

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2023.

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

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

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair); Councillors J. Aviet, G. Ball, S. Campbell, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, S. Lloyd-Selby, M.J.G. Morgan and S.D. Perkes.

Also present: – C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale Representative), G. Doyle, D. Dutch and V. John (Representatives from Tenant Working Group / Panel); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 309 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”.

### 310 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from H. Smith (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

### 311 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### 312 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 313 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, the purpose of which was for the Committee to consider the financial pressures over the medium term and the

Strategy put in place for delivering the 2024/25 budget and sustainable finances over the medium term.

In addition, a number of slides were presented to the Committee which outlined the Strategy, economic outlook, current five year position and approach.

Key takeaways from the report and presentation included the Council needed to look at revising cost pressures and closing the funding gap that had been identified. In terms of the approach to the budget for this period, the intention was to adopt an approach which would be broadly similar to the 2023/24 period. Also outlined were the principles that would be followed such as in terms of delivering the Corporate Plan and focusing on supporting the most vulnerable within the Vale, as well as ensuring that the budget strategy implemented was sustainable. Other areas that would inform the Strategy would be ensuring appropriate levels of reserves, collective responsibility to manage finances as well as delivering best value.

The economic outlook remained challenging, despite the slowing down of inflation, including a high Bank of England base rate. These challenges were coupled with a lack of clarity concerning the Welsh Government grant and ongoing cost pressures around areas such as investment and demographics which were linked to Social Services and Education. Consideration also had to be given around cost pressures concerning pay awards for staff. In terms of cost pressures within the remit of the Committee, this included areas such as homelessness and the need to address the gap in this provision following the fallout from the Welsh Government grant, whilst the rapid housing strategy and other policies to address the increase in homelessness and housing also required to be implemented. It was believed in 2024/25 the funding gap as a starting point would be approximately £6.4m. Directorates were currently in the process or reviewing those cost pressures which were expected to increase.

In terms of addressing these issues and taking a suitable approach it was important for the Council to look at funding sources and the need to challenge the cost pressures in order to ensure that these were sound. As these were aligned with the Council's corporate priorities there would also need to be a review of potential savings, the need to look at schemes, service transformation and whether the Council could identify any digital innovation as well as looking at reserves as a means of supporting investment.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** both the Cabinet reference and the appended report be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report on the Financial Strategy 2024/25.

### 314 DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 AND INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2024/25 TO 2028/29 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2023 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, the purpose of which for Committee to consider the initial Capital Programme proposals for 2024/25 to 2028/29 as part of the consultation process in conjunction with the draft Capital Strategy.

In addition, a number of slides were presented to the Committee which outlined the key headlines, including the five year Capital Programme, funding of the Capital Programme and the next steps for the Council in terms of this process. In terms of the capital position, this remained very challenging in terms of delivery of capital schemes due to costs with such funding post 2024/25 being less easy to predict, with no firm projections beyond that point. As well as general capital funding from Welsh Government (WG), the Council also had its reserves and the use of S106 funds as well as applications for grants, and the use of unsupported borrowing to help deliver capital schemes.

In terms of the remit of the Committee (including the Housing Improvement Programme) this was separately identified as having approximately £41m allocated to it in terms of funding. Other schemes included in the Capital Strategy with links to the Committee included the allocation of Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs). In addition, for the Housing Improvement Programme it was believed that an idea of the settlement from Welsh Government (WG) on this would be provided in December and finance were asking Directorates to submit capital bids as part of this. These would go through a period of challenge and review to match them against available funding. These would then go to the Strategic Insight Board in November with the aim to get the WG settlement around December and to bring revised capital proposals back to Cabinet / Scrutiny in January. In addition, there would be a slightly different timescale due to the need to fit this process in with the Council's rent setting.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- The Vice-Chair asked about the review of the DFG process and whether this would help make the scheme more accessible to the wider community in order to ensure that people could remain in their homes for longer. It was explained that proposals had been drafted concerning how the Council delivered the DFG, with the Director of Place explaining that a report was being drafted to be taken to Cabinet, possibly in October, which would present a new draft Independent Living Policy. The intention of the Policy would be to align with WG guidance on disability grants for persons remaining in private properties and private rented properties. The aim of this was to change the way the grant scheme was undertaken i.e. looking to provide an alternative form of grant which would tie in any improvement grant awarded and charge to the property which would last for the life of the person who had had the improvement made. This would allow the Council to recover the full cost of the improvement once that person no longer needed it. This in turn would

help the Council to plough this back into the DFG scheme, as well as a move away from the means testing solution currently used for the scheme.

- Councillor Campbell asked what the nature of the pipeline schemes referred to in the report were. I was explained that provided being that these schemes were ones where there were some feasibility or initial design work that was being undertaken pending a full business case. This enabled finance to in the meantime build a picture of the kind of funding implications of these proposed schemes into the overall Capital Programme with the cost of borrowing factored in in terms of consideration around the Council's revenue programme. Essentially these schemes had not had full approval to progress and further work needed to be done before being fully integrated into the Capital Programme, if appropriate. This meant that these proposed schemes could be bundled into a specific area where also ringfencing for funding could be applied in order that they could be properly financed and budgeted pending final approval, with the example of St. Richard Gwyn being provided.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report.

