

Meeting of:	Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 18 October 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Strengthening our Communities and work to tackle poverty and the current cost of living crisis
Purpose of Report:	To update on work being undertaken to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and to set out our approach to responding to three Audit Wales reports on the challenges of poverty in Wales
Report Owner:	Tom Bowring – Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring – Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Due to the corporate nature of this report, no specific Ward Member consultation has been undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report provides an update on work being undertaken to tackle poverty, to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and a proposal for future progress reporting. This report details the findings and recommendations from three Audit Wales reports and the approach being taken in response to these reports. The three reports are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time for Change – Poverty in Wales A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance These three reports encourage changes in how the Council works with the community, the third sector and social enterprises. The reports form part of Audit Wales’ work on tackling poverty across Wales. A fourth Audit Wales report, ‘Third Sector Partnership working’ which is specific to the Vale sits with and should be considered alongside these three reports. The Audit Wales report on third sector partnership working has previously been presented to this Committee, Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee. 	

- This committee report details how we are taking an integrated and collaborative approach to how we respond to the work of Audit Wales; recognising the interconnections and reflecting on the recommendations set out in the four reports to embed changes in how we work and who we work with. This is consistent with the Council's existing critical challenge within the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan and the work on the future transformation programme within the theme of Strengthening Communities.
- The approach outlined in this report will also assist in work to develop the Council's relationship with key community-based partners. Developing a new compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and a revised Town and Community Council Charter.
- This report also provides details about the use of the cost of living reserve which was established as part of the 2023-24 budget demonstrating how the Council is matching the use of reserves with the Council's core priorities as set out in the Financial Strategy considered by Committee in September.

Recommendations

- 1.** That Committee notes the work being undertaken with regards to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and that Committee note the proposed approach for future reporting of work on tackling poverty and the cost-of-living which is a critical challenge within the Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.
- 2.** That Committee endorses the approach outlined in this report for engaging with a range of stakeholders to determine how the Council can work better with the third sector and social enterprises and increase community resilience through an integrated response to the Audit Wales reports.
- 3.** That Committee note the progress made in response to the recommendations in Audit Wales report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' as set-out in Appendix A to this report.
- 4.** That Committee endorse the response to the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises' as set out in Appendix B to this report.
- 5.** That Committee endorse the response to the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance' as set-out in Appendix C to this report.
- 6.** That Committee notes the proposal to include work to develop the above in conjunction with a new Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services, a review of the terms of reference of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and work to revise the Town and Community Council Charter into the programme of work outlined in this report whilst recognising that the Compact, Committee and Charter have a broader focus than poverty and the cost of living.
- 7.** That Committee notes the use of the cost-of-living reserve to support those in need.
- 8.** That the Committee refers this report to Cabinet (for oversight), Governance and Audit Committee (for noting the response to the regulatory recommendations made), and Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (for their comments to be referred to Cabinet for consideration) and that updates on progress are also provided at those meetings.
- 9.** That this report is circulated to all elected members and the Public Services Board for information.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.** To ensure Committee is aware of the work being undertaken with regards to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and that effective arrangements are in place for the regular reporting of work on tackling poverty and the cost-of-living which is a critical challenge within the Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.

2. To develop an integrated response and approach to the recommendations in the Audit Wales reports detailed in this report.
3. To advise Committee of the progress to date in taking forward the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' and how this works will now form part of an integrated programme of work.
4. To advise Committee of the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises' and the proposed approach to responding to the recommendations.
5. To advise Committee of the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance' and the proposed approach to responding to the recommendations.
6. To seek endorsement from the Committee for including work to agree a new Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services and to review the terms of reference of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and work to revise the Town and Community Council Charter into the programme of work outlined in this report.
7. That Committee are aware of the use of the cost-of-living reserve to date.
8. To ensure all relevant committees are aware of the proposed approach and have the opportunity to shape the programme of work.
9. To ensure all elected members and the Public Services Board are aware of the Audit Wales reports and proposed approach.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council has identified the cost of living crisis as a critical challenge in this year's Annual Delivery Plan. In addition, the Council has set out how tackling poverty is a key driver for our work, reflected in the Public Services Board's Wellbeing Plan, the Council's Corporate Plan and as part of the Financial Strategy.
- 1.2 A significant amount of work is taking place across a number of workstreams which interconnect and would benefit from a more integrated approach. This would streamline some activity and enable greater clarity of focus and purpose. This includes responding to a number of Audit Wales reports, reporting progress on the challenges in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24, welfare reform, co-ordinating work around the cost-of-living and improving how we work with other sectors. These activities will also inform the development and delivery of the next phase of the Council's Transformation Programme and work on a new Corporate Plan 2025-2030.
- 1.3 The Council identified three critical challenges in the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2023-24, the critical challenges are Project Zero, Cost-of-Living and Organisational Resilience. Due to persisting pressures and the continued need to respond, these challenges are likely to remain in the coming year.

