a general lack of awareness and understanding of what the Council did and that more needed to be done to communicate information in a way that was easier for people to understand so they were encouraged to participate in engagement activities. In addition, Council colleagues would benefit from regular communication about performance overall. These issues were being progressed through the new Public Participation Strategy.

As part of the engagement work, elected Members were also consulted on the draft report via Scrutiny Committees and the views of Members had been incorporated within the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment Report 2021/22 (Appendix A) as appropriate. In accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Governance and Audit Committee had played a specific role in contributing to the Annual Self-Assessment process and having reviewed a draft Self-Assessment report on 27th September, 2022, made two recommendations which had been addressed within the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2021/22 report.

Overall, based on a review of last year's performance and the findings from the consultation work with citizens, partners, Council staff and other key statutory consultees, it was believed that, on balance, the Council had met its Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22, in what continued to be a challenging year for the Council. Whilst the self-assessment findings and stakeholders views did give some assurance that the Council were heading in the right direction, it was recognised that the challenges that lay ahead were significant and would require the Council to fundamentally rethink how it operated as an organisation in order to succeed in future proofing and protecting the services that matter to our citizens and their well-being.

The Leader said that communication regarding the Council's responsibilities was needed to ensure that the public understood the services being provided and any relevant support available.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the consultation summary findings (Appendix B) and the updated Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2021/22 appended at Appendix A be endorsed.

(2) T H A T the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report be referred to Governance and Audit Committee (24th October, 2022) for their consideration and approval in line with their statutory role, under Part 6 (section 114) of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and that upon consideration the Committee refers any recommendations back to Cabinet for their final consideration (3rd November, 2022) prior to Cabinet referring this report, the comments of the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet's responses to Council (9th November, 2022) for consideration and approval. Should Governance and Audit Committee make no further comments regarding the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2021/22, Cabinet would consider the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2021/22 as agreed and refer the matter to Full Council.

(3) T H A T the use of paragraph 15.14.2(ii) of the Council's Constitution (urgent decision procedure) be authorised to allow the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment 2021/22 to be referred to the Governance and Audit Committee meeting taking place on 24th October, 2022 for consideration, with any recommendations considered by Cabinet on 3rd November, 2022 if required, prior to Full Council consideration on 9th November, 2022.

Reasons for decisions

(1) To enable Cabinet to consider the consultation feedback and then approve the subsequent changes to the Final Draft Annual Self-Assessment report 2021/22.

(2) To enable the Governance and Audit Committee to consider the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment findings in line with its statutory role, under Part 6 (section 114) of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(3) To ensure that the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2021/22 can be presented to Council in November for consideration and approval.”