

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 26th April, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, S.J. Haines, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood.

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources), W.A. Hennessy and G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing).

948 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

949 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 15th February, 2023 and 15th March, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

950 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor C.P. Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Annual Report 2021/22. The nature of the interest was he was involved with various organisations that GVS supported. Councillor Franks had dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only on matters relating to Dinas Powys Library and Activity Centre (including grant applications) when being discussed at both Vale of Glamorgan Council and Dinas Powys Community Council meetings. He also had dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only on matters relating to Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern (including grant applications) when being discussed at both Vale of Glamorgan Council and Dinas Powys Community Council meetings. Due to this, and there being no prejudicial interests present, Councillor Franks remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor S.J. Haines declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Annual Report 2021/22. The nature of the interest was he was a member of the Paul Lewis Community Centre in St. Athan which may have

links to GVS. He was also a trustee for the St. Athan Clothes Bank. Due to there being no prejudicial interest present, Councillor Haines remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 5 – Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Annual Report 2021/22. The nature of the interest was he was a Council representative on the Alexandra Gardens Community Association which was a member of GVS. Under 19.3.3(b)(c) of the Council's Constitution this was not a prejudicial interest. He was also involved with Barry Arts Festival which was also a member of the GVS. Councillor Dr. Johnson also had dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak and vote on matters relating to arts and events in the Vale of Glamorgan and to speak and vote on matters relating to community centres being discussed at both Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council meetings. Due to these and there being no prejudicial interests present, Councillor Dr. Johnson remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

951 CUSTOMER RELATIONS SERVICE OVERVIEW –

The presentation, concerning the Customer Relations Service based within the Council's C1V contact centre, was outlined by the Operational Manager for Customer Relations to the Committee. The Committee were given an extensive overview of the service, with a focus on three key Service Review Objectives:

- Operations and Performance. This included details of the demand by channel/means of contact for C1V services (i.e. email, telephone, in person, online self-service, etc.) and the average speed of answer, which required constant monitoring in order to address and balance demand concerning resource management effectively and ensure as speedy as a response, interaction and resolution as possible for Vale residents. Services included C1V, Adult Social Care, Telecare, Armed Forces Liaison, Cost living, etc. These were supported by British Sign Language & Language Translation, telephone access for hearing and speech impaired residents and all services were available in Welsh and English.
- Digital Customer. This involved the use of digital technology to develop and improve services for residents, i.e. registering births, deaths and marriages, bulky refuse collection bookings, etc.
- Future Priorities. These included user centred design, service transformation using GovService, Payment Card Industry standards compliant telephone payments, automated telephone enquiry handling to help reduce wait times and improve services, as well as an overall upgrade of the C1V contact centre platform and to look at resource sharing opportunities with other Councils and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to meet the challenges of recruitment and retention of staff with digital technology and Welsh Language skills.
- Members of the Committee had been invited to visit the C1V contact centre and see the work around customer relations, with those who had already taken up this offer stating they had been provided with a lot more insight into the good work undertaken, and challenges faced by, the staff concerned.

