

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 10th December, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes (Chairman); Councillor Ms. J. Aviet (Vice-Chairman); Councillors J.C. Bird, Mrs. C.A. Cave, Miss. A.M. Collins, S.J. Griffiths and Mrs. S.M. Hanks.

Also present: Councillors Mrs. P. Drake, N. Moore and E. Williams; Mrs. W. Davies, Mr. A. Raybould and Ms. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

512 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Ms. B.E. Brooks, A.C. Parker and L.O. Rowlands; and Mrs. G. Doyle (Tenant Working Group Representative).

513 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

514 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

515 PRESENTATION: UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY ON PERFORMANCE –

The Chairman welcomed Mr. Chris Barton, Treasurer of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and Mr. Huw Jakeway, Chief Fire Officer, South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, to the meeting to provide a presentation to Members regarding the funding and performance around the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

Mr. Barton began the presentation by thanking the Committee for the opportunity to present and started with the background concerning the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. He stated that there were 10 Unitary Authorities which made up the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority area comprising of 47 fire stations, including the headquarters based in Llantrisant and an occupational health unit based in Pontypridd as well as a training facility at Cardiff Gate near to the M4. It was a statutory order that funding for the Fire and Rescue Authority came from all member Unitary Authorities which comprised an annual contribution in proportion to that Fire and Rescue Authority's population. As a result, the Vale of Glamorgan contributed £6,047,690 in the last year. Mr. Barton did caveat this however with the fact that the population figures were reviewed every year which did result in changes to the contributions made by Local Authorities depending on changes in their local population over the last year.

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Mr. Barton then referred to the budget provided to the Unitary Authority which in 2019/20 equated to approximately £72m. He noted that although this was quite a large figure for a Fire and Rescue Authority, in comparison to other types of public authorities this was a relatively small amount. In terms of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's Capital Programme there was a requirement to borrow with cost impacting the budget that came from Local Authorities. The vast majority of the budget was focused on staffing and premises, which equated to 75-80% of the total budget. These costs in the main would relate to operational, frontline, staff as well as staff based in the Control Centre in South Wales Police Headquarters at Bridgend. Another key area of expenditure was around training for operational staff – this was primarily around health and safety working practices within the potentially hazardous environmental situations where operational staff would be placed. Mr. Barton then went on to outline several other key areas of expenditure within the budget such as supplies - for example radios, breathing apparatus and other equipment to support operational staff - and transport; ranging from large fire engines to boats down to light vans for moving equipment and 4-wheel drive vehicles for mountain emergencies. In terms of income generation, due to the nature of the services provided by the Fire and Rescue Authority, the primary focus was on statutory services with very few non-statutory services being provided. Although this resulted in limited income generation there were still opportunities to do this, for example at the training facilities at Cardiff Gate fire fighters from other areas attend here in order to train thereby generating income. Also there were a number of co-location projects ongoing, for example recently in Llantwit Major a Police, Ambulance, Fire Service and Coastguard Agency now share a station, with the Fire Service charging the other rescue services for the use and access of their site. In order to ensure that savings and efficiencies were made, the Fire and Rescue Authority also used external providers for certain services, for example the Fire and Rescue Authority bought in audit services from an outside provider. Mr. Barton advised that in real terms in the budget – factoring in inflation and other costs – there had been a 15-17% efficiency saving. Mr. Barton stressed that the Fire and Rescue Authority was always looking to restrict expenditure or seek efficiencies wherever possible.

Mr. Barton went on to outline the current risks for the Fire and Rescue Authority in terms of future funding:

- Community Safety – a major element of Fire Authorities' role was in the prevention of fires and other types of emergency. This was currently partially funded by the Welsh Government but had been cut over the last couple of years. Mr. Barton went on to say that the aim of the Fire and Rescue Authority had been to keep going with prevention training and awareness despite the current round of cuts. He went on to stress the importance of investing upstream thereby preventing problems and issues occurring in the future.
- National Resilience – Mr. Barton outlined the areas involved, for example terrorist incidents and major emergencies or incidents. These areas required Fire Authorities around the country to pull together in order to deal with these and other issues (Mr. Barton also went on say that the Welsh Government also provided some funding with regard to this area). He provided the

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example of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority providing officers for help with wild fires in the north of England and other Fire Authorities assisting South Wales Fire Authority with flooding in the South Wales area previously.

