

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 14 June 2023
Report Title:	Shared Regulatory Services Business Plan
Purpose of Report:	To provide the opportunity for pre decision scrutiny of the Shared Regulatory Services Business Plan
Report Owner:	Head of Shared Regulatory Services
Responsible Officer:	Director of Environment and Housing Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Committee Reports – Legal and SRS – Accountant Consultation with stakeholders has been carried out.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report sets out the process by which the draft SRS Business Plan for 2023/24 has been developed • The draft plan requires ratification by the Joint Committee and forms a part of the SRS Annual reporting process set out in the SRS Joint Working Agreement. • This report offers the opportunity for pre decision scrutiny of the Business Plan prior to submission to the SRS Joint committee. 	

Recommendation

That the Scrutiny Committee notes the content of this report and considers the content of the draft SRS Business Plan for 2023/24.

Reasons for Recommendation

1. The Joint Working Agreement (JWA) specifies (at clause 14) that each year, the Head of Shared Regulatory Services will develop a draft Business Plan under the direction of the Management Board.
2. The purpose of the Business Plan, as specified by the JWA, is to update the information contained in the previous Business Plan; and to identify the proposals for service activities, business and financial objectives, efficiency targets, business continuity planning, risk management, indicative staffing levels and changes, performance targets, costs and income. The JWA further specifies that a draft Business Plan is submitted to the Joint Committee for approval, and once approved, circulated to each participant authority's Head of Paid Service.
3. The draft SRS Business Plan for 2023/24 is currently in circulation with various stakeholders and the Committee may wish to consider the plan and offer comments prior to the plan's submission to the SRS Joint Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The draft SRS Business Plan (attached as **Appendix 1 - to follow shortly**) reflects the aspirations set out in each of the participant Council's corporate plans, along with the national priorities agreed for Regulatory Services in Wales. Performance against the plan is monitored and measured with quarterly and annual reviews by the SRS management team and SRS Management Board. The SRS plan seeks to ensure that the partner Councils continue to meet statutory requirements and to continuously improve service delivery.
- 1.2 The draft SRS Business Plan has a 'golden thread' or 'line of sight' to the corporate priorities of the respective Councils. The strategic themes of the Shared Regulatory Service identify the areas of work that are delivered in support of these corporate priorities.
- 1.3 In 2019, The Wales Audit Office recommended that the SRS Business Plan should contain a clear distinction between statutory and non-statutory services to ensure that statutory responsibilities and powers are weighed and prioritised appropriately alongside discretionary services. Elected members will know that the current JWA contains the following text:

Some of the functions the Shared Regulatory Service will provide are legally mandated, statutory requirements: the role of the Weights and Measures authority, the duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. Others are optional, non-statutory, but have been adopted to support the core Regulatory function and to support the corporate objectives of each partner Council: examples include, consumer advice, accreditation of landlords.

The collaborative arrangement defines a Core Service in terms of ensuring public health, helping customers to access information and knowledge and in securing a safe, healthy, fair, environment. This requires the use of both statutory and non-statutory legislation to achieve service and corporate goals. For example, Consumer Advice and safeguarding initiatives are non-statutory, but are an essential set of tools in protecting the vulnerable and vital in the achievement of other corporate goals.

- 1.4** To meet the WAO recommendation, additional commentary has been included in the 2023/24 Business Plan, however achieving effective outcomes involves the use of many “tools” and it is often non-statutory functions that are the most effective in resolving challenges.
- 1.5** The new SRS Business Plan reflects on the very busy year of 2022/23 in which post COVID ‘business as usual’ resumed across the Service. Work remains to be done to recover ‘lost ground’ in our traditional inspection programmes, and there are challenges ahead as we respond to a broad range of emerging themes, for example those that are linked to the Climate Change agenda as well as the cost of living crisis. The draft Business Plan has been the subject of limited consultation with SRS officers, senior managers at the partner Councils and a range of stakeholders.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The 2023/24 draft plan presents a realistic acknowledgement of the challenges and resource limitations within which SRS will deliver essential services following the impact of the Covid outbreak. There is broad support for continued use of the existing strategic priorities namely:
- Improving health and wellbeing
 - Safeguarding the vulnerable
 - Protecting the local environment
 - Supporting the local economy

All of which are underpinned by a fifth strategic priority, that of *Maximising the use of resources*

- 2.2** The 2023/24 draft Plan, like those previously approved by the Joint Committee, sets out the services provided by SRS and gives an indication of the activities planned for the 2023/24 period, the financial projections for the year, and a review of performance for 2022/23.
- 2.3** The plan contains proposed service improvement targets aligned with the Well-being Objectives and Corporate Health priorities. These are set out in Section 6 of the Plan which outlines the proposed targets and includes all relevant performance indicators that will enable the partner Councils to demonstrate progress against achieving their corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives. Targets have been set for those performance indicators that are continuing into 2023/24 where appropriate to do so. Consultation with stakeholders is likely to generate some changes to the Plan. Members are asked to consider the draft 2023/24 SRS Business Plan.

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

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires the SRS to underpin decision making by contributing to the seven well-being goals of the Act, following the five ways of working, and consequently undertaking actions that will have a positive impact on people living in the future as well as those living today. The draft SRS Business Plan contains a number of initiatives that contribute to the well-being objectives. Section 6 of the plan illustrates how the SRS priorities interface with the well-being goals on matters such as safeguarding the vulnerable and protecting the environment.
- 3.2** The fundamental purpose of the SRS (here defined as trading standards, environmental health and licensing) is to protect residents, consumers, businesses and communities. The broad range of responsibilities can make it difficult to demonstrate succinctly their impact and value in terms of well-being; the SRS Business Plans provide members with greater detail and articulate how those statutory responsibilities, and subsequent activities, contribute toward well-being across the region. This Business Plan highlights the activities undertaken last year to promote the sustainable development principle and the proposed forthcoming programmes of action.
- 3.3** Aligning the Well-being Goals of the Act enables us to evidence our contribution to the National Well-being Goals. Promoting the five ways of working is reflected in our approach to integrated business planning. Setting consistently challenging yet realistic steps and performance improvement targets, the SRS can clearly demonstrate progress towards achieving the national goals. Importantly we seek

to connect everything we do to the work of our partners. SRS cannot deliver its priorities alone, so we take a joined-up approach to policy, strategy and delivery.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** One of the key strategic themes for the Shared Regulatory Service is *Protecting the Local Environment*.
- 4.2** The SRS Business Plan articulates the work carried out under this theme to deliver on the corporate priorities for the participant Councils, including their ambitions to minimise climate change and impacts on the natural environment.
- 4.3** In this context, the Joint Committee is regularly updated on the contribution of the Shared Service to this agenda, for example through its work in the areas of animal health and welfare, air quality, contaminated land, energy efficiency in the private rented sector and investigating greenwashing claims or environmental fraud.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The financial resource implications arising from budget reductions in this period have been considered previously as part of the three-year financial strategy for the service. The programmes of work identified in the plan can be delivered within budget.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no employment matters associated with the plan. The SRS budget reductions in previous years have seen a reduction in human resources available within the service and performance metrics and some aspects of scope of the SRS have been amended accordingly.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** There are no legal and Human Rights implications arising from the draft SRS Business Plan.

6. Background Papers

The Joint Working Agreement between Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils on the provision of a Shared Regulatory Service dated 2015 and revised in July 2017.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft SRS Business Plan for 2023/24 (to follow shortly).