- 1.4** In addition to quarterly performance monitoring, progress on Project Zero is reported twice a year to Scrutiny and Cabinet, and there are regular reports on issues relating to organisational resilience including HR and OD issues, risk management, asset management and financial monitoring reports. There is not a regular report which updates members on work relating to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis.
- 1.5** The Council has established a cost-of-living reserve of £854K to fund work to alleviate the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 1.6** Audit Wales have undertaken three reports as part of a programme of work looking at the challenge of tackling poverty in Wales. The three reports are:
- [Time for Change – Poverty in Wales](#)
 - [A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises](#)
 - [Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance](#)
- 1.7** The corporate response to the first Audit Wales report has previously been agreed but responses to the two most recent reports have not previously been formally reported.
- 1.8** Work in response to the Audit Wales report on [working with the Third Sector](#) reported to Cabinet in 2022, has not progressed as originally envisaged and there is an opportunity to integrate it within a wider programme of work. Committee will note that whilst the approach has differed, the Council’s work with the voluntary sector has continued and relationships are strong.
- 1.9** The Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) needs to be reviewed and revised as does the Town and Community Council Charter. There is an opportunity to integrate both pieces of work into a wider programme of activity, focused on the way the Council engages with these important partners as part of the next phase of transformation.
- 1.10** In July 2023 the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee supported proposals to take a more integrated approach to the work detailed in this report and to reviewing the committee’s terms of reference linked to a review of the voluntary sector compact.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

Impacts of deprivation and the cost of living crisis in the Vale

- 2.1** Our data tells us that there are issues of poverty across the Vale of Glamorgan and that the cost-of-living is continuing to cause hardship, with increasing issues of affordability with regards to food, energy and housing. Three Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Vale of Glamorgan are identified through WIMD 2019 as being in the top-10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. A further seven LSOAs are included

in the 10-20% most deprived LSOAs in Wales. All ten LSOAs are in Barry. There is a consistent correlation between these areas and higher proportions of people on lower incomes, who are in receipt of Universal Credit and in receipt of unemployment support. There is a recognition that these groups have been identified as most vulnerable to the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis and experiences of deprivation. The Bevan Foundation's [Snapshot of Poverty in Winter 2023](#) found that people on Universal Credit were five times as likely to report that they sometimes, often, or always struggle to afford the basics as the general population.

- 2.2** Since March 2022, there has been a consistent month-on-month increase in the total number of people in receipt of Universal Credit. As reported in the [Vale monthly economic insight report](#), in June 2023 there were 10,542 people on Universal Credit in the Vale, 6,437 were not in employment, while 4,096 were in employment. The cost-of-living crisis has been associated with sharp increases in the rates of inflation, driven by growing food and energy prices; with food prices in February 2023 at a 45-year high and 18% higher than the previous year. Some households experience higher effective rates of inflation as they must allocate a higher proportion of their household income to cover essentials. On average, lower income households spend more of their income on these essentials. In the Vale, in 2022-23 there has been a growth in the number of food parcels distributed by [Trussell Trust](#) food banks. In 2022-23 in the Vale, 6,610 parcels were distributed by the trust, an increase of 2,202 from the 4,408 distributed in 2021-22.

Improving Co-ordination and Integration of Activities

- 2.3** Significant work across the Council is taking place to tackle poverty and to respond to the cost-of-living crisis. This includes activities around homelessness, housing support, money advice, benefits entitlements, employment support, period poverty, access to food, Big Bocs Bwyd, free activities for children and young people, childcare and a range of work being undertaken through our schools.
- 2.4** Work is continuing to gather more information about the range of work being undertaken and to explore opportunities to improve co-ordination and integration and to identify any gaps. This work, together with the Audit Wales report recommendations, and reflections on work undertaken to date, will shape how the Council continues to undertake work to tackle poverty and respond to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.5** There is an opportunity to bring together a number of pieces of work into a more integrated programme that will inform work on tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis, improve engagement with a number of sectors, including informing work to review the Voluntary Sector Compact and the Town and Community Council Charter. This work would also form part of the Council's new transformation programme and would also assist in developing a robust mechanism for reporting progress.
- 2.6** The following sections of this report detail the recent Audit Wales reports and examples of some of the work being taken forward by the Council, Schools and the Public Services Board; and the opportunities and benefits of aligning these activities. It is proposed that by aligning these activities and using the

recommendations of the Audit Wales reports together with a facilitated programme of engagement sessions and workshops we can develop a coherent way forward. Although there will be a focus on tackling poverty, this work will have a wider impact on how the Council works with different sectors and the community and therefore contribute to the commitments around strengthening communities more widely.