- Pension – Scape Funding – pension funding costs had increased, with national government providing additional funding of £3m to the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, but with overall pension costs being £3.8m, this left a shortfall of approximately three quarters of a million pounds. The risk here would be whether the government would continue to fund this pension.
- Firelink / ESN – the Firelink project was part of the emergency services' network critical communication system. The Firelink project being set up to replace an aging range of technology through the use of 4G/5G. The risk here was that the project was currently over-running with the concern that the costs from Welsh Government helping towards this could be cut.

Mr. Barton went on to refer to budgetary pressures for the Fire and Rescue Authority. He mentioned the use of efficiency savings in order to offset inflation as well as needing to pay business rates through the Local Authorities for their buildings. The Fire and Rescue Authority also still needed to provide assistance even if fire fighters went on strike and therefore had to pay for and retain the services of persons who could assist in such circumstances. The total cost pressures for the Fire and Rescue Authority's budget equated to £2.5m representing a 3.4% increase, however this was based on still being fully funded by the Welsh Government and would still require some cuts to be made.

The Chief Fire Officer for South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, Huw Jakeway, went on to outline the non-financial or operational risks that lay within the South Wales area. A question often asked was if prevention was so effective, why did costs increase, to which the response was that in order to deal with risks across South Wales there was a need to maintain an appropriate response in line with such risks, for example major events occurring in the capital city (Cardiff), road networks plus more fixed and known risks. A key area for the Fire and Rescue Authority was its programme of helping to reduce risk throughout the South Wales area, for example the traditional role of the Fire Service in having to fit smoke alarms, offer fire safety advice and other services to home owners. Mr. Jakeway stated this role had now expanded, for example, offering to fit carbon dioxide detectors and to provide an assessment of "slips, trips and falls" risk assessments. The Fire and Rescue Authority also supported efforts to help reduce smoking as well as looking at signs of any potential domestic/sexual abuse – as part of this the Fire and Rescue Authority worked with other agencies in order to identify homes with such a risk. The Fire and Rescue Authority also supported Fire Service Cadets where young people were trained on fire fighting and life skills. This helped young people to gain qualifications and employment as well as generating greater social responsibility. An example was the work currently undertaken in Parc Prison. Finally, the Fire and Rescue Authority attended business premises in an enforcement capacity and where there was potentially a high risk in terms of fire or other dangers. If required, non-compliant businesses could be shut down as part of the Fire and Rescue Authority's enforcement capabilities.

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The Chief Fire Officer went on to outline the operational response that the Fire and Rescue Authority provided such as statutory flooding response, large animal rescue, bariatric rescue and joint control efforts.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the impact of the Grenfell fire and the work being undertaken by the Authority via the High Rise Living Team to ensure where failures have occurred in cladding and compartmentalisation on high rise buildings within the South Wales area there are safe systems of control in place.

The Chief Fire Officer went on to present various performance indicators over a 15 year period for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service with the majority of these having seen considerable reductions in, for example, the number of 999 calls received as well as attendance at fires including accidental and deliberate fires. However, it was still the case that 80% of fires attended were deliberately set within the South Wales area. The only indicators that were currently shown as red where there had been increases were in relation to special service calls, these were calls where the Fire and Rescue Service was supporting another emergency service in order to deal with an emergency. In terms of operational incidents, over the last 10 years the numbers of operational incidents in the Vale of Glamorgan had fallen similar to the South Wales average, with figures in the Vale also being very similar to the South Wales average in terms of fires attended, injuries from fires as well as fatalities from fires and accidental dwelling fires.

Finally, Mr. Barton looked at the future in terms of governance and funding for the South Wales Fire Authority and explained that there had been previous consultation on changing its governance structures as well as the funding arrangements. There had not been much support in terms of changing the current governance structure despite suggestions of either having an elected Cabinet Member from each Authority on the Fire and Rescue Authority or having an all-Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. However, there had been some support for changes in the funding, for example several models had been mooted – one in particular that was favoured was having a precept where funding was made direct via the taxpayer, but this would ultimately have to be decided via the Welsh Government.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions or made comments in relation to the presentation. A Committee Member wanted to say about the excellent service that the Fire and Rescue Authority provided and had personal experience of the high level of service provided by the Fire Service.

A Representative of the Tenant Working Group asked about how many fires were down to alcohol or drug use. The Chief Fire Officer replied that he did not know the exact numbers or breakdown for this but would look to get the statistics for the Representative. What he could say was that the main area for ignition was within the kitchen due to people becoming distracted or through lack of hygiene. In relation to this and areas around drink and drugs misuse the Fire and Rescue Authority were working with the NHS in order to identify potential issues or areas of concern in order to prevent such fires occurring.

