

HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 10th September, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles (Chair); Councillor N. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors I. Buckley, A.M. Collins, R. Godfrey, S. Lloyd-Selby, J. Lynch-Wilson, J.M. Norman and C. Stallard.

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

300 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”.

301 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors G. Ball, C.A. Cave and C.M. Cowpe.

302 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

303 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

304 UPDATE ON THE HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BUDGET WORKING GROUP – VERBAL UPDATE –

The Chair advised that a meeting of the Budget Working Group had been scheduled for 29th July at 2:30pm, as per the agreement of the Committee back on 6th February, 2024 that a meeting of the Group be arranged every six months.

Members of the Group were asked to provide any budgetary questions in advance of the July meeting so that the relevant officers might prepare detailed responses for the meeting. On 15th July, the Chair took the decision to cancel the scheduled meeting on the 29th due to lack of business.

Therefore, the next meeting of the Budget Working Group would be arranged in due course, in January 2025, so that the relevant minutes may be presented to February 2025 Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the update on the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee Budget Working Group, as provided by the Chair of the Committee, be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To inform both Members and the general public of progress made to date, as well as future arrangements in place, for the Budget Working Group.

305 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2023/2024 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 18th July, 2024 was presented by the Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes who advised that the appended Cabinet report sought to update Cabinet on the work that had been undertaken in relation to corporate arrangements for Safeguarding across the Council.

There was corporate responsibility to ensure that there were effective arrangements in place for safeguarding children and adults who required specific Council services and the Annual Report 2023/24 (Appendix 1) provided an overview of the Corporate Safeguarding activities that had taken place across the Local Authority.

The Officer apprised the Committee on the overview of data and performance as set out in Section A of the annual report, specifically in relation to the Social Services directorate, with it being noted that:

- In respect of child protection registrations, the numbers were similar to those that the Council had seen in similar years, so there was no apparent escalation,
- In relation to safeguard referrals, the directorate saw quite a significant increase in numbers when the Council's new sets of arrangements and procedures came into place in 2019 but the numbers had since levelled out and become static,
- In relation to section five allegations against those in position of trust and practitioners, the Directorate continued to see an increase in the number of Referrals, particularly those that were then going into the process. As a consequence, the Council was looking at its structures internally to assess

current resources and how it structured its teams to meet the increased demand, and

- The Council continued its engagement and participation within the arrangements of its regional safeguarding board, with the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan remaining as Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Board, to actively contribute to the priorities and delivery of the regional annual plan.

Following the Officer's presentation of the reference, Councillor Lloyd-Selby referred to page 5 of the appended Annual Report and noted that a review was currently being undertaken in relation to the largest reported area of abuse being neglect within the 85+ years age group. Therefore, requested that a report be brought to the Committee at a future date on the outcomes and also how the Council was planning to address the findings of said review.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Lloyd-Selby also referred to the graph provided on page 6 of the appended Annual Report which demonstrated that the majority of the abuse reported was taking place in the individuals' own homes and queried if the graph was demonstrating statistics related to just the 85+ years category or all safeguarding referrals.

In response, the Operational Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes advised that the information provided which outlined the types of abuse being reported, and the age ranges of said adults at risk where abuse or neglect was being reported, was reflected on a national scale and officers would be happy to provide Committee with the highlights of the related review in the future. In response to Councillor Lloyd-Selby's supplementary question, the Officer confirmed that the related graph related to all / the total number of safeguarding referrals.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T both the Cabinet Report and Reference on the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report for 2023/2024 be noted.
- (2) T H A T a report be added to the Committee's Forward Work Programme on the outcomes of the review currently being undertaken to understand in more detail why the largest category of abuse reported to the Council was the neglect of persons aged 85 and over.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee is aware of recent developments in corporate arrangements for safeguarding as well as to receive assurance of effective safeguarding measures taking place.
- (2) So that Committee may consider the statistics as provided on page 5 of the Corporate Safeguarding Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Report April 2023 –

March 2024 in more detail, as well as the Council's plans to address the review findings.

306 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 (DSS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that the draft accounts were now complete and with external auditor for audit and the report before Committee sought to inform Members of the provisional financial position of the Council for the 2023/24 financial year.

The Council encountered significant revenue pressures during 2023/24, particular pressures were in respect of inflationary pressures particularly regarding contracts and pay pressures (which reflected cost of living, market pressures and the Council's commitment to paying real living wage). The Council continued to experience significant demand pressures for supporting Children's Services, Homelessness, Highway Maintenance, HGV Drivers and pupils with Additional Learning Needs during 2023-24.

Said pressures were offset more than the Council had expected through additional investment income and also a Council Tax Surplus and this enabled the Council to draw down less than it had planned from service reserves but it still had quite a significant draw down from within Social Services and from unplanned use of reserves that was in the region of £4m.

Children's Services had reported a significant adverse variance relating to increased external placement costs given the complexities of the care proceedings, and care requirements of children and young people currently being supported and the high-cost placements some of the children required to meet their needs. Additional costs had also been encountered in respect of legal costs and increased staffing resources associated with the service. Again, this position reflected pressures seen across local government nationally.

An overspend was also reported in the Adult Services and Resource Management and Safeguarding service areas in respect of Domiciliary Care and Residential and Nursing Home Payments of approximately £3m after allowing for the £2m planned step in funded from reserves. There was also £554k adverse variances associated with Council run care homes in 2023/24.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised the Committee of the Council's reserves position, the Council had seen a reduction from reserves starting the year at £110m down to £76m. £3m was transferred into the social services reserve so that it would have sufficient resilience going into 24/25.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Vice-Chair of the Committee noted the significant financial pressures as a result of out of county placement costs and the fact that said costs were difficult to predict based on the nature of the service. Some private placements were very costly but the Council had been required to use them in order to ensure it continued to support young people in the best way possible.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report and the financial measures taken and proposed be noted.
- (2) T H A T the allocation of overall Council surplus as set out below be noted:
 - £2m transfer to new reserve to offset school deficits on a provisional basis in 2024/25,
 - £80k to Council Fund to offset general pressures.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report to inform Members of the outturn and the financial measures taken and proposed.
- (2) To inform Members of the allocation of the 2023/24 surplus to support key pressures identified by the Council.

307 CAPITAL CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 (DSS) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee that the accounts were complete, and to inform Committee of the provisional financial position of the Council's Capital Programme for the 2023/24 financial year.

The report provided detail on the closing of the Capital Programme for the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024. Details by scheme, that were relevant to the Scrutiny Committee were shown in Appendix 1 to the report and Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6th March, 2023 through to 31st March, 2024, including any changes requested within the report.

In conclusion, the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that, specific to the Committee, the position regarding the budget was a variance of £306k against an adjusted programme of £3.817m. Outturn for the Scrutiny Committee was recorded at £3.511m and slippage of £271k had been requested as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

With no questions or comments raised, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the year end capital position for the financial year 2023/24 be noted.

- (2) T H A T the additional scheme budgets, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the summary position of the changes in the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6th March 2023 to 31st March 2024, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the Emergency Power approved in respect of the slippage, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the contents of the report to inform Committee of the year end capital position for financial year 2023/24, the additional schemes added to the approved programme for 2023/24, the changes to the Approved Capital Programme set on 6th March, 2023 and the approved slippage in the Emergency Powers in the 2023/24 Capital Programme.

308 QUARTER 1 REVENUE MONITORING 2024/25 (DSS) –

The Operational Manger for Accountancy presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the Quarter 1 Revenue Monitoring position for 2024/25.

The Officer advised that the Council's revenue position for 2024/25 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures with continuance of the key service pressures that were seen in the 2023/24 outturn position into 2024/25.

The cost pressures allocated as part of the 2024/25 budget were adjusted to reflect the funding available and therefore did not provide full funding for pressures and those pressures had continued to increase in the first quarter of 2024/25.

Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set out for 2024/25 which included a target of £7.676m Corporate savings. The progress against those savings targets were reflected in the Appendix to the report. The Council also continued to monitor the delivery of 2023/24 savings not achieved in year.

The Officer concluded that the Social Services budget was set at £96.243m for 2024/25 and a virement of £33k was requested as part of the report. The budget position was detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

The savings target for Social Services for 2024/25 was £1.755m it was expected that 66% of savings would be delivered or mitigated in year. The projected outturn for Social Services in 2024/25 was an adverse variance of £5.906m and further detailed in Appendix 2.

Key pressures in addition to the reserves funding set out in the report related to the directorate included the following:

- Rising costs 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 due to a significant ageing population.
- The service was also reporting an increase in residential and nursing placements, an increase in direct care placements and respite.
- The increase in residents over 75 has a significant impact on the levels of care required and this demographic pressure was particularly acute in the Vale.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that, across the 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 2024/25 pay award and the likely pay award for 2024/25.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, Councillor Godfrey queried whether Government's withdrawal of winter fuel payments would bring any additional pressures to the Council. In response, the Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that there was not a direct financial link but it was recognised that any wider impacts that affected the wellbeing of Vale of Glamorgan residents would be of interest to the Council and could subsequently increase the levels of contact made to access Council services.

The Vice-Chair of the Committee then referred to the recent confirmation from Welsh Government that an increase of 5-6% in public sector pay was agreed and queried whether that matched the Council's expectations. In response, the Operational Manager for Accountancy confirmed that a rate of 5.5% for teachers' pay had been confirmed, however the Council had forecast 4%. However, the increase was graduated from September 2024 and therefore spanned 7 out of 12 months for the financial year. So there was a funding gap of 3% in the Council's budget. Finance officers were working on the consequential to assess how the increases would be portioned out over the financial year.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2024/25 Revenue Budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the virements requested as part of the Quarter 1 Revenue Monitoring 2024/25 report be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report to inform Committee of the projected revenue outturn for 2024/25.

(2) To allow Finance Officers to update the original budget for 2024/25 for virement requests.

309 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH JUNE, 2024 (DSS) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2024/25 Capital Programme for the period 1st April, 2024 to 30th June, 2024 and to request changes to the Capital Programme.

The Operational Manager for Accountancy advised that there were two requests under the Additions, Virement and Re-profiling section of the report that were within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee. The first was for Rondel House Day Service Improvements and the second for conversion of C1V for Parkwood:

Rondel house Day Service Improvements – Works were now complete and no further spend would be incurred against the scheme, it had been requested to vire the scheme budget of £5k to the Residential Homes Fire Doors scheme.

Parkwood – C1V Conversion – Following the relocation of C1V from the Leisure Centre to the Civic Offices, Parkwood Leisure applied to the UK Government Shared Prosperity fund for a grant to repurpose the former call centre into new recreational space. It had been requested to include the new scheme with a budget of £400k in the 2024/25 Capital Programme, to be funded £200k from the UK Government Shared Prosperity fund, £100k contribution from Parkwood Leisure and £100k from the Council's Reshaping Risk and Investment Reserve. A Cabinet report was presented on 5th September, 2024 that provided further detail regarding the scheme including the request to repurpose the area for recreational use.

There were two Delegated Authorities that had been approved within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee. The first detailed schemes under the UK Government Shared Prosperity fund and the second for the Linear Park Proposals at Sully:

Shared Prosperity Fund – Delegated authority had been approved to amend the 2024/25 Capital Programme for schemes supported by the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund as detailed in paragraph 2.20 of the report.

Linear Park Proposals, Sully – Delegated Authority had been approved to add the new scheme into the 2024/25 Capital Programme to enhance the Council owned public open space to the north of South Road, Sully, to form a linear park. The proposed public open space enhancements would be determined following a feasibility study. Suggested works included new planting, seating, way finding signage, exercise equipment and the upgrading of the existing children's playground. The budget of £175k would be funded by S106 monies.

In conclusion, the Officer added that it was important to note that many areas were continuing to experience an increase in costs associated with delivery of schemes. Tenders were being received over the current allocated budgets and officers were

reporting the requirement to re-negotiate submitted tenders. Schemes would be closely monitored over the coming months and it was anticipated that slippage requests would be requested in future reports.

Officers would continue to work with project managers and sponsors to ensure value for money and that all possible funding opportunities were identified and were fully explored.

Following the Officer's presentation of the report, the Vice-Chair took the opportunity to thank Finance officers for the four financial reports on the agenda that evening, which were very informative and reflected the considerable amount of work on behalf of officers.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2024/25 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraph 2.5 and further detailed at paragraphs 2.20 and 2.24 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 of the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2024/25 Capital Programme and future years Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraph 2.4 and further detailed at paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16 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 the changes to the Capital Programme.

310 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2024/25 (DSS) –

The Director of Social Services advised that the purpose of the report was to present Quarter 1 performance results for the period 1st April, 2024 to 30th June, 2024 in delivering the 2024/25 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Director referred to the presentation appended at Appendix A to the report which provided a summary of progress against the Annual Delivery Plan

commitments for 2024/25 as aligned to the remit of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee.

In particular the Director highlighted that finding a replacement system for WCCIS continued to be an area of High Risk. Work was continuing with the Council's cluster partners in Cwm Taff Bro Morgannwg (CMT) and Digital Health Care Wales (DHCW). Weekly meetings were in place at a local, regional and all Wales level to ensure the delivery of a replacement system and a delay in the production of key documents had caused some slippage against implementation timelines.

Following the Director's presentation of the report, the Vice-Chair began discussion by asking the Director for an update on the new ICT system to replace WCCIS. In response, the Director advised that the procurement process for the new system had started and that officers were hoping to bring a report to Cabinet in October 2024 which would then be referred on to the Committee for consideration.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby then requested an update in relation to the recruitment of an additional officer for children's accommodation, to which, the Head of Resources Management and Safeguarding advised that the post had recently been approved as a permanent position and the post advert was currently out for Welsh translation with the intention of publicising next week. It was therefore hoped that, with the change of post from temporary to permanent, there would be an increase in applications received in the next recruitment round.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Lloyd-Selby, the Head of Adult Services and Vale Alliance confirmed that the wellbeing post had now been filled.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Q1 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 underperformance 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 demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council is 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 maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

311 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the following item which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading, be considered.

312 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT 2023/24 (REF) –

(Urgent by reason of the need to ensure that the Annual Self-Assessment Report was considered by Full Council on 2nd December, 2024 including any recommendations made by the Governance and Audit Committee following Scrutiny and Cabinet consultation, and having regard to statutory agenda publication deadlines during the consultation period.)

The reference from Cabinet on 5th September, 2024 was presented by the Director of Social Services who advised that the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report (attached at Appendix A to the report) drew on a wide range of information sources to assess the progress made by the Council in meeting its Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. The findings would enable the Council to identify how it could further enhance its internal processes and use of resources to improve and support achievement of its Annual Delivery Plan commitments and the Corporate Plan 2020-25 Well-being Objectives.

The Annual Self-Assessment report was a requirement for Welsh Local Authorities under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E), which required the Council to keep its performance under review, consult on and then publish a report setting out the conclusions of its self-assessment once in respect of every financial year. Therefore, the Committee had been presented with the report as part of the consultation process.

For the period 2023/24, the Council judged that it had made good progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2020-25. The Council had achieved 85% of 591 planned activities and associated targets set in what was an ambitious Annual Delivery Plan given the context of ongoing significant service demand pressures and a difficult financial and economic climate. The areas of underperformance identified from performance monitoring remained areas of focus in 2024/25 and were reflected in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans for the period.

Following the Director's presentation of the report, the Chair commended the Directorate for its hard work and successes in what had been a very difficult climate.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T both the Cabinet Report and Reference on the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual-Self Assessment 2023/24 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

(1) Having regard to the contents of both the reference and appended Cabinet report to ensure that consultation is undertaken on the findings of the Council's Annual Self-Assessment in line with requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, prior to the Final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report being considered by Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.