- 2.7** The proposed approach builds on the work undertaken in-line with our Public Participation Strategy and is consistent with the five ways of working as detailed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This work will also be part of the new approach to reshaping our services with an increased focus on community.

Audit Wales Reports

- 2.8** Audit Wales have published three all-Wales reports focused on tackling poverty. The recommendations across the three reports provide an opportunity to reflect on how we work, and who we work with. In addition to these reports, it is also proposed that the response to a Vale specific report published in 2021, Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working also forms part of this work. This was a Vale focused report requested by the Council to build on the work undertaken with the third sector during the pandemic. The report was published in July 2021 and reported to Cabinet in March 2022. It was agreed that in order to take forward the recommendations about how the Council works with, and supports the third sector, that further engagement with the sector was needed. Work has not been progressed as originally intended due to the changing economic environment. However, the Council has continued to work closely with the third sector to mobilise a response to the cost of living crisis, commissioning services, working in partnership and delivering grant funding. The third sector also continue to be actively represented by GVS on a number of strategic partnerships.
- 2.9** The recommendations and reflections in the report on the third sector and the poverty focused reports provide useful insights and direction to assist in taking forward the work of the Council. By responding to all four reports in an integrated way we can contribute to work being undertaken in response to the cost-of-living crisis but also the Project Zero and organisational resilience challenges detailed in the Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24.
- 2.10** The first of three all-Wales reports undertaken by Audit Wales as part of their work on the challenge of poverty in Wales was published in November 2022. The report [Time for Change – Poverty in Wales](#) was reported to Cabinet in December 2022. The recommendations for councils, our response and a summary of progress to date are detailed in Appendix A. The recommendations include:
- Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty.
 - Leadership on the poverty agenda.
 - Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty.
 - A single web landing page for people seeking help.

- Streamlining and improving application and information services.
 - Complying with the socio-economic duty.
- 2.11** Progress has been made across all of the recommendations, but further work will be required as the cost-of-living crisis continues, and residents continue to struggle.
- 2.12** The second report is '[A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises](#)' published in December 2022. The overall conclusion of the report is that local authorities across Wales are not effectively working with Social Enterprises to maximise their impact, make better use of resources and improve services for people and communities. Appendix B details the proposed response to the recommendations in this report. In summary the recommendations are for all local authorities to:
- Self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, management, performance and practice.
 - Identify opportunities to improve joint working.
 - Jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set-out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self evaluation.
 - Formally approve the completed Action Plan.
 - Regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees.
 - Revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance.
- 2.13** The third report is '[Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance](#)' published in January 2023. This is the third report in the series focused on the challenge of poverty in Wales. The overall conclusion of the report is that local authorities face a challenging and uncertain financial future but find it difficult to empower people and communities to be more self-reliant and less dependent on services. Appendix C details the proposed response to the recommendations in this report. In summary the recommendations are for all local authorities to:
- Strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place.
 - Self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice and identify improvements.
 - Draft and formally approve an Action Plan arising from undertaking an evaluation exercise.
 - Regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees.
 - Revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance.

- 2.14** In reviewing the various recommendations and exploring how best to respond and make changes to how we work it is proposed to approach this as a programme of work and not four distinct and isolated reports (including the report on working with the third sector) with unrelated recommendations. In looking at this as a programme of work it can also inform a revised Town and Community Council Charter, a revised compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services and help shape the work programme of the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee whilst also contributing to the work of the Community Liaison Committee.
- 2.15** Work is already progressing to deliver our Section 16 responsibilities under the Social Care and Well-being (Wales) Act. Under the Act the Council is required to promote care and support services, including services for carers, and preventative services which are provided by social enterprises, user-led organisations and third sector organisations. Discussions are taking pace with GVS, informed by the national work of Cwmpass, to consider how a local forum could progress this. It has been recognised that there is a need to focus the forum on the not for profit organisations who are directly delivering care on behalf of Social Services already.