A Member asked whether the Fire and Rescue Authority went around schools in order to educate children about the dangers of starting fires and general fire safety

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awareness. The Chief Fire Officer replied that the Fire Service spoke to approximately 30,000 school children each year. A strong message went out to school children about the impacts of fire and fire safety on lives and the environment. This accorded with the Fire Service's intention to put a key emphasis upon prevention rather than reacting to incidents once they happened.

A Member stated that it was good now to have a joint emergency services station based in the Llantwit Major area, to which the Chief Fire Officer stated that he believed this was now the first quad service station within the UK.

The Chairman asked about the pressures on the Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to making cutbacks, in particular in reduction of personnel and equipment. The Chief Fire Officer replied that although performance indicators indicated a reduction in the number of fires, etc. that the Fire and Rescue Authority was attending to, this did not equate to providing 50% less service or staff being required. The principle aim was for the Fire and Rescue Authority to look at future trends and risks, for example - the related impact around an ageing population, longer, drier summers, and wetter winters. This required the Fire and Rescue Authority to continue to invest in prevention and the capability to deal with all of the above risks or issues that would be faced in the future.

A Committee Member asked if there were part time or voluntary fire officers also deployed or employed by the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Chief Fire Officer stated that many of the 47 fire stations within the South Wales area had on call or retained officers with some on part time contracts or job share.

The Head of Housing and Building Services wanted to ask the Chief Fire Officer about the potential changes in building regulations after the Grenfell fire and explain the risks around such changes. The Chief Fire Officer outlined the changes post Grenfell:

- The "stay put" policy would remain for certain buildings if they continued to comply with compartmentalisation standards and had safe cladding. He noted that this policy was not owned by the South Wales Fire Authority but rather by the Local Authorities. If buildings did have issues around compartmentalisation or failed cladding, then the policy would move to a simultaneous full evacuation one and have "a waking watch" there in order to ensure early identification of fire.
- The ultimate aim was to move to a position where no premises would have combustible material.
- Welsh Government have looked at the Fire and Rescue Authority being a statutory consultee with the building and planning process.

The Chairman asked when the Local Authority would know about the budget for the Fire and Rescue Authority going forward. Mr. Barton replied that there would be a meeting of the South Wales Fire Authority on 16th December which would look at the contributions budget for consultation – this process being approximately one month. The budget would then be set by February 2020. He also added that he would be in touch with the relevant Section 151 Officers within the South Wales Local Authorities.

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It was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the update regarding South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority on performance be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure the Committee remains aware of progress made with regard to performance and funding of the South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority.

516 INITIAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21 AND REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 18th November, 2019, referred the report to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration and consultation with any recommendations being passed on to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for their views to be forwarded to Cabinet.

The report was outlined by the Finance Support Manager who stated the report provided an update on both the revised Housing Revenue Account budget for 2019/20 and the initial Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for 2020/21. The Finance Support Manager explained that each local housing authority is required to keep a Housing Revenue Account. Section 76 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act (the Act) required Local Authorities to set a budget for their Housing Revenue Account (HRA) on an annual basis, which had to be set so that the sum held in the HRA reserve at year end was not in a deficit position. During the course of the year, Local Authorities review their HRA expenditure and income in order to ensure as much as possible no deficit is incurred. The Finance Support Manager reiterated that each Local Authority aimed to have a working balance on the HRA reserve in order to meet any exceptional circumstances that may occur. The level of rent increase mentioned in the report was based on a rent policy introduced by Welsh Government. At the time of writing, an announcement had not yet been made on this and therefore an average rent increase of 3% had been assumed in the 2020/21 initial budget proposals which aligned with the Housing Business Plan.