Following the Officer's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- On Councillor Carroll's comments around the need to avoid a 'clearing the desk' and quantitative approach at C1V in order to ensure that customer experience/satisfaction was at the forefront of its provision of customer service, it was explained that the Council appreciated that the key to success for C1V was that its customers and residents received a great experience and service. This included, going forward, greater focus on user needs and to seek post call feedback.
- On the Vice-Chair's query about updates and further communication with service users of C1V services, after reporting an issue or requesting a service, it was explained that C1V were constantly looking to ensure that residents get further communication and feedback on the next steps for their request, as well as help to manage resident expectations, and the GovService platform and automated services would help in achieving, particularly where service users had an email address, but still with the option to speak to someone directly via telephone. This would improve customer satisfaction and help remove the need for service users to call back in order to get an update.
- Regarding Councillor Haines' comments on the benefits that online customer services could bring to service users, but the need to address telephone services, where the Councillor stated the majority of complaints from his constituents related to, it was explained that the potential increase use of online services would help to 'flatten out' any spikes in demand for C1V's telephone services, thereby freeing up telephone operators and lowering call waiting times and allow them to focus more on complex requests and issues that required a human response and interaction.
- Councillor Dr. Johnson suggested that the presentation could help form the basis for future Elected Member induction/training or awareness raising. He also suggested further updates on the progress being made in terms of customer relations and C1V, which in essence was the first line of contact and first impression many residents had of the Council and its services, and gauge what success looked like for C1V in these areas, via the use of performance type metrics around customer satisfaction and others. He also referred to the opportunities of full time and part employment for older pupils in Welsh medium education in the Vale and asked for more details around the Garden Waste Subscription Service, alluded to in the presentation. In response it was stated that the Council had started to re-engage with Welsh medium post-pandemic and with regard to Garden Waste services, C1V were closely liaising with colleagues in Waste Management to capture the requirements, plus the service had been integrated into the capital payment system.
- The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources added that it was important to ensure both a prompt service to residents but also more importantly that each issue and request was resolved successfully and to the satisfaction of residents and service users. The Leader also referred to the successes of C1V, including the deployment of specialist staff to tackle key challenges for the Council, i.e. an experienced Waste Management officer was utilised to take calls from residents over the recent changes to recycling, which had helped reduce non-compliance rates. Also mentioned were the excellent services provided by the Telecare team (which

sat in C1V) and the potential benefits of the digital and technological improvements being undertaken by C1V also.

- The Vice-Chair suggested that the Committee receive a further report in six months' time in order to monitor improvements and developments and to look at recruiting 'Customer Service Champions' from across the Council to temporarily assist at particularly busy times. In response, further updates would be provided to the Committee, and it was also important that the work around customer relations was communicated as widely as possible.
- The Chair suggested that all Elected Members should have the opportunity to visit the C1V centre and see the work of the Customer Relations Service.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T C1V look into offering all Elected Members the opportunity to visit their Customer Relations Service Centre.

(2) T H A T a further report or update be provided to the Committee on the progress being made with the Customer Relations Service in six months' time.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order to provide Elected Members with the opportunity to see the work being undertaken and progress made by C1V regarding customer relations and support.

(2) In order to apprise the Committee of the progress being made regarding customer relations and support at C1V.

952 GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS) ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (REF) –

The reference from the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee of 3rd April, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Rachel Connor, a representative from Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), who outlined to Members the work and achievements of GVS, in partnership with the Council, over 2021/22:

- GVS, as the 'umbrella' body, supported the third or voluntary sector in the Vale of Glamorgan, in order to help ensure that such groups could deliver key services to local communities and residents effectively. Membership consisted of approximately 770 community organisations.
- Despite the ongoing challenges around COVID-19, GVS had continued to operate effectively, utilising social media and digital technology and platforms in order to be able to continue to engage with the local third sector and communities and to ensure their continued access to funding and other assistance i.e. via the Wales Wide Volunteer Management System and a Wales Wide Funding Search Facility, known as the Customer Relationship Management System (CRM).