Annual Delivery Plan – Critical Challenge

- 2.16** In addition to the work outlined in response to the Audit Wales reports there are a number of pieces of work being taken forward as part of our work on the cost of living crisis and these are reflected in the annual service plans. These include:
- Work in partnership to develop Community Focused Schools as part of an inclusive approach to tackling the impact of poverty and the cost-of-living crisis on children and young people’s educational attainment and well-being – Standards and Provision
 - Embed our approach to signposting and how we undertake assessments being mindful of the impact of Cost of Living on our citizens. – Adult Services
 - Work in partnership to deliver a comprehensive play programme that improves the well-being of children and their families with a particular focus on developing and promoting no and low-cost activity schemes (which include food provision) and ensuring ease of access to these schemes for residents facing cost of living challenges. – Neighbourhood Services and Transport
 - Review our Rent Setting Affordability Policy to ensure they are affordable, represent value for money and are in line with the living rent model. – Housing and Building Services
 - Identify new opportunities internally to support Council staff experiencing difficulties due to the cost of living crisis and implement interventions as appropriate. – Human Resources and Organisational Development
 - Administer the Shared Prosperity Fund via a mix of grant schemes, commissioned projects and expressions of interest that promotes new employment space and supports local businesses, tourism, social enterprises and communities. – Regeneration

- Implement the new Welsh Government Employability Strategy to ensure that employability provision meets the future needs of young people and adults in the Vale of Glamorgan. – Additional Learning Needs and Well-being
 - Explore opportunities with partners to support digital inclusion with a focus on data poverty and cost of living. – Policy and Business Transformation
- 2.17** In addition, work has commenced to review the cost-of-living webpages and to ensure they contain the most up-to-date and relevant information to support people and to provide staff with more information about where to signpost residents. This work also reflects the recommendations from Audit Wales.
- 2.18** Work is also continuing to refresh the cost-of-living analysis undertaken in winter 2022. The refreshed analysis will reflect the developing nature of the cost-of-living while also reflecting continuing trends. Alongside this analysis, work has been undertaken to identify existing and new performance measures that can be used to assist in understanding the impact of our activities and the context within which services are being developed and delivered.
- 2.19** Our schools continue to be at the forefront of work being undertaken in response to the difficulties that many people are experiencing. A number of schools now run Big Bocs Bwyd and other food and advice projects, linking in with partners such as Citizens Advice and others. One example of a new piece of work being undertaken is within the Pencoedre Learning Community. Work has been undertaken to identify how Council services can work more closely together with the school to meet the needs of families in the area, and to share knowledge and ideas to help shape services that will respond to local needs. This work is being led jointly by the Director of Corporate Resources and the Executive Headteacher of Pencoedre and Oakfield Primary Schools, with support from teams across the Council. The intention of this work is to build on the Welsh Government's emerging guidance on Community Schools which is well advanced within the Cluster. The Community Schools approach is focused on a whole family approach and offers the potential to join up and reimagine services based on the needs of families and pupils in this area. The next stage of this work will draw in other public sector partners.
- 2.20** Shared Prosperity funding is supporting a number of projects that will also be helping to target poverty and address the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. Just under £4million has already been committed to Communities and Place projects across the Vale of Glamorgan. This funding has been allocated to support projects that provide a range of services for young people such as leisure activities including bike hire, skate parks and improved green spaces. Some projects are more targeted such as the Tackling Deprivation and Poverty programme supporting our communities most in need, and a re-use and recycling shop supporting people to mend items and source replacement items at a low cost. Additional funding has been allocated to the People and Skills theme and many projects supported here will also support the cost-of-living agenda through a new hub in Barry to advise

people about skills and employment opportunities and linking with other service providers to support people with a range of cost-of-living advice and services.

- 2.21** The PSB's new [Well-being Plan](#) responds to the findings of the [Well-being Assessment](#) about inequalities in the Vale and those areas that are most deprived. One of the workstreams identified in the PSB's Well-being Plan is to work closely with our most deprived communities. To take this work forward a Senior Community Development Officer has been appointed for two years to focus work on the LSOAs of Gibbonsdown 2, Buttrils 2 and Court 3 and to build on the engagement and asset mapping work previously undertaken by Grasshopper consultants. This post is based in the Council's Regeneration team.

Tackling Food Insecurity

- 2.22** The Council continues to be involved with and supportive of projects that improve access to food including the Vale Foodbank, Big Bocs Bwyd and similar school-based projects, food pantries such as the GVS Foodshare at CF61 in Llantwit Major and the Penarth Food Pod run by the Council's housing team.
- 2.23** Welsh Government have awarded £33,447 to the Vale of Glamorgan Council as part of their Direct Food Support Scheme for 2023-24. Local projects were invited to bid for funds and 11 projects have been allocated funding with the amounts varying from £2,000 to £5,000. Collectively these projects have an estimated reach of supporting over 535 people each week.
- 2.24** Welsh Government have also made funding available to support Food partnerships in 2023/24. The Vale was successful in a bid to receive £97,000 and this money is being used to further develop the Vale of Glamorgan's local food partnership, Food Vale, through the creation of a new Food Vale Project Support Officer post hosted within the Food Vale team of the UHB. The postholder will be responsible for a range of work. This will include the development of the partnership, exploring opportunities on how to create more resilience in the local food system and carrying out a rural Vale food pilot over the winter 2023 – 24 to increase access to good quality affordable food in our more rural areas.
- 2.25** In July 2022 the Llantwit Food Project was successful in their bid to receive £98,702 from the Lottery's People and Places fund. The Llantwit Food Project, which is a partnership made up of local food insecurity providers, experts and other interrelated service providers e.g. Hafod Housing and Citizens Advice, was established in October 2020 aiming to collectively ensure everyone in Llantwit Major can eat a good meal every day. This work is now led on behalf of partners by two coordinators within Food Vale and the Strategy and Partnership team of the Council.

2.26 During the first year of funding the project has supported local community growing projects, supported local food projects in Ysgol y Ddraig and CF61 Community Centre, installed a digital community notice board and has established a More Than Food Hub. The Monthly More Than Food Hub brings support agencies together alongside the weekly CF61 Food Share, St Athan Clothes Bank and More in Common Chatty Cafe providing free, friendly and safe support under one roof. Since February 2023, people have been supported by the More Than Food Hub Support Partners on a range of topics including housing, falls, benefits, homelessness, financial entitlements, health and well-being activities, voter registration and electoral changes, childcare and utility advice. Work is continuing to further develop the monthly hub and progress actions within year 2 of the project which includes exploring opportunities to expand access to affordable food into nearby St Athan.

Warm Spaces and Tackling Loneliness and Isolation

2.27 In 2022-23 Welsh Government awarded the Council £33,196 to develop Warm Spaces. This funding was allocated to 22 warm spaces across the Vale with amounts varying from £30 to £5,472. Over the period of January 2023 to March 2023, these warm spaces supported 6,320 people. In addition, a dedicated Council webpage was developed to provide residents with an interactive map and directory of warm spaces. At the height of the scheme there were nearly 40 warm spaces operating in the Vale and promoted on the Council website. These projects helped residents through a challenging winter with peak energy prices and contributed to work to tackle loneliness and isolation. Warm spaces often adopted hub models of support including the offer of financial advice from partners such as Citizens Advice and Welsh Water, free Period Dignity products and food insecurity support. Several projects are continuing, however there is currently no indication from Welsh Government that there will be further funding in 2023-24 and as such, the Council is considering the use of some reserve funding to support community schemes.

2.28 In 2021 the Vale of Glamorgan successfully bid for 3 years of grant funding from the Welsh Government Connected Communities: Loneliness and Social Isolation funding between 2021 – 2024. The bid, developed by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, GVS and Age Connects ensured the Vale of Glamorgan received £22,727 per year to develop an older people's Western Vale hub by moving Age Connects into Illtud House, Llantwit Major and to provide a small grass roots community grant funding stream where each year third sector organisations can apply for up to £2,000 to support work tackling loneliness and isolation across the Vale. The grant is managed and administered by GVS with all applications being discussed and agreed by a funding panel with representatives from GVS, Age Connects and the Council. Over the first two years the fund has supported 12 organisations. The third and final grant stream was open for applications until 15th September 2023 and proposals are now being considered.

Cost of Living Reserve

2.29 As part of ensuring an effective response to the cost-of-living challenge detailed in the ADP 2023-24 a cost-of-living reserve has been established. The total reserve as of April 2023 was £854,000 and the table below sets out expenditure to date.

Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	£'000s	£'000s	£'000s
Opening Balance	854	404	274
Budget Contribution FSM	-200	-100	0
Additional Contribution Citizens Advice	-30	0	0
Summer Free School Meals support	-220	0	0
Closing Balance	404	304	274

2.30 The initial focus has been on supporting those entitled to free school meals and enabling Citizens Advice to meet the increased demand for their services. A proposal for the use of the reserve will be considered by Cabinet on the 19th October 2023 reflecting the continuing pressures being faced by residents due to the increases in the cost of living.

The Proposed Approach – Engagement and Progress Reporting

2.31 Taking account of the above issues, the recommendations in the four Audit Wales reports and the Council's desire to undertake this work as part of the next iteration of the transformation programme, it is proposed that a programme of engagement, workshops and discussion is undertaken facilitated by a third party. This will help provide some independence and challenge but also continuity across the discussions and development of our work with the above sectors and in response to the Audit Wales recommendations. This approach will also strengthen our public participation activities, building on the work to-date and will inform work undertaken through the Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board. The approach will provide the opportunity for a range of stakeholders to be involved and to develop a better understanding of the contribution that organisations can make with regards to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. It will also enable stakeholders to be engaged in wider Council priorities including improving participation and engagement, climate change, organisational resilience and meeting the needs of our more vulnerable residents.

2.32 It is important that we reflect on the learning over recent years and are conscious of future challenges. There is a need to work differently and in a more sustainable and collaborative way. This is the essence of Strengthening Communities, demonstrating that the Council (such as in the Llantwit Major food project) can be a facilitator rather than a direct provider. This will assist us in contributing to the national well-being goals and taking forward our responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

2.33 The importance of developing an improved and shared understanding across different sectors forms part of our work to develop greater insight together with better use of data and increased public engagement and consultation to enable a more evidence-based approach to our work.

2.34 It is proposed that a series of facilitated workshops and discussion forums for stakeholders, officers and elected members are held in the late Autumn/Winter. The workshops will provide an opportunity to explore our current position, knowledge levels and ways of working and consider what needs to change, how and at what pace. This work will need to take place over a number of months and will run in parallel to the development of the new Annual Delivery Plan and budget discussions for 2024-25. Some of the intended objectives of the engagement and workshops are:

- To have a better shared understanding of what a social enterprise organisation is and the benefits to the Council of working with them.
- To have a better shared understanding of the third sector and the benefits to the Council of working with them.
- Understanding of third sector and social enterprise perspective of working with the Council.
- Understanding of how we can enhance the relationship between the Council and Town and Community Councils.
- Understanding who we already work with and future opportunities.
- Understanding and identifying opportunities for how we can improve community resilience.

2.35 This work will be managed by officers in the Strategy & Insight Strategic Advisory Group, the Regeneration Service and Democratic Services and will be sponsored by the Director of Corporate Resources. This will bring together experience of working with different sectors, communications and engagement, policy development and work with members including Town and Community Councils. It will also provide opportunities for exploring connections with external funding, place making and partnership work. The opportunities for discussion and to strengthen relationships through this process are considered to be a key outcome of this programme of work.

2.36 In addition, this work will inform a new Voluntary Sector Compact and a new Town and Community Council Charter. In July a report was presented to the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee outlining relevant proposals included in this report and the opportunities for refocusing the work of the committee linked to the Annual Delivery Plan and to create a forward work programme. The Committee were supportive of this more integrated approach bringing together responses to a number of Audit Wales reports, priorities in the ADP and the transformation programme.

2.37 The above engagement work will be undertaken over a period of time and will inform work for 2024-25, the transformation programme and the new five year Corporate Plan for 2025-2030. In the meantime, it is important to continue to report progress on work around poverty and the cost of living and it is proposed that in addition to the quarterly performance reports on the ADP that twice-yearly reports are presented to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet (with distribution to all elected members, the Public Services Board, and members of Community Liaison and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committees) which will include progress against relevant service plan actions, performance information and progress against the recommendations in the Audit Wales reports as well as other relevant partnership activity and the use of relevant funding. In addition, as recommended by this Committee in May 2023, issues relating to the welfare reform agenda will be incorporated in these reports. Information about the outcome of the wider engagement outlined above will be included in reports on the transformation programme.

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

3.1 The proposals outlined in this report will assist the Council in contributing to the national Well-being Goals and the Council's own Well-being Objectives as detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-25. The proposed approach also embeds the five ways of working through involvement and collaboration to develop ways forward, to ensure a longer term thinking and more sustainable approach to how we work and with a more integrated programme of activity. In terms of prevention as the work develops officers will be keen to explore the opportunities for a more preventative approach and how the knowledge and experience of other sectors can assist, particularly with work around cost of living and climate change.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

4.1 The work outlined in this report and improved working with the third sector, social enterprises and Town and Community Councils will be critical for taking forward work on the climate and nature emergencies. To achieve net-zero we need increased community engagement and close working with all sectors to share learning and expertise.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 The Corporate Plan 2020-25 and the associated Annual Delivery Plans are key tenets of the Council's Financial Strategy.
- 5.2 This report outlines a range of different funding streams contributing to the Council's response to the cost of living crisis and work to tackle poverty, including an overview of the use of the cost of living reserve established in April 2023.
- 5.3 These issues will also be significant considerations part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.

Employment

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

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.5 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report, however the work detailed in this report aligns with the Council's socio-economic duty and contributes to work to address economic inequity.
- 5.6 Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken as required on particular schemes.
- 5.7 As part of the programme of engagement there will be discussions with the Equality Consultative Forum and relevant member champions.

6. Background Papers

[Voluntary Sector Compact \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee February 2017

[Ref from CL - Town and Community Councils Charter \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) Cabinet November 2019

[Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working | Audit Wales July 2021](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

[Ref from G&A - Third Sector Partnership Working \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) Cabinet March 2022

[Time for Change – Poverty in Wales Audit Wales November 2022](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk)

[Cost of Living Support \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](http://valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) Cabinet Report December 2022

[A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises Audit Wales December 2022](#)

[Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance Audit Wales January 2022](#)

FSM Emergency Powers Decision***

[Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee Welfare Reform Closure Report
24th May 2023](#)

Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee - [Strengthening Communities](#) 25th July 2023

Appendix A – Time for Change Progress against Actions

Audit Wales Recommendation	Proposed Action	Officer Responsible	Completion Date
<p>R2 Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect Cost of Living as a critical challenge in the Council’s Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) for 2023/24. <p>Progress – The cost of living is one of three critical challenges in the Annual Delivery Plan agreed by Council in March 2023. In April 2023 a workshop was held with officers to map what services exist, gaps and key issues.</p>	Tom Bowring	March 2023 - complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the actions across the ADP contributing to this challenge and link with specific service plan actions. <p>Progress – As part of service planning all services considered the impact of the cost of living crisis and the services that can provide support and assist people.</p>	Tom Bowring	March 2023 - complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the proposals from Audit Wales regarding the emphasis of actions when completing service planning activity, including related measures. <p>Progress – There are a number of relevant measures in the performance management framework but further work is being undertaken to make this more comprehensive together with other key data.</p>	Heads of Service	March 2023 - ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce regular performance reports for Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees which provide updates relating to this critical challenge to enable oversight and scrutiny. <p>Progress – it is intended that Q2 and end of year performance reports will include a particular focus on all three critical challenges.</p>	Tom Bowring	On-going
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect this in the Council’s Annual Report (Annual Self-Assessment). <p>Progress - The Annual Report includes details of work in relation to the cost of living crisis.</p>	Tom Bowring	November 2023 - ongoing

R3 Leadership on the poverty agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities & Regulatory Services champions poverty at Cabinet level. • A dedicated champion is also in place within the wider elected member population and is part of the Champions Network which is integral to delivering the Council's Public Participation Strategy. • Director of Corporate Resources to lead and be accountable for the anti-poverty agenda as part of the Council and PSB's work in this arena. <p>Progress – there is a strong emphasis on the cost of living and working with our most deprived communities in the PSB's new Well-being Plan</p>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>Tom Bowring</p>	<p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>December 2023 - ongoing</p>
R5 Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress the Public Participation Strategy, in particular making links with the Champions Network. • Progress the Public Services Board's work on anti-poverty which is undertaking community needs analysis within the County's most deprived communities. <p>Progress – the Public Participation Strategy has an established programme, comprising a practitioner's network, links with the Equalities Consultative Forum and the Member Champions Network. Progress has included the Food Bank and Citizens Advice joining as new members of the ECF reflecting the socio-economic duty, the ECF undertaking a review of the EIA process, the Member Champion Network making the links with community and third sector organisations and the most pertinent issues and involving them in the development of programmes of support work, such as warm spaces.</p> <p>Progress – Work was undertaken by Grasshopper consultants on behalf of the PSB to map assets and produce a communications and engagement strategy for work in our three most deprived LSOAs. This work has been reported to the PSB</p>	<p>Cllr Sivagnanam</p> <p>Tom Bowring</p> <p>Tom Bowring</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>March 2024/ On-going to 2028</p> <p>On-going to 2028</p>

	<p>and is being taken forward by a new Community Development Worker funded through Shared Prosperity funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain insight reports on poverty within the communities of the Vale of Glamorgan as part of developing the evidence base to support the Public Services Board’s work on the forthcoming Wellbeing Plan 2023-2028. <p>Progress – work has commenced to develop an updated cost of living insight report.</p>		
R6 Single web landing page for people seeking help	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain updates to the Council’s Cost of Living page which is available from the homepage of the Council’s website. <p>Progress – information on the cost of living webpages is regularly updated and the pages have been independently reviewed as part of work with the WLGA. A workshop was held 3rd October 2023 to undertake a further review, to reflect the most pertinent information to meet the current challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further strengthen the signposting to the support available from partner organisations. <p>Progress – this has been identified as an area for further development and was an issue raised at the officer workshop.</p>	Tom Bowring Tom Bowring	On-going January 2023/on-going
R7 Streamlining and improving application and information services for people in poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the feasibility of the recommendation made that “councils: establish corporate data standards and coding that all services use for their core data; undertake an audit to determine what data is held by services and identify any duplicated records and information requests; create a central integrated customer account as a gateway to services; undertake a data audit to provide refresher training to service managers to ensure they know when and what data they can and cannot share; and review and update data sharing protocols to ensure they support services to deliver their data sharing responsibilities.’ 	Tom Bowring/ Cost of Living Working group	March 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be undertaken by the Cost of Living Working group and will build on proposals to produce a Data Strategy, deliver the Council’s replacement Customer Relationship Management System (including an online customer ‘account’ and the Data Protection & Information Security action plan). <p>Progress – Work has commenced on developing a Data Strategy for the organisation, a key component of which will be in considering the data held by the organisation and the ability to consider this holistically with a view to taking decisions that inform service design.</p>		
R8 Complying with the socio-economic duty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the equalities impact assessment (which incorporates consideration of the socio-economic duty) in line with the recommendations made by Audit Wales in the national study report to review the Equality Impact Assessments and the process supporting their use. <p>Progress – Work is being undertaken to review the Equalities Impact Assessment and this will be reported to Cabinet in the winter. This review has been wide ranging, involving several workshops with the Strategic Insight Board and Equalities Consultative Forum, with the terms of reference for the review being widened to not only incorporate the process and content, but also the digital approach to completing the EIA and ability to consider cumulative impacts at the request of elected members.</p>	Tom Bowring	May 2023 – work in progress

Organisational response

Report title: A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises

Completion date: October 2023

Document reference: Vale of Glamorgan Council: A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises (Corporate Performance & Resources Scrutiny Committee)

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p>To get the best from their work with and funding of Social Enterprises, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authority officers use the checklist in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, management, performance and practice; • identify opportunities to improve joint working; and <p>jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self-evaluation.</p>	<p>To complete the checklist with input from officers across the Council.</p> <p>Engage a third party to facilitate discussions with officers and social enterprises to develop a better understanding of opportunities.</p> <p>Undertake this work in parallel with work with the third sector and Town and Community Councils.</p> <p>Develop an action plan that provides an integrated response to Audit Wales reports on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working Audit Wales • Time for Change – Poverty in Wales • A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises • Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance 	February 2024	Tom Bowring and Phil Chappell
R2	<p>To drive improvement we recommend that the local authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally approve the completed 	<p>Seek endorsement of the action plan from a number of stakeholders and committees including Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee.</p>	March/April 2024	Tom Bowring and Phil Chappell

	<p>Action Plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance. 	<p>Set out appropriate monitoring arrangements reflective of the content of the action plan.</p> <p>Utilise the action plan to shape other relevant activities.</p>		
R3	<p>To ensure the local authority delivers its S.16 responsibilities to promote Social Enterprises we recommend that it reports on current activity and future priorities following the evaluation of its Action Plan including the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services.</p>	<p>To incorporate the action plan and monitoring arrangements in work across the Council including social services.</p> <p>To make connections with the Annual Report of the Director of Social Services in this work, and highlight to Committees the specific references which are included in this report relating to the S.16 responsibilities.</p>	<p>March/April 2024</p> <p>July 2024</p>	<p>Tom Bowring and Phil Chappell</p> <p>Lance Carver and Tom Bowring</p>

Organisational response

Report title: Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance

Completion date: October 2023 **Document reference:** Vale of Glamorgan Council: Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance (Corporate Performance & Resources Committee)

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p>To strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place. We recommend that local authorities use the evaluation tool in Appendix 2 to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice; • identify where improvement is needed; and <p>draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified in completing the evaluation tool.</p>	<p>To utilise the evaluation tool with input from officers across the Council, in particular the Participation Network.</p> <p>Engage a third party to facilitate discussions with officers, member champions, Equality Consultative Forum and others to develop a better understanding of opportunities.</p> <p>Undertake this work in parallel with work with the third sector, social enterprise and Town and Community Councils.</p> <p>Develop an action plan that provides an integrated response to Audit Wales reports on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working Audit Wales • Time for Change – Poverty in Wales • A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises • Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance 	February 2024	Tom Bowring
R2	To help local authorities address the gaps they identify following their self-evaluation, we recommend	Seek endorsement of the action plan from a number of stakeholders and committees	March/April 2024	Tom Bowring

that they:

- formally approve the completed Action Plan arising from the evaluation exercise;
- regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees; and
- revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance.

including Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee.

Set out appropriate monitoring arrangements reflective of the content of the action plan.

Utilise the action plan to shape other relevant activities.