The Finance Support Manager then referred to the amended budget for 2019/20 and explained that as the HRA was ring fenced any growth had to be funded from within its balance. She pointed out that the net operational budget for 2019/20 had changed from a surplus of £21k to a deficit of £1.795m. This largescale change was due to the requirement that the balance of the reserve be brought down so that it could align with the level required within the Housing Business Plan. The Finance Support Manager pointed out that after review of the current budget potential net savings for this year of approximately £1.154m had been found – the main reason for this being that the budget relating to the increase in the provision for bad and doubtful debts had been reduced by £330k due to the Universal Credit rollout for the Vale of Glamorgan since October 2018, but whose full effect would not be felt until

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2020/21. There were also budgetary reductions in a number of other areas such as in Repairs and Maintenance, Capital Financing costs, employee costs as well as digital transformation which was expected to have an underspend of £250k. Other budgets that were expected to outturn with an underspend were: insurance costs £20k, Court fees £17k, survey costs £12k, office furniture £16k, etc. There were also expected to be a reduction in void costs of £85k and an increase in interest income of £3k. However, capital fees have increased by £46k relating to New Builds. The Finance Support Manager did state that these savings would be offset by a number of increased costs such as printing costs (relating to housing mail-out) of £10k, other professional fees £10k and a one-off software cost of £4k relating to the upgrade of Keystone system. There were also utility and security costs incurred in the Hostel and Temporary Accommodation which had increased by £27k as well as expected rental income being £45k lower than budgeted. The Finance Support Manager stressed that the balance on the HRA reserve brought forward as at 1st April, 2019 was £2.668m and was currently higher than projected as part of the Housing Business Plan. Therefore, it was prudent to maintain the HRA revenue reserves at a minimum balance. She explained that the level of Capital Expenditure funded from the Revenue Account (CERA) had been recalculated at £8.816m which was an increase of £2.970m. This would leave a balance on the HRA reserve at year end of £873k which was in line with the minimum amount required as per the Business Plan.

The Finance Support Manager went on to outline details around the base budget for 2020/21. The strategy for this being in order to establish a baseline, services should prepare revenue budgets for next year based on the cost of providing the current level of service and approved policy decisions. In the case of the HRA, this was ring fenced and therefore any growth and inflationary pressures would have to be funded from its available funds. She stated that as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, the proposed 2020/21 budget had identified a number of areas such as Supervision and Management of the Council's housing stock as well as other areas in relation to the Housing Service; Repairs and Maintenance to Council housing stock; Capital Financing costs; rents, rates, taxes and other charges; etc. She again reiterated that the charge for rent and other services provided by the Housing Service were reviewed annually and would be subject to a future report once guidance had been received from Welsh Government regarding the setting of rents for 2020/21. The assumption remained that rents would rise by approximately 3%.

The Chairman asked when would the potential increase in rents be known or confirmed to which the Head of Housing and Building Services stated he was not anticipating any update until the last week of December. Furthermore, this would tie in with the new Welsh Government Housing Rent Policy as well as the Vale of Glamorgan requirement to provide a new business plan looking over the next 30 years. Welsh Government had asked the Vale of Glamorgan to look at various scenarios in terms of rent increases, for example, no change or CPI plus 3%.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the amended Housing Revenue Account budget for 2019/20 be noted.

No.

(2) T H A T the Initial Housing Revenue Account budget proposal for 2020/21 be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To facilitate monitoring of the amended Housing Revenue Account budget.

(2) In order to note the review by the Scrutiny Committee of the 2020/21 Housing Revenue Account Budget Proposals.

517 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING SUMMARY REPORT – NOVEMBER 2019 (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 18th November, 2019, referred the report to all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration. The report was outlined by the Head of Housing and Building Services. Of note were the priorities and planning – as set out by the Corporate Safeguarding Group (CSG) – around five key areas which included Corporate Leadership, Corporate Policy, Scrutiny and Assurance, Safer Recruitment and finally Training. He then offered some examples in these various areas:

- Corporate leadership: this ensured proper governance was in place and that the relevant service leads understood their responsibility both for safeguarding at a Corporate level and within their respective service areas. Their subsequent presentation of a CSG report and work plan at various Scrutiny Committees also helped to ensure a strengthening of the role of scrutiny in providing assurance regarding corporate safeguarding arrangements;
- Safer Recruitment: following the Estyn report and the improvements with regard to far tighter monitoring of all relevant Council appointments in compliance with the Safer Recruitment Policy – there was full coverage for all services which came into contact with children and adults at risk such as in Social Services and Education;
- Training: there was a framework of training with regards to safeguarding which was known and understood throughout the Local Authority. This was very similar to the training framework provided in relation to domestic violence awareness.

The Chairman asked whether the training component of safeguarding would be an ongoing process to which the Head of Housing and Building Services replied that yes, there would be further training in line with changes in procedures. He also reiterated that employees, volunteers and agency staff were all trained to fulfil the safeguarding function relevant to their role within the Local Authority.

It was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the work that has been undertaken to improve corporate arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children and adults be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that each Scrutiny Committee is provided with an update report.

518 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2020/21 AND REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 (DEH) –

The report was outlined by the Finance Support Manager who asked the Committee to note the amended Revenue Budget for 2019/20 and to consider the Initial revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21 and to provide any recommendations, including those related to cost pressures and savings, for further review by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

She referred Committee Members to Appendix 1 of the report which set out the amended budget for 2019/20 together with the necessary technical adjustments to be made to the original budget. She then went on to refer to those relevant services that were expected to outturn on target (or not):

- Youth Offending Service - which is expected to outturn on target
- Regulatory Services – the allocation represented the Vale of Glamorgan's budget for its share of the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS). A separate set of accounts was maintained for the SRS and periodically reported to the Shared Regulatory Service Joint Committee
- Council Fund Housing – the savings target for CCTV would not be achieved this year. If underspends did not materialise elsewhere within the service by year end, funding would be drawn down from reserves to cover the shortfall
- Private Housing – the slippage on capital spend for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) had a knock-on effect to the agency fee income so it was anticipated that this may be below target at year-end. This was anticipated to be covered by staff vacancy savings within the team so it was still expected that the Division would achieve a balanced budget at year end.

The Finance Support Manager then went on to detail savings for 2019/20, stating that as part of the Final Revenue Budget Proposals for 2019/20, a savings target of £211k had been set for this Committee. Referring to Appendix 2 to the report, which detailed the projected progress against savings targets for 2019/20, it was currently projected that there would be a shortfall against the savings target of £76k which the Finance Support Manager stated was due to the ongoing CCTV project which would not be achieved in 2019/20. However, there were ongoing discussions with South Wales Police and officers from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office in order to address future CCTV provision in the Vale. Potentially any ongoing revenue commitment would fall to partner agencies if agreement could be reached, on a spend to save basis.

The Finance Support Manager went on to outline the Initial Budget Proposals for 2020/21 whereby it was necessary to revisit the submitted cost pressures facing services in order to build up a complete and up to date picture of the financial position of the Council. Although the Council had not yet received its provision settlement, it had considered a number of scenarios as part of its Medium Term

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Financial Plan which would now be updated in the context of the revised cost pressures submitted by service departments. The Financial Support Manager outlined the two scenarios – firstly Scenario 1 had a cash neutral or flat settlement with the projected shortfall being £4.8m. With Scenario 2, assuming a 1% reduction in Welsh Government funding, the projected shortfall would be approximately £6.4m. Both these projected shortfalls were based on the assumption of an increased Council Tax to the Welsh average which would be 10.4%. However, if the Council Tax increase was limited to 4.9% the projected shortfall in Scenario 1 would be £8.9m and for Scenario 2 £10.4m. Another factor affecting the analysis would be whether all savings would be achieved - with the figures provided based on that assumption. The Finance Support Manager stressed that further work would be undertaken by the Budget Working Group (BWG) in order to achieve a balanced budget for the final budget proposals for 2020/21. This would include a review of the use of reserves, a review around an increase in Council Tax, a review of all cost pressures, possible changes to the approved saving targets and a review of the inflation assumptions within the current financial strategies. It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the amended revenue budget for 2019/20 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2020/21 be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To note changes to the 2019/20 budget.
- (2) To note the proposals for the 2020/21 budget.

519 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2020/21 TO 2024/25 AND CAPITAL MONITORING 2019/20 (DEH) –

The Finance Support Manager set out the report which asked the Committee to consider the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25 and forward any recommendations to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee. It also asked the Committee to consider the changes for 2019/20 and future years' Capital Programme.

The Finance Support Manager noted the number of areas where there had been delays in completion of works and therefore various amounts of expenditure would need to be carried forward into the 2020/21 Capital Programme. These included areas such as Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Internal Works and External Works, Housing Improvement Programme and Disabled Facilities Grant.

The Finance Support Manager also referred to the Provisional General Capital Funding for 2020/21 which had not yet been announced by Welsh Government and would be expected in mid December 2019.

No.

The Finance Support Manager stated that in terms of new bids for capital for the 2020/21 to 2024/25 period, there were no new bids from Housing and Building Services – other than those already in place. It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the changes to the 2019/20 and future years' Capital Programme be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To note the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- (2) To note amendments to the 2019/20 and future years' Capital Programme.