- GVS had also continued to provide some one-to-one services, such as practical information and guidance for third sector bodies in order to help them operate legally, efficiently and to help them develop ideas and projects. Also, GVS provided low-cost design and printing services for third sector organisations.
- GVS' funding and information service provided support to 275 groups throughout the year with a reported £785,000 of funding obtained as a direct result of the advice and information given by GVS.
- The GVS provided training (which became primarily online during the pandemic) and worked in partnership with the Local Authority, Health Services, as well as the third sector.
- GVS also had undertaken considerable work with volunteering and the placement of volunteers in key projects for local communities, as well as engagement with youth-based groups or related and the Youth Led Grant helped local organisations provide more youth volunteering opportunities in the Vale.
- Other areas referred to included GVS' work towards becoming a dementia friendly organisation, and the use of the CF61, Illtud House and Saint Paul's Community Centre as community/GVS spaces.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- On Councillor Dr Johnson's request for an update on the volunteering and community-based work work being undertaken at the Gibbonsdown Hub and the former Castle Hotel at Jewel Street in Barry, it was explained that at Gibbonsdown, GVS retained space at the Community Enterprise Centre in order to provide volunteering, advice, training, courses, printing, delivery, collection and meetings from that site. This was the same for all three sites where GVS supported the delivery of services, as well as similar services being provided at Barry Library. Regarding the Castle Hotel development, despite the commitment to develop this property, it had been decided that due to the significant costs involved in developing the site, it was not financially viable, nor could it be justified in terms of greater community benefits.
- Regarding Councillor Hanks' query on receiving the quarterly GVS newsletter, it was explained this was shared with Democratic Services who in turn sent this out to all Elected Members.
- On Councillor Loveluck-Edwards' query about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on volunteering, it was explained that despite GVS membership remaining high, a number of Members had slipped out of being able to pay for membership and had moved into the associate membership category because of this, with some services and support groups also closing down. Despite the surge in volunteering during the Pandemic, the numbers had not gone back to their pre-Pandemic equivalent. The potential for third party bodies to be unable to fund and support volunteers in providing expenses fully was also a major concern, as well as the ability of, and the liability on, such bodies to pay for rising utility bills for community centres and spaces. It would be important to 'future proof' the community buildings longer term in order to reduce the heating, etc. burdens. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis could

also be seen with the increase in the use of local food banks, including increasing numbers of people in work.

- Councillor Dr Johnson commented on the need for the Council to review its work with the third sector in order to help deliver strategic recovery priorities, build on the excellent work undertaken during the Pandemic and to strengthen sustainable development, as well as reinvigorating the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC). The Director of Corporate Resources explained that there was a large amount of work underway in this area, with further engagement with GVS, to strengthen the 'compact' with the third sector and to look at utilising VSJLC more effectively i.e. enabling the Committee to focus in on the critical challenges in the Annual Delivery Plan each year. Recently, the Council, in tandem with GVS, had been able to leverage lottery funding to augment the food pantry operating at CF61.
- On the Councillor's follow up query about the energy efficiency surveys of community centres in the Vale as part of Project Zero, funding had been received via Welsh Government to assist with this, and further details would be provided to the Committee. As well as Council owned premises, some GVS owned community centres had also been included in the review.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) Annual Report 2021/22 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting.

953 PEOPLE STRATEGY AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 27th February, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, the purpose of which was for the Committee to consider the report and appendices as part of the six-week consultation process. Key points included:

- The People Strategy closely aligned to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Plan, the Equalities Plan and Project Zero, in order to set both the strategic direction and to support Council staff to be the best that they could be in delivering the wellbeing objectives to the communities that the Council served.
- The Strategy was split into three key themes:
 - Redesigning for Responsiveness
 - Driving Employee Experiences
 - Striving for High Performance
- The supporting policy documents, appended to the reference and report, aligned with the Strategy and included:
 - Strategic Workforce Implementation Plan
 - Hybrid Working Strategy

- Learning and Development Plan
- Volunteer Policy
- The consultation on shaping the Strategy involved a wide range of groups including Trade Unions, the Joint Consultative Forum, the various diversity and staff networks, etc.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- On Councillor Haines' query on measuring staff performance, it was explained that the Chief Officer Performance Appraisal Scheme had recently been introduced, which would entail close monitoring of their performance, plus peer and 360-degree review. Going forward, this system would be rolled out to all (non-education) staff.
- On the Councillor's follow up question concerning hybrid working and the importance of including its carbon impact and to highlight its challenges (i.e. isolation), as well as the benefits of this way of working, it was explained that it would be challenging to measure the carbon output for hybrid working and this way of working did help reduce commuting to work and rationalise office space, both helping to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council. In terms of the challenges around hybrid working, the Hybrid Working Strategy did emphasise the need for collaboration and to encourage staff to attend the workplace to achieve this and to mitigate feelings of isolation, etc in conjunction with the Council's other wellbeing activities.
- The Chair emphasised the need to have this flexibility (via hybrid working) in place in order to support recruitment and retention of staff and that hybrid working was entirely voluntary and would not be applicable to all roles in the council, where other forms of work flexibility may be offered instead.
- The Vice Chair felt that the Youth Service should be engaged with as part of the consultation for the Strategy, as well as potential collaboration, i.e. the possible use of young person apprenticeships and to showcase to young people the job opportunities in the local government sector, which the Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development would look to engage with.
- On the Vice Chair's other queries on comparative staff data and the updates on the Staff Learning Framework, the comparative data would be developed, with the new Oracle Fusion system being able to assist with this, and in terms of staff learning, a new 'Welcome to the Vale' induction programme had been introduced for new staff and the inclusion of required learning from a health and safety perspective had also been added to the Council's online learning.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T, as part of consultation process, the Youth Service also be engaged with in order to seek their comments and views on the Strategy, as well as potential collaboration, i.e. the possible use of young person apprenticeships and to showcase to young people the job opportunities in the local government sector.

