

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 23rd October, 2024.

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, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks, 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 Performance and Resources), H.M. Payne and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

519 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”.

520 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor H.C. Hamilton.

521 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 18th September, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

522 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Goodjohn declared an interest in relation to Agenda Items 7 and 8 (Reshaping Programme). The nature of that interest was personal, not prejudicial, in that the Councillor was a member of Barry Town Council but had dispensation to speak and vote on the Vale of Glamorgan’s Reshaping Programme. Due to this, the Councillor remained in the meeting when the agenda items were discussed.

Councillor Dr. Johnson declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest in respect of Agenda Items 7 and 8 (Reshaping Programme). The nature of that interest was personal, not prejudicial, in that the Councillor was a member of Barry Town Council but had dispensation to speak and vote on the Vale of Glamorgan’s Reshaping

Programme. Due to this, the Councillor remained in the meeting when the agenda items were discussed.

Councillor Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item 4 – Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update. The nature of the interest was personal not prejudicial in that he was a Member of Dinas Powys Community Council and had been involved in discussions about Community Asset Transfers and his relationship with the Dinas Powys Library and Activity Centre, which he had dispensation to speak on.

523 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 18th July, 2024 as contained within the agenda would be deferred in order for officers to have time to consider the recommendations made in the document “Response from the Wales Centre for Public Policy to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Carbon Management Plan” and to update the report in order to reflect this. This would also allow Committee to be able to fully and effectively scrutinise the report with any updates attached for their consideration.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T this item be deferred to the next suitable meeting of the Committee.

Reason for recommendation

In order for officers to have time to consider the recommendations made in the document “Response from the Wales Centre for Public Policy to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Carbon Management Plan” and to update the report in order to reflect this. This would also allow Committee to be able to fully and effectively scrutinise the report with any updates attached for their consideration.

524 CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 5th September, 2024 as contained within the agenda would be deferred in order for officers to have time to consider the recommendations made in the document “Response from the Wales Centre for Public Policy to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Carbon Management Plan” and to update the report in order to reflect this. This would also allow Committee to be able to fully and effectively scrutinise the report with any updates attached for their consideration.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T this item be deferred to the next suitable meeting of the Committee.

Reason for recommendation

In order for officers to have time to consider the recommendations made in the document “Response from the Wales Centre for Public Policy to the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Carbon Management Plan” and to update the report in order to

reflect this. This would also allow Committee to be able to fully and effectively scrutinise the report with any updates attached for their consideration.

525 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2025-30 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 10th October, 2024 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources in conjunction with the Operational Manager, Corporate Strategy and Insight. The purpose was that the Committee had the opportunity to consider the draft Corporate Plan and provide feedback as part of the programme of consultation.

A presentation was delivered to the Committee, in addition to the reference and the report, which outlined the key areas of the draft Plan, including:

- How the Council was delivering its duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act;
- Set out 5 new Well-being Objectives;
- Showed how the Council was responding to the findings of the Let's Talk Residents Survey and other consultation;
- Provided a framework for planning over the next five years – how the Council would change, improve, deliver;
- Set out what residents and partners could expect;
- Detailed some of the key challenges and highlighted some cross-cutting themes;
- Included a statement about working together;
- Brought together actions relating to poverty;
- The Council would be audited, scrutinised and judged against the commitments in this Plan;
- The Structure of the Plan was highlighted, including a detailed glossary to help explain the more technical terms to a wider audience;
- Example actions were also shared, including those around poverty, which was a key thread that ran throughout the entire Plan;
- Monitoring performance, including more streamlined and timely performance reports;
- The timetable for the Plan and the related consultation was also set out, with an 8 week consultation period (14th October – 8th December) and the process to scrutinise, consider and approved the revised Plan, with this being published in April.

Following the presentation, a number of comments and queries were made by the Committee, which included the following.

The Chair welcomed the Plan focusing on poverty and helping to eradicate this, because it was at the root of the inequalities that residents in the Vale of Glamorgan faced.

Councillor Franks raised concerns about the seeming absence to areas directly supporting older people in the Plan, and that it was important to highlight specific objectives, etc. within the Plan which refer to older persons and their requirements, as well of those of other key groups of residents within the Vale of Glamorgan. It was explained that the Councillor's feedback would be looked at, as well as those made through engagement with older persons' groups, such as the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum, although it was stressed not only by the Operational Manager, Corporate Strategy and Insight, but also by the Chair, Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and Councillor Loveluck-Edwards (Older People's Champion) that all groups, including older persons, were encouraged to participate with the consultation process and that their needs were considered as part of this, and their opinions valued, which the recent interaction with the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum exemplified.

The Vice-Chair was pleased to see the new 5th Wellbeing Objective, "Being the Best Council We Can Be" within the Plan and stated that it was important to embed this into the Council culturally and organisationally, with greater openness, transparency, public engagement and accountability as well as a stronger focus on poverty and the environment also included in the Plan. He asked what residents should see in terms of the Council doing things differently as part of the draft Plan, in comparison to its previous iteration. It was explained that there was both elements of continuity and change between the draft Plan and the previous version, with the new Plan setting out with each Well-being Objective what the Council would be looking to achieve, such as new ways of working, greater transparency and greater listening to and engagement with residents and service users. On the Vice-Chair's follow up question on how the Council validated and monitored how these new objectives and changes would be achieved whilst being seen as a listening Authority, it was explained that work was being undertaken, in conjunction with the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and political group leaders, on managing performance and the feedback from residents as well as Elected Members on how to present this performance information / indicators in a less technical and clearer way. Also the "Let's Talk About Life in the Vale" survey would be undertaken on a regular basis to sense check and understand the public appetite and perception of the Council and its performance was.

Councillor Dr. Johnson agreed with the development of the 5 Wellbeing Objectives for the Plan but stated there needed to be measures in place to 'test' and clearly demonstrate where the Council had been successful or where there was room for improvement and 'lessons learnt'. There was a need to have a proper evaluation of success and to consider how best to scrutinise this Plan, due to its cross-cutting objectives and themes. It was explained that the measures around progress and success were important parts of the Plan, and work was underway to see what these measures on outcomes would look like before the final drafting of the Plan was in place, as well as what these measures and outcomes have actually achieved. There was also an opportunity now to revisit how the Plan could still be scrutinised effectively in light of the changes to the Wellbeing Objectives and the increase in cross cutting areas, as well as to look at the format of related performance reporting, to include qualitative data and case studies. The Chair added that it was important for the Corporate Plan to be more outcome focused and to measure and monitor the performance effectively.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources added that the work on the various iterations of the Corporate Plans did not, in effect, stop between the previous and the new versions but was rather an ongoing process. There was an opportunity, between iterations, to take stock and ensure that the direction of travel for the Corporate Plan remained the appropriate one. She also placed emphasis on the involvement of other partner bodies and agencies in terms of collaborating on this work and to meet residents' needs.

Following the discussions on this item, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following comments from the Committee be shared with the Director of Corporate Resources in order to help inform revisions to the Corporate Plan, prior to Cabinet considering a final draft in due course:

- Consideration should be given to highlighting specific objectives, etc. within the Plan which refer to older persons and their requirements, as well of those of other key groups of residents within the Vale of Glamorgan;
- The importance of embedding the 5th Wellbeing Objective “Being the Best Council We Can Be” into the culture and organisation of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, with greater openness, transparency, public engagement and accountability as well as a stronger focus on poverty and the environment, which were also key parts of the Plan.
- The importance of monitoring performance of the Plan and the need to have measures in place to ‘test’ and clearly demonstrate where the Council had been successful or where there was room for improvement. There was a need to have a proper evaluation of success and a more outcomes-based approach for the Plan, as well as a mechanism to ensure that the direction of travel for the Plan continued to be the right one.

Reason for recommendation

In order that the comments made by the Committee be considered by the Director of Corporate Resources in order to help inform revisions to the Corporate Plan.

526 RESHAPING PROGRAMME: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES – A RESPONSE TO AUDIT WALES REPORTS ON TACKLING POVERTY AND THIRD SECTOR WORKING (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet (and appended report, as well as a presentation) was outlined to the Committee by the Operational Manager, Corporate Strategy and Insight. The purpose of this was to enable the relevant Committees to have sight of the development of this body of work and to provide an opportunity to feed back their comments to Cabinet.

This report set out the key findings and recommendations contained in reports produced by Cwmpas following a programme of engagement undertaken on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, in response to four Audit Wales Reports, focused on tackling poverty and working with the Third Sector.

The engagement focused on the recommendations outlined in these reports and looked at the Council's current work on tackling poverty as well as working relationships with Third Sector Organisations, Social Enterprises and Town and Community Councils to explore opportunities for development.

The report highlighted the results of extensive engagement with both internal Council officers, and representatives from external organisations, namely, Third Sector, Social Enterprise and Town and Community Councils.

The report also considered the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the engagement and the Council's proposals to address them as part of the development of a new Corporate Plan and the Reshaping Programme of transformation.

The background methodology on strengthening communities and work to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis was also shared with Members.

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

The Chair welcomed the report and the emphasis on social enterprises laid out by Cwmpas and their recommendation that the Council undertake detailed mapping of the sector to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and make-up of the sector within the Vale of Glamorgan. It was vital that the Council supported social enterprises through providing a pipeline of opportunities and helping them to find a market, in order to make these enterprises as beneficial and sustainable as possible.

Councillor Carroll stated that the Council should hold the various Third Sector organisations and partners that it worked with to account to ensure that they were meeting their obligations and objectives to the Local Authority and residents and wanted to understand how this was currently being implemented by the Council. In response, it was explained that there were various arrangements and agreements in place with these partners, which included key conditions, service level agreements and terms of reference in order to monitor and evaluate their performance and what they were achieving in terms of the specific, set outcomes and services for the Council and its residents. The specific examples raised by the Councillor would be forwarded to the appropriate Council teams.

The Vice-Chair welcomed the work being undertaken by Third Sector partners, which would also provide the Council with an external perspective of the organisation and the opportunity to look at best practice from this sector which could be taken on board by the Council in its own workstreams and practices. This also applied to its partnership and relationship with local Town and Community Councils, which would also help to strengthen the relationship between the Council and Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan. Procurement was an important element to these relationships and should be taken forward as part of this process, as well as being more creative with procurement going forward. In response, it was explained that, regarding procurement, a more creative approach was being undertaken and at the Section 16 forum on engaging with the wider Third and Social

Enterprise sectors around the procurement process. Procurement was also being addressed by the Committee's Task and Finish Group. Work was also being undertaken as part of the report on a reflections piece, which was an open and honest piece of work, getting the views of external partners in terms of working with the Council for the Reshaping Programme and Corporate Plan.

The Chair explained that the Procurement Reform and the Social Partnership Bill which would be coming in February 2025, would make it easier and simpler to engage, pre-tender, with Third Sector, Social Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and for them to bid for these. Also, there would be a requirement to publish a pipeline of opportunities, which would aid the Council's procurement and benefit local and smaller businesses in tendering to the Authority.

Following the discussions on this item, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following comments from the Committee be shared with Cabinet for consideration:

- The emphasis on social enterprises was welcomed, as well as the recommendation by Cwmpas for the Council to undertake detailed mapping of the sector to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and make-up of the sector within the County;
- The importance of the Council supporting social enterprises through providing a pipeline of opportunities and helping them to find a market, in order to make these enterprises as beneficial and sustainable as possible;
- To ensure that the Council holds the various third sector organisations and partners that it works with to account to ensure that they were meeting their obligations to the Local Authority and residents;
- The benefits of working with various external agencies and third sector partners which would provide the Council with an external perspective of the organisation and the opportunity to look at best practice from this sector which could be taken on board by the Council in its own workstreams and practices;
- Also, to have this similar external perspective and appraisal of the Council and how it worked from other key stakeholders and partners such as the local Town and Community Councils in order to build on the relationships with them;
- The importance of the Vale of Glamorgan Council working with its Town and Community Council partners around procurement, as well as social enterprises and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the county.

Reason for recommendation

In order that the comments from the Committee are fed back and considered by Cabinet.

527 RESHAPING PROGRAMME UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet was presented by the by the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to enable the Committee to

consider the report and for Cabinet to consider the views of the Committee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor Dr. Johnson asked about the timescales on implementation and prioritisation of the measures for the Reshaping Programme, as well as the governance and decision-making processes surrounding this and the potential

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

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

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

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

Following the discussions on this item, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

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

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

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

Reasons for recommendations

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

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

528 1ST AND 2ND QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE (DCR) –

The report advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the proposed Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25:

- 2023-24 Recommendation Tracking (Appendix A);
- 1st Quarter Recommendation Tracking April to June 2024 (Appendix B);
- 2nd Quarter Recommendation Tracking July to September 2024 (Appendix C);
- Updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 (Appendix D).

The Committee was also asked to approve the following amendments to the Forward Work Programme schedule prior to this being published:

- That the Refresh of the Medium Term Financial Plan be slipped from the Committee meeting in November 2024 to December 2024;
- That both the Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update and the Carbon Management Plan be slipped to the next Committee meeting in November due to their deferral at this meeting.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A – C to the report be agreed.

(2) T H A T the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website, subject to the following amendments agreed by the Committee:

- That the Refresh of the Medium-Term Financial Plan be slipped from the Committee meeting in November 2024 to December 2024.
- That both the Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update and the Carbon Management Plan be slipped to the next Committee meeting in November due to their deferral at this meeting.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.

(2) For public information.