520 QUARTER 2 2019/20 PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE VALE (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, which charted the progress made in Quarter 2 (Q2 - 1st April to 30th September, 2019) towards achieving the Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes for Year 4 of the Corporate Plan 2016-20 as aligned to Well-being Outcome 1, “An Inclusive and Safe Vale”.

Overall, the Council had made good progress in delivering its Corporate Plan in relation to the Well-being Outcome 1 objectives of, 'reducing poverty and social exclusion' and 'providing decent homes and safe communities'. This had contributed to an overall 'Green' status for the Outcome at Q2.

The Head of Housing and Building Services went on to say that 86% of planned activities aligned to an 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale' had been attributed a Green performance status reflecting the exceptional progress that had made during the quarter. Currently there were 14% planned activities that had been attributed a Red status. He went on to refer to the actions that were currently in Red:

- PD/A023: Continue the roll out of integrated e-forms for the CRM to improve opportunities for customers to access Council services digitally. The associated rationale or description had been provided by the Operational Manager for Customer Relations whereby work was still ongoing and once finalised a proposal would be delivered to the Digital Strategy Programme Board. Similarly PD/A033 regarding the promotion of more cost effective digital channels to support the movement of customers from traditional channels of contacting the Council, this was still a work in progress and the Head of Housing and Building Services pointed out that as such, only a certain percentage might be achieved in each quarter thereby meaning that it might still be under 50% and therefore still Red in Quarter 2.

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- HS/A076: Develop a co-ordinated approach to tackling fuel poverty recognising the expertise and contribution of Registered Social Landlords towards achieving this goal. The Head of Housing and Building Services noted that the Council was still waiting on Welsh Government direction in terms of the strategy for zero carbon for social housing. The Council would be directed by Welsh Government requirements for the use of the Major Repairs Allowance grant but this is anticipated as only being allowed for certain activities such as ensuring carbon neutral housing. Similarly, for the related action HS/A081 (pilot programme of renewable technologies in order to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's housing stock), renewable technology solutions such as solar panelling and ground heat pumps were being assessed at Longmeadow Court. In terms of rural areas the Council was looking at more sustainable methods for heating and powering housing in these areas and therefore moving away from the traditional oil or gas that was used.
- HS/A082: Develop a Tenant Scrutiny Panel. This action was ongoing although it had slipped slightly back from Q1, it was now again gathering pace with new members being identified and a meeting due to take place in the next month or so. A member of the Tenant Working Group stated that they had recently been visiting empty properties in order to carry out spot checks which were generally of a high standard.
- HS/A084: Adopt a Housing Development Strategy. This action was now completed and would be shown as such in the Q3 report.
- HS/A091: Evaluate the key outcomes of the pilot Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordination (DAARC) service and source long term funding. The Head of Housing and Building Services stated that this would form part of the report to be presented after this item at the meeting and with regard to funding, he stressed this would continue with the longer term funding review simply identifying the best means of achieving this.

The Head of Housing and Building Services then referred to the achievements highlighted in the report:

- A brand new community pod had been installed at St. Lukes Avenue, Penarth for use by members of the Penarth Residents Group. Sessions due to be delivered at the pod included digital inclusion, employment, training, health, among others.
- The Council continued to work with partners in order to increase the number of affordable and sustainable housing units in the Vale – during Q2, 50 additional affordable homes had been delivered, with more homes to come on stream in the near future.
- Good progress had been made in terms of delivering actions within the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy developed in conjunction with Cardiff and Cardiff and Vale Health Board. The annual 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' event was held in September with strong representation from the Vale of Glamorgan Council, including the presence of officers at Director level.

The Head of Housing and Building Services wished to advise Committee Members of the potential impact of Welfare Reforms such as the Bedroom Tax and now

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Universal Credit in the near future. In particular, the roll out of Universal Credit was already starting to have an impact due to it placing significant pressure on tenants in terms of rent payments. The Head of Housing and Building Services stated that the migration over to Universal Credit would carry on in 2020 and the Council would have to consider the resources available in order to support residents during this process. He mentioned the use of alternative payment plans that could help tenants as well as the Vale of Glamorgan Council continuing to offer financial advice to tenants. However, the expectation was that the financial pressures around Universal Credit would plateau in due course but there would still need to be consideration in the future on additional capacity for the Housing Team.

A Committee Member asked around HS/A086 which referred to dialogue between the Vale of Glamorgan Council, the Welsh Government and existing identified Traveller community in order to identify the most appropriate housing services for their needs and wondered why this was now showing as Green due to there still being no report produced as yet and apparent slow progress in getting this resolved. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that a report would be presented to Cabinet in January 2020 looking at the assessment and identification of a new site for the Traveller community. Further, the preliminary work that had been undertaken with the Gypsy and Traveller community had now been concluded. As a result, it was now known what the Welsh Government and residents' views were on a new site. However, at present it could not be confirmed when this new site could be identified. The Head of Housing and Building Services was asked to clarify the reason for this action being Green, which he advised was in line with the original outcomes in the action and that the process of speaking to the Welsh Government and residents had been completed and as stated, a report to Cabinet would be going forward in Quarter 4. The Committee Member replied that the Green status did not seem wholly accurate as there were still some actions outstanding and the process had seemed to lose momentum. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that momentum was still being kept up as could be evidenced by the imminent report to Cabinet and the Welsh Government continuing to be keen to engage with this process.

The Chairman queried the actions currently showing as Red connected to the work by the Operational Manager for Customer Relations (e-forms and digitalisation) and on this work being finished, with hopes that there would be a report to the next meeting charting the progress in this matter. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied he would speak to the Operational Manager for Customer Relations in order to see if this could be done and would report back to the Committee. The Chairman also confirmed with the Head of Housing and Building Services that the report on identifying an appropriate housing solution for the Traveller community would be presented to the Committee in the future following its review at Cabinet.

It was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving key outcomes in line with the Council's Year 4 priorities for Corporate Plan Well-being

No.

Outcome 1 “Citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan have a good quality of life and feel part of the local community” be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle key challenges identified be noted.

(3) T H A T a report concerning the development and delivery of a Digital Inclusion Strategy be presented to the next Committee meeting.

(4) T H A T a report identifying an appropriate housing solution for the Traveller community would be presented to the Committee in the future following its review at Cabinet.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes 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 secure continuous improvement outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

(3) To ensure that Members are updated with regard to the current progress on the development and delivery of a Digital Inclusion Strategy in order to increase access to digital technology and improve digital skills.

(4) To ensure that Members are updated on the identification of an appropriate housing solution for the Traveller community.

521 DOMESTIC ABUSE, ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL CO-ORDINATOR PROGRESS REPORT (DEH) –

This report was set out by the Principal Community Safety Officer. She described how it had been a long journey in order to get the pilot scheme established. It had started with a process map of how victims of domestic abuse were dealt with. The system previously worked through the Police producing a risk assessment notification from a domestic abuse incident (Domestic Abuse Public Protection Notice (DA PPN)) which would then be sent to all other relevant agencies. However, it was found that if a victim was deemed to be high risk then they would be contacted by the appropriate services immediately, whereas those deemed to be standard or medium risk were given insufficient support. This was because of the lack of coordination which resulted in services receiving a vast number of PPNs which would never meet their service threshold requirements as well as creating unnecessary duplication. It was also found to produce a risk averse environment which further exacerbated these issues. What was required was multi-agency working in order to help the victim and hold the perpetrators to account. This led to

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the establishment of the Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral (DAARC) Service which was launched in June 2018, with a dedicated Officer in order to implement this new process.

Under this new process DAARC received all standard or medium PPNs as the high-risk ones would continue to be managed by a separate officer. The DAARC officer had access to various agency systems in order to cross reference the PPNs and thereby ensure that all victims and their families who are deemed standard or medium risk are assessed in terms of who is already in contact with the victim, what their needs are and what their support priorities are. Where consent has been provided, the DAARC coordinator would also make contact with the victim in order to advise them of what their options were and what they wanted to do as well as explaining the process. The PPNs would be looked at in a timely manner in order to update Police of any potential repeat incidents.

The Principal Community Safety Officer stated that the first six months of the pilot were a challenge due to the large volumes of PPNs received and processed (1107) which were used in order to benchmark such data going forward. As part of this challenge it was necessary to establish a framework of information statistics, establish areas for development and set up working groups in order to monitor the project with partner agencies and improve the overall process. As part of this it was essential to look at links between domestic abuse incidents with drug use / antisocial behaviour and assess those relating to children or where children were involved in some way. The DAARC Officer could also pinpoint specific times when domestic abuse would spike and would be more likely as well as being able to identify repeat incidents and, in the cases, where children were involved, to look at support for children going forward. This also required close working with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the Housing Team. Another area that now could be identified under the process were those incidents involving mental health issues.

Ultimately, through this new framework, incidents could be looked at and dealt with earlier as the longer incidents were left unresolved then the more likely other factors would come into play, such as drug use, antisocial behaviour and mental health issues. The Principal Community Safety Officer wanted to stress this framework ensured the victim's possibly complex needs were considered and that the whole process would be more bespoke as opposed to a simple blanket categorisation.

The Principal Community Safety Officer also referred to the appendices concerning the data and findings from the pilot and offered some additional statistics, noting that 18% of all Vale of Glamorgan recorded crimes were domestic abuse related, although it was considered that this was under-reported. During the pilot there had been 255 incidents of domestic abuse involving Council tenants with 432 incidents having been identified in relation to mental health issues.

Finally, the Principal Community Safety Officer referred to the public recognition of the importance of this project, evidencing this by the pilot having won the Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Staff Award 2019 for Innovation concerning its multi-agency approach, recognised in the National UK Housing Awards, where the project was shortlisted to the final nine projects within the UK under the category of

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Innovative Landlord of the Year, as well as being placed for an award for early identification work.

A Member stated that it could not be over-estimated how important this pilot had been and also queried the statistics in the appendix around the location of victims of domestic abuse as she noted that there were 43 described as “out of the area”. The Principal Community Safety Officer replied these related to victims that did not live in the Vale of Glamorgan area but had been victims of domestic abuse incidents within the Vale. As part of this, the DAARC Officer would contact the relevant Authority and would send the PPNs to that relevant area for their information.

Another Committee Member asked how challenging it was to fund this pilot, to which the Head of Housing and Building Services stated that the whole purpose of this pilot was in order to evaluate its usefulness with other agencies and thereby potentially get the funding from these. He also pointed out that there was funding from Supporting People as well as from Community Safety. Furthermore, the evidence from the pilot demonstrating the effectiveness of intervention prior to the escalation of domestic abuse would ultimately save the Council money as it would save statutory funding going down the road. Internal funding for the project would continue in tandem with looking at potential sources of external funding as well so that this scheme could be sustainable in the long-term.

A Committee Member asked how big the DAARC team was and where it was based. The Principal Community Safety Officer replied currently there was one designated DAARC Officer, but there was resilience within the overall Community Safety Team, for example the MARAC Officer could assist as well as the Domestic Abuse Manager who had overall oversight and supervision.

Another Committee Member stated it was important to have this early intervention and it was good that the DAARC also recognised male victims of domestic.

A Tenant Working Group Representative stated that it was important that children caught up in domestic abuse did not copy or repeat the same type of abusive behaviour to which the Principal Community Safety Officer replied that they worked with Public Health in order to address this – for example, to educate children caught up in incidents of domestic abuse that this was not normal behaviour and the DAARC Officer also contacted the relevant schools which these children attended in order to make them aware. The Principal Community Safety Officer again stated the importance of the scheme in helping to build a bigger picture and in getting other partner agencies to ‘buy-in’ and collaborate with DAARC.

A Committee Member asked about the pilot scheme and whether they had looked at elder abuse, to which the Principal Community Safety Officer replied that they would be looking at statistics in order to pinpoint any incidents involving the over 60s. On the current information known, numbers were comparatively low, but the DAARC scheme was working with Supporting People – for example, through dispersed housing and also engaging with groups such as the Vale 50+ Forum. Similarly, the scheme was involved in looking at children abusing parents, for example in situations where a parent did not want to criminalise a child but wanted to help the

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child by referring them to substance misuse help, they could contact the DAARC who would provide advice / updates.

Finally, a Tenant Working Group Representative stated that she was currently involved with groups that had been set up to offer help and support to families who had domestic abuse occur within their family. The Principal Community Safety Officer stated that they would speak to the Tenant Working Group Representative outside of the meeting in order to see if they could liaise with these groups.

The Chairman and the other Committee Members wanted to thank the officer and the wider Safer Vale Team for their work and that it was good see a more effective multi-agency approach being pursued. It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the findings from the evaluation of the Domestic Abuse, Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator service project be noted.
- (2) T H A T the wider data from the domestic abuse services across the Vale be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To update Members on the positive impact of the DAARC project located within the Community Safety Team.
- (2) To ensure accountability for domestic abuse services and to help to drive improvement in the quality of victim support.