(2) T H A T, the following comments be reported back to Cabinet as part of a future report reflecting on the wider consultation with staff and partner organisations:

- The need to highlight both the benefits and challenges around hybrid working, as well as to explore measuring the carbon impact of this method of working.
- It was also important for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to highlight its agile and hybrid working policies, in order to maintain its competitiveness and attractiveness in terms of recruitment and retention of Council staff.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order to consult with the Youth Service and young persons as part of the Strategy and to help secure future recruitment and retention of potential Council staff via apprenticeships, etc. in order to help inform the Cabinet's consideration of the Strategy.

(2) To inform Cabinet of the comments made by the Committee as part of their consideration of the final version of the People Strategy and associated documents.

954 ANNUAL EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT 2021-2022 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16th February, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was for the Committee to consider the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the progress made in meeting its equality objectives within the Council's Strategic Equality Plan.

By way of background, the Equality Act placed certain duties on Local Authorities, including the requirement to publish an annual report.

The report detailed on how effective the Council had been in meeting the ten objectives of the overall Equality Plan and also provided some specific information around employment, including information around pay, procurement and training, i.e. on anti-racism. It also looked at areas such as how the Council could develop processes to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence, as well supporting people with protected characteristics, etc.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Carroll raised concerns around the use of Stonewall and its Workforce Equality Index in order to provide guidance and benchmarking for the Council to help to achieve its equality and related objectives, due to previous extreme and controversial comments the organisation had made. In light of this, he asked whether the Council should reconsider the appropriateness of this relationship and using this material. In response, it was explained that the Council was a member of a number of different networks that supported various different protected characteristics and the

primary purpose for its membership of Stonewall was around the Workplace Equality Index. This provided a structure which helped the Council to provide an inclusive environment, but where the Council also took on board a wide range of views and evidence in order to make its own decisions in this area. In relation to this, the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources asked for any specific concerns to be provided to her in writing in order that they could be addressed, whilst stressing the need for the Council to collaborate with other bodies in order to help improve its support and services to various groups.

- On the Councillor's follow up question on whether the Council paid for membership/services relating to Stonewall, it was confirmed that a subscription was paid to Stonewall by the Council.
- The Vice Chair raised a query on the progress made around the gender pay gap, due to it appearing to have increased slightly in 2021/22. The response was that this increase was being closely monitored going forward, with steps being taken to reduce the gap. In Summer 2022, the Council had adopted the Real Living Wage, which had made a positive impact to Council staff on lower wages, which included significant numbers of female workers. This should be reflected in future reports to the Committee.
- Both the Vice Chair and Councillor Loveluck-Edwards wished to stress that the report did not relate to the validity of Stonewall as a recognised charitable organisation, but rather the positive work undertaken by the Council in tandem with diversity groups and allies who were able to choose which organisations they wished to liaise with in order to achieve their goals.
- Councillor Haines wished to stress the importance of Members to be able to comment, discuss and raise their concerns about the above issues openly and regardless of whether they were part of the groups directly impacted by the report or not.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and Annual Equality Monitoring Report 2021 – 2022 as described in the body of the report and at Appendix A be noted.

Reason for recommendation.

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting.