

No.

## HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

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

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

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillor N.C. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G. Ball, C.A. Cave, A.M. Collins, C.M. Cowpe, R. Fisher, E.J. Goodjohn, J.M. Norman and C. Stallard.

Also present: Councillors A. Asbrey, G.D.D. Carroll, W.A. Hennessy, S.M. Hanks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport, and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 585 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”.

### 586 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors I. Buckley and J. Lynch-Wilson.

### 587 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### 588 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 589 REFRESH OF MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024/25 TO 2028/29 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 as contained within the agenda, was introduced by the Director of Social Services, and subsequently presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

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By way of introduction, the Director highlighted the degree of complexity across the suite of finance reports presented to the Committee within its agenda and the substantial challenges the various reports presented for both the Social services Directorate and the Council as a whole. The reports demonstrated the level of overspend within the Social Services Directorate which was primarily as a result of a significant increase in demand for the services covered by the Directorate.

The Director also highlighted that the Children and Young People's Annual Placement Review report, later on the same agenda, provided the Committee with detail of where and how money had been spent within Children Services to support vulnerable children and young people.

Following a request received from the Director, and subsequently agreed by the Chair, that the Market Stability Report (Agenda Item 7) be received after the Children and Young People's Annual Placement Review Report (Agenda Item 8), the Director noted that the Market Stability Report was a forward-looking report which also demonstrated increases in service demand as well as challenging demographics and the list of services and developments that the Council would need to meet to adequately support its population in the future.

By way of reassurance, the Director concluded their introduction by advising that it was recognised by Officers that the aforementioned reports had the potential to pull Committee Members in different directions but, despite significant challenge, Officers were intent on dealing with the matters contained therein.

The Chair subsequently invited the Operational Manager for Accountancy to present the report who advised that the report was presented to Cabinet to refresh spend and funding assumptions and update Cabinet on the next steps for approving the Medium Term Financial Plan and setting the 2024/25 Budget in March 2024. The report had subsequently been referred to the Committee to review the work mitigating the cost pressures within its remit.

Through a series of supportive PowerPoint slides, the Operational Manager apprised Committee on the Council's Budget Planning Cycle, the objectives of the Council's Financial Strategy, the challenging financial forecast monetary figures as well as key dates in the budget consultation and approval calendar.

A Budget would be published for consultation with the public, business and scrutiny in January 2024 and final proposals would come forward to Cabinet in late February 2024 and there on to Council for final approval on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 before the statutory deadline on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

The Officer added that, at the heart of the Committee's remit was to maintain focus on supporting the most vulnerable residents of the Vale of Glamorgan and therefore, as budget proposals were formulated, the Council would need to ensure that it was also offering a level of protection by thinking about transformational proposals as part of the Council's savings strategy. Officers and Members alike had a collective responsibility in terms of managing and safeguarding the Council's finances and to ensure that said finances were as accessible and transparent as possible.

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The Cabinet report set out underlying pressures of £38.525M (for the Council overall) before management action, a revised sum of £20.767M and an overall gap of £10.573M for 2024/25. Setting the budget depended on maximising revenue, containing cost, and ultimately constructing a deliverable savings programme. Given the magnitude of the financial challenge work had already commenced on managing and mitigating cost pressures and the Cabinet report focused on the total following these initial actions.

The Officer added that the key cost drivers were inflation (both pay and price) and unprecedented increase in demand for social care across both the Adults and Children and Young People sectors as well as increasing demand for Additional Learning needs provision and the need for Homelessness accommodation.

There was a two-year settlement announced by Welsh Government in March 2023 with an indicative Aggregate External Finance (AEF) increase of 3.1% for 2024/25 and signalling of growth of only 1% per annum thereafter. There was a very strong indication currently that there should be no expectation of any improvement in the indicative settlement for 2024/25. The Welsh Government Settlement was expected to be announced on 19<sup>th</sup> December following a very late UK Government Budget announcement on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023.

In conclusion, the Operational Manager advised that work had already been undertaken to reduce Social Services specific cost pressures whilst maintaining the approach to protect the most vulnerable residents however, this had resulted in less of a reduction for Social Services cost pressures than other directorate areas across the council.

There were no specific Leisure Services cost pressures identified within the report, but the Council was aware of ongoing pressures around energy and leisure facility running costs.

Following the Officer's presentation, Councillor Cave noted that one of the comments raised by the Leader of the Council when the report was considered by Cabinet, was that everyone had a responsibility to scrutinise the budget matters presented and in particular Scrutiny Members when presented with the report at their relevant Scrutiny Committees. Therefore, in light of the fact that there was such a significant spend for the Directorate under the remit of the Committee, Councillor Cave suggested that all 54 Elected Members be invited to look at the budgetary situation being considered by the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee but noted that the Committee itself was not always fully up to date with where the money was being directed.

Councillor Cave then referred to a previous working party meeting example as undertaken by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee around homelessness in response to increased pressures on the Council following the Covid-19 Pandemic, and that the main benefit of the aforementioned working party meeting was that the Elected Members involved had quite a lot of training and therefore indepth understanding as to what the actual dilemmas were in regard to the particular topic. Therefore, Councillor Cave moved that arrangements be made for a working party meeting amongst Members of the Committee to receive

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additional insight and understanding of the significant and increased spending for the Social Services Directorate, identified savings, as well as future transformational opportunities for Members to better scrutinise future spending.

Councillor Cave also referred to recommendation (4) within the Cabinet report that requested that the ongoing work to identify savings and transformational opportunities be brought forward in the budget or consultation report in January 2024. However, Councillor Cave advised that they were unable to find any paperwork or other sources of information in order to find out exactly what the transformational options and/or cost savings were.

In addition to Councillor Cave's comments, the Chair of the Committee advised that they had also previously requested a more detailed report of where money was going in relation to service areas that fell under the Social Services Directorate as well as a report on Social Services' recruitment.

In response to Councillor Cave's subsequent comment that the Committee had the capacity and the power as a Committee to decide whether it wished to set up a working party meeting, in order to receive more information and a fuller picture before being able to properly scrutinise, the Chair seconded Councillor Cave's motion to establish a working party meeting and asked any Committee Members who wished to be part of the working party meeting to indicate. In response and in addition to the Chair of the Committee, the Vice-Chair, Councillor Cave, Councillor Fisher, Councillor Ball and Councillor Norman all indicated.

With no further comments, the Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T both the reference and appended Cabinet report, to review the work mitigating the cost pressures under the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T arrangements be made for a working party meeting to be held between Finance Officer(s) and Members of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee, as confirmed at the meeting, i.e. Councillors Charles, N.C. Thomas, Ball, Cave, Fisher and Norman, to meet to receive additional insight and understanding of the significant and increased spending for the Social Services Directorate, identified savings, as well as future transformational opportunities for Members to better scrutinise future spending, with it being noted that any issues / recommendations be referred back to the Committee for consideration and that Cabinet be informed accordingly.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the reference and report to ensure an open and transparent approach to financial management in line with the approved Financial Strategy.

(2) To apprise Committee and Cabinet that a meeting of Members of the Committee was to be arranged to consider the significant and increased spending for

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the Social Services Directorate in more detail and that any issues/recommendations be referred back to the Committee for consideration prior to any recommendations being referred to Cabinet having regard to the timescales in the report.

#### 590 QUARTER 2 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DSS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the Quarter 2 Revenue Monitoring position for 2023/24.

The Officer advised that the revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures, with increasing demand in respect of Children's and Adults Social Care and significant increases in the cost of placements and care packages. Support for Additional Learning Needs continued to be an area of significant pressure within Learning and Skills. The Council was also experiencing continued inflationary pressures in respect of School Transport and Highways Maintenance

Across services, inflationary pressures were also being experienced in respect of pay, most notably where market forces were being utilised and for the funding gap between provision for the 2023/24 pay award and the likely pay award for 2023/24.

The report set out an overall unplanned use of reserves of £6.768m and a further £6.5m for schools.

The Council had identified a number of steps to be taken in year to help mitigate the emerging overspend and safeguard reserves, this included tighter controls on expenditure and recruitment and a review of the Capital Programme. The Corporate Resources Directorate had identified a potential underspend of £300k to be offset against emerging overspends and there was a projected underspend of £1m against Council Tax income due to the projected collection of arrears, new properties, changes in allowances and premiums on empty homes.

Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set for 2023/24 which included a target of £4.628m of Corporate savings.

The Officer then apprised the Committee on points relevant to the remit of the Committee as follows:

#### Social Services

- The Social Services Budget programme continued in 2023/24 and would utilise a contribution of £1.828M of funding and additional efficiency savings of £81K. It was proposed that, in the context of the significant cost pressures being reported by the service during the 2023/24 financial year and also in future years, these funding requirements should be consolidated with the other Directorate cost pressures to enable a single and more strategic programme of transformation to be developed for future years.
- The Social Services budget was also expected to utilise £2M of step in funding from the Social Services reserve.

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- The projected outturn for Social Services in 2023/24 was an adverse variance of £8.269M which would need to be mitigated by additional savings identified in year or the unplanned use of reserves, and
- The planned drawdown from reserves for 2023/24 was £4.028M with a further £5.884M required to offset the additional adverse variance. This posed significant additional budgetary pressures that would need to be addressed as part of the 2024/25 budget proposals and would leave the balance in the Social Services reserve at nil.

Key pressures in addition to the reserves funding within the directorate included the following:

- Rising cost associated with placements for Children and Young People.
- Additional legal costs associated with increased complexity and incidence of care proceedings.
- Increase in care hours required for adults which can in part be explained by a return to care following Covid, an increase in the incidence of double handed care and also Demographic pressures.
- The service was also reporting an increase in residential and nursing placements, an increase in direct care placements and respite, and
- The cost of placements can sometimes peak in October and the Council had seen some reductions in the cost of Adult care at the latest monitoring position.

#### Leisure Services

- No specific pressures were being reported for Leisure Services at the current budget planning stage however, possible Energy pressures may emerge through the winter months.

Following the Officer's presentation, the Vice-Chair of the Committee raised two questions as follows:

(1) Had finance officers had an opportunity to factor in any of the impacts of the U.K. Government Autumn Statement which seemed to be a continuation of austerity and therefore the budgets coming down to local government had not been enhanced, and

(2) Could the finance officer comment on the implications of the nil balance in reserves at the end of the financial year and the implications of this going forward.

In response, the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that finance officers had not seen anything favourable as it stood at the current time in relation to the U.K. Government Autumn Statement and therefore no additional funding from the U.K. Government was expected. However, this would be kept under constant review. In relation to the reserve position as indicated by the Vice-Chair, the Operational Manager advised that finance officers shared the concern of the Vice-Chair especially in light of the fact that the Social Care budget could be extremely volatile and reserves by their very nature could only be used once.

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The Vice-Chair thanked the Officer for their response to their questions and in addition noted that given the legal/statutory commitments the Social Services Directorate had in relation to providing necessary care for vulnerable individuals, the Directorate was therefore considered an unavoidable big spender for the Council. The Vice-Chair added that they were aware of how much effort officers and the Directorate as a whole were making trying to control spending, which was very difficult when a small change in service demand could have significant budgetary implications/costs involved.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the position with regard the Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report to inform Committee of the projected revenue outturn for 2023/24.

**591 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 (DSS) –**

The report provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 through to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, including any changes requested within the report.

The Officer advised that the report noted the current approved Programme of £129.298m, but it was important to note that this was unlikely to be delivered and slippage was requested of £18.801m. By way of reassurance, schemes would be closely monitored over the coming months, and it was anticipated that further slippage requests would be requested in future reports presented to the Committee.

Due to the current financial situation, as set out within the previous financial reports on the agenda, the Council's Capital Programme had undergone a review. The report requested changes that would release funding back into the Council's reserves, capital receipts and other sources of capital funding to ensure finances were more sustainable and the Capital Programme was deliverable. It was proposed to remove some uncommitted schemes and vire money to help mitigate future years' revenue pressures as shown in the table below:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>£'000</b>
Reserves	2,174
Capital Receipts	500

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General Capital Funding	2,450
Borrowing	400
Revenue Contribution to Capital	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,545</b>

The uncommitted schemes that had been removed from the programme, and that fell under the remit of the Committee, were as follows:

- WCCIS Implementation – had a small residual balance which was not substantial enough to progress a full scheme, and
- IT Developments – also a small residual balance scheme so removed from the Capital programme.

In conclusion, the Operational Manager for Accountancy apprised the Committee on a number of items relevant to the remit of the Committee, as set out in the main body of the report, as follows:

#### New Schemes

Social Services – 1) Electric Bike Scheme

Leisure Services – 2) Inclusion of an Air Handling Unit at Llantwit Leisure Centre, 2) New flooring at Colcot Sports Hall, 3) Increase existing scheme budget for Community and Leisure Centre in Belle Vue.

#### Slippage Request

Under the Environment and Housing slippage section for Celtic Walk Park and Play Area at Rhoose.

#### Delegated Authority

To add the UK Government Shared Prosperity Funding which included funding for the Knap Skate Park in Barry.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, and the Chair thanking officers for all three finance reports received on the agenda, a subsequent query was raised by Councillor Cave in relation to the third recommendation presented within the report that the use of Emergency Powers be 'noted' rather than scrutinised. To which, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that Councillor Cave's reading of the recommendation was correct. The Scrutiny Committee was being asked to note any Emergency Powers set out within the report and that the Emergency Powers had been moved as per the Council's Constitution and therefore scrutiny in relation to any Emergency Powers had been undertaken at the time that the Emergency Power was raised. Therefore, the Committee was not scrutinising the Emergency Power decision because that decision had already been made.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.



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(2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee, as set out in paragraphs 2.45 – 2.48 of the report, be noted.

(3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

(4) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 and Future Year's Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6 and further reviewed at paragraphs 2.14 to 2.18 of the report, be noted.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the content of the report to advise Committee of the progress on the Capital Programme, the use of Delegated Authority, the use of Emergency Powers and changes to the Capital Programme.

#### 592 CARDIFF AND VALE OF GLAMORGAN MARKET STABILITY REPORT 2022: ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN (DSS) –

The Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding presented the report which highlighted the key findings of the work undertaken in the review at a local level of the updated needs of the Vale of Glamorgan in relation to the Market Stability Report (MSR).

For context, the Officer advised that the MSR had been undertaken between October 2021 and July 2022. The dedicated engagement undertaken during development of the Population Needs Assessment (PNA) as well as existing data and reports were used to inform the MSR, alongside dedicated engagement work in the form of focus groups with professionals and providers. The MSR was originally published in 2022.

The original MSR highlighted improvements in care and support services had been made across all population groups since the 2017 Population Needs Assessment despite COVID-19 having several impacts, including increasing demand for services, especially as a result of mental health issues, and changing models of delivery for many services. The longer-term impact on care and support needs of the Vale of Glamorgan population, and the market's stability would require continual monitoring to ensure market sufficiency.

Since 2022 pressures on Adult and Children & Young People services had increased significantly. There were now more children in Local Authority care, and they needed support services and placements that could meet their needs. More adults were being assessed as requiring packages of support and the Local Authority had worked hard with providers to ensure that the increased need could be met. The demographic of the Vale of Glamorgan adult population meant that the need for care and support services would continue to increase.

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The Officer added that, when the MSR was undertaken in 2021/22, the region was emerging from covid and, since this time, there had been changes within the market. In places the market remained fragile.

The Officer then drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 2.3 of the report which set out several priority areas of need that would be a huge challenge for the Vale of Glamorgan in order to ensure that all the competing needs were met in full. To prioritise and focus attention on the areas of need an action plan would be developed.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, Councillor Cave began debate by thanking officers for an indepth report and noted that if the Council continued to keep a live document in terms of the MSR then hopefully there would not be much to do in 2027. Councillor Cave then requested, in relation to transformational services, how the Council was attempting to get ahead of the curve and provide high quality services. Therefore, enquired after an example of transformational work that the Directorate was most proud of.

In reply, the Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding advised that there were previously significant delays in placing packages of care in the domiciliary care market within the Vale of Glamorgan during the autumn and winter of 2022. Whilst the market situation had now significantly improved, and packages of care could be placed quickly, it remained fragile and an area of pressure. The Officer also noted that transformational work could not stand still by its very nature and that the Council continued to look into areas such as social enterprises and in particular within areas of the Vale of Glamorgan that were hard to provide services to such as the western area of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Councillor Cave subsequently echoed the officer's comments in terms of efforts being required in the western areas of the Vale of Glamorgan, as this area often faced more challenges than other areas but asked for more specifics as to how the transformational work was being undertaken.

In referring to the example of domiciliary care specifically, the Head of Service advised that improvements were made in the main following significant partnership working within the service market and a reliance on private providers as well as Third Sector support networks. Council staff had worked really closely with providers at its Provider forum and the Council had received excellent feedback from the Inspectorate on its efforts to work really closely with providers within the market. Having very honest conversations with partners in relation to the needs of the service and the challenges within the market had proved extremely beneficial and the Council continued to work very closely in terms of being able to unpick where there were very complex packages of care. The Council also worked really closely with some of the new providers that were coming to the market. For areas of the Vale of Glamorgan that were known to be harder to reach and provide services to, the Council had made its expectations very clear to the providers providing support in these areas.

To confirm their understanding, Councillor Cave then summarised the Officer's advice given in that the transformational work undertaken was to ask current

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providers to not offer support exclusively to one area of the Vale of Glamorgan but to widen the reach and by helping the providers to understand that they needed to meet the demand more widely across the Vale of Glamorgan which had cut down the number of days that people were waiting for domiciliary care to a matter of days rather than weeks or months, to which, the Officer agreed with Councillor Cave's summary.

Councillor Cave then added that the difficulty for the Committee was often due to the fact that figures were provided within service area reports however, figures would not tell the full story in terms of the impact for service users. Councillor Cave's interest in particular to transformational work was to ensure that they had an understanding of where the transformational work may occur going forward across the Vale of Glamorgan area and start wider conversations about the problems that were being experienced for service users across the Vale as a whole. Councillor Cave added that every individual was creative in their own way and therefore transformational work would not be successful if attempts were made in silo by any one team in the Council. Therefore, as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Cave was curious as to how the Committee could focus on transformational work a little bit more.

The Director of Social Services then added that the Social Services Directorate would be happy to bring any reports as requested to the Scrutiny Committee. With regard to the transformational change in domiciliary care specifically, there was an extensive action plan put in place that officers had developed following an internal workshop to experiment with and discount ideas that could be developed and explored further. The extension of the 'Your Choice' programme was significant in terms of the number of individuals that were supported through the mechanism and also in April 2022 the Council substantially increased the fees for domiciliary care which had an impact due to the fact that the increase allowed the Council's providers to pay their staff more and ensure that the staff were funded for travel time between home visits. The Council also undertook detailed work by looking through each agency's website to ensure that the agency was advertising the services and fees correctly. This was not a piece of work the Council had undertaken previously but it was included as part of the aforementioned action plan and the smaller actions collectively made a big difference.

The Vice-Chair then summarised previous examples of transformational work where the Council was leading the way within the relevant industries, such as the Telecare Service, which was having a huge impact on domiciliary care and allowing individuals to stay safe in their own homes for longer. Also, the 'Step-Down' care scheme that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was working closely in partnership with the University Health Board, which was also having a very positive impact. The Vice-Chair also noted that there was going to be consequences in the future in relation to some national policies in the pipeline from the U.K. Government, such as the stated intention by the Home Secretary to reduce the number of overseas care workers coming into the United Kingdom, which was going to impact the kind of care offers that the Council could provide and this would have to be given very careful consideration going forward by the Social Services Directorate.

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In response, the Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding agreed that the Directorate would have to closely consider the impacts of any future policies on its service areas. The Council had historically recruited a very small number of individuals from overseas and therefore future policies may have more of an impact on private providers. It was too early to say what the impacts of any future policies would be; however, officers were already mindful of that fact that the market was fragile.

With no further comments or questions, the Chair thanked officers for the report and the Committee subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the changes to the market since publication of the Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Market Stability Report (MSR), as per the key changes and local priorities set out in the report, be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report to ensure Committee was updated in respect of changes in demand and service availability since the MSR was published in 2022.

#### 593 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICES ANNUAL PLACEMENTS REVIEW (DSS) –

The Operational Manager for Children Looked After presented the report which outlined the actions taken within Children and Young People Services during 2022/23 with regard to placement provision for Children Looked After (CLA) and the priority actions for 2023/24.

Where children and young people could not be supported to remain within their immediate families and needed to become looked after, the Council sought to provide a range of suitable placements.

Formal kinship fostering arrangements would be explored as the preferred alternative arrangement where it was necessary for the Local Authority to share parental responsibility or intervene in managing risk and protecting children.

The Officer added that where a child's needs could not be adequately met through kinship arrangements, the majority would have their needs met best in a substitute family, preferably with in-house foster carers and, if not, with Independent Fostering Agency carers wherever possible living within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Residential care placements would be made only where the complexity and challenge of a child or young person's needs meant they were unable to live within a family setting or where a young person was subject to a Court Ordered Secure Remand.

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The Officer referred to the Annual Placement Review report and advised that pages 1 through 3 described how the area of activity and expenditure was challenging and complex as well as a number of external influences having a significant impact.

Pages 3 to 5 described the aims and objectives of the Council Corporate Strategy for Children who need Care and Support which underpinned the work of the Service.

The Officer then drew the Committee's attention to pages 5 through 7 of the report which provided information about the number and nature of placements on a quarterly basis during 2022/23. Between March 2022 and September 2023, the population had increased by 54.

The increases, as set out, correlated with the increased demands the Council had seen within other areas of the Division as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Cost-of-Living Crisis. The largest increase was seen in internal and external foster placements. This reflected a national upward trend in demand for foster placements and decreasing capacity.

The majority of children looked after in the Vale of Glamorgan were in foster care provided by in-house carers and family and friends (kinship carers). The breakdown of the CLA population confirmed the Council's strategy to return children to placements within Wales and, where possible, within the boundary of the Vale of Glamorgan. Of the nine children who currently remained out of Wales, one was placed with relatives, five were placed with external placements (IFA's) and three were placed in specialist residential settings. It was hoped that five young people could be returned to the area once appropriate accommodation was identified.

There had also been an increase in the number of children placed in externally provided foster care from 63 in March 2022 to 80 in September 2023. This increase was a trend the Council had seen in previous years from March 2020 where there were only 36 children placed in IFAs to March 2021 where there were 53. This reflected the increasing demand on foster care and continued to be a target for reduction in future years.

The number of children requiring residential care had remained relatively stable with only some variation over the past 18 months. There were on average 15 children whose additional complex needs required this type of provision during the year. The Council was aware of the increasing complexity of need amongst the children it was currently supporting. In addition to this the Council had seen costs for residential placements increase significantly.

In conclusion, the Operational Manager advised that the overall external placement budget for children looked after was overspent by £228,764k and that pages 8 through 13 of the appended report set out some of the initiatives and activities undertaken during the previous year to manage the Service.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee thanked officers for their comprehensive report and, in their capacity as a Member of the Council's Corporate Parenting Panel, advised that the Panel was regularly cited on the obvious upward trend due to the current economic climate and the after-effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore,

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the Vice-Chair welcomed the move to look at more in-house ways to advertise and hopefully recruit more widely for foster carers.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Council Children and Young People Services Annual Placement Review October 2023 Report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

(2) T H A T a further Annual Placement Review report be received by the Committee at its October 2024 meeting.

(3) T H A T both the covering and appended report be referred to the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report to provide Members with an opportunity to exercise oversight of the key statutory function.

(2) To ensure that Members were aware of any changes with regards to placement provision for Children Looked After (CLA) and future priority actions on an annual basis.

(3) To ensure that Members from the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee also had an opportunity to consider the matters in the report which related to their portfolio areas.

#### 594 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING SUMMARY REPORT – (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023, as contained within the agenda, was presented by the Director of Social Services.

The Director advised that the brief, mid-year, report provided a summary of the activity that had been undertaken in relation to Corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council, as monitored by the Corporate Safeguarding Group, and to provide assurance around safeguarding activity taking place across the Council since the annual version of the report was received by the Committee.

The Director then summarised the key developments since the report was last received by the Committee as follows:

- Improvements in monitoring of safeguarding data,
- Review of the Council's Safeguarding training and associated materials, and
- Improvements in how the Council shared learning across the region following serious Child or adult practice reviews.

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With no comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the reference and appended Cabinet report on the activity that had been undertaken in relation to Corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report to provide assurance around safeguarding activity taking place across the Council as well as to ensure that there was a wide-reaching level of Member oversight.

595 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DSS) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (Q2) (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2023/24) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Performance Team, the format for the report had been revised temporarily, to enable the Council to continue to provide Elected Members with an overview of progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the remit of each Scrutiny Committee.

The Director of Social Services drew the Committee's attention to the presentation appended at Appendix A to the report, which provided a summary of progress against the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24, as aligned to the remit of the Committee.

The Director noted that pages 7 and 8 of Appendix A set out positive progress that the Council had made in terms of how it was working with its communities and supporting people at home.

With no comments or questions raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 2 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the content of the report to ensure the Council clearly demonstrated the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the

No.

Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements, as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.