#### 315 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/23 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 was presented by the Director of Environment and Housing for consideration by the Committee. The Annual Self-Assessment formed part of the Council's legislative requirements and performance management framework, which entailed the self-assessment of its work against the Annual Delivery Plan, which formed part of the overall Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2025. The Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment report 2022/23 was appended at Appendix A, with an "easy read" version at Appendix B.

This was a considerable piece of work, which evaluated a wide range of performance, engagement and other data insights from the Council's annual planning and performance framework including the annual Directorate Self-Assessment and Peer Challenge process which enabled the Council to draw conclusions on how well it was using its resources to support the achievement of the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This also tied in with how Directorate services were applying the five ways of working [Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015].

The Council believed that on balance it had met its Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2022/23, in what continued to be another challenging year for the Council. It had attributed a judgment of 'Good', reflecting the achievement of over

85% of in-year activities and performance target. Use of resources by the Council was also judged to be 'Good' because it had good evidence of how resources had been used economically, efficiently, effectively and equitably to enhance performance, achieve outcomes, meet need and was in a strong position to secure future service improvements. From the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken throughout the year via the internal and external audit work programme as well the findings of the performance evaluation, reasonable assurance could be given that the governance arrangements for the Vale of Glamorgan Council continued to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

Workshops and other means of engagement with partners, trade unions, local businesses, residents and Council staff were also undertaken as part of this self-assessment process.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Haines approved of the “easy read” format of the Annual Self-Assessment report, but asked if the report could be made shorter to enhance its accessibility further. He also felt that by its nature, the report was perhaps overly “positive” compared to the comments he received from residents in his ward on Council services, etc. His views would be taken on board, including the need to produce a more “bite size” version of the report. In terms of residents’ views on Council services and support, there was a “gap” between what the Council said it would do and the public’s perception of what it wanted the Council to do. It was important therefore for residents’ views and concerns to be fully factored into the assessment.
- Councillor Campbell queried whether the self-assessment was a wholly retrospective document or if it was still “live” due to some projects referred to within it either being live or they had not started yet. It was confirmed that the report was retrospective, but any projects that had started during the period the report covered would be included. If there were any projects that were felt to have been included outside the scope of the period, then these would be taken back to the appropriate officers for consideration.
- On Councillor Hanks’ query on the progress being made with recruitment and retention, it was explained that challenges remained in certain specialist areas and disciplines, i.e. engineering and refuse drivers, where remuneration remained highly competitive in both the private and public sector jobs markets. The Council was addressing this in terms of remuneration and other means of attraction and retention, such as offering flexible working arrangements wherever possible and to make sure that the job valuation process was fit for purpose. Overall however, the Council’s recruitment and retention remained good with relatively low turnover in staff.
- The Vice-Chair wanted to build on the easy read nature of the report and on the accessibility of the self-assessment process itself to all residents in the Vale through using a wide range of formats and not relying on social media or digital which would not be accessible to or readable for all residents and communities. She also added that it was important for the Council and

Elected Members to provide an honest and open assessment on the provision of services by the Council to residents in light of current economic pressures and to counter the more “toxic” and untrue statements that were provided on social media around this and the work of Council staff. It was agreed to take back the suggestions around formats and accessibility to Performance colleagues. It was important to engage in a way people wanted to be engaged with. On the issue of misleading information on social media, it was important that the Council provided as much information as possible on its services to the public in order to address this and to inform residents on how the Council spends its budget in terms of services, such as during the budget setting process. This would help manage residents’ expectations in an honest, open and realistic way.

- Councillor Lloyd-Selby highlighted the incredible amount of hard work that had been undertaken by the Council such as with free school meals despite significant challenges with the cost of living crisis. It was therefore important to highlight to residents in the report, as part of its introduction, that it was reporting on things the Council said it would do, as well as the prioritisation of essential services, particularly those for the most vulnerable in society. However, it was important to also emphasise that this was not the extent of the Council’s ambition but that it simply did not have the resources to do so at this time. It was also important to encourage Vale of Glamorgan residents to participate in the self-assessment process and to ensure the Council was a “listening Council” with the emphasis of wanting to hear from residents about the issues that mattered to them. The Director of Environment and Housing agreed with the points raised and would refer these back to Performance colleagues for their consideration.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the following comments of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee be passed to Cabinet:

- To consider producing a “bite size” version of the report, in order to provide a shorter version for Elected Members and residents. This would build upon and enhance the “easy read” aspect of the document already in place.
- As part of the introduction to the report, it should clearly outline that it will be addressing those areas and services that the Council said it would do, as well as highlight the Council’s need to prioritise essential services, particularly those for the most vulnerable in the Vale of Glamorgan. It was important to highlight the Council’s achievements, particularly in terms of those areas and services which it had said it would do. Consideration should also be given to include a statement around the Council’s ambitions and aspirations, but this needed to be coupled with the inclusion of a realistic, honest and sober assessment of the current challenges and pressures that the Council faced in providing services, such as the impact caused by the cost of living crisis.
- It was important to encourage Vale of Glamorgan residents to participate and engage in the self-assessment process, and to ensure the Council was a “listening Council” with the emphasis on wanting to hear from residents about

the issues and services that mattered to them, as well as where they felt resources should be focussed. As part of this, it was vital for the Council to communicate to the public about the services it provided and what it could and could not do due to the current economic and other pressures that it faced. This would help to ensure that the Council could manage residents' expectations on the services and other areas of support that they expected the Council to provide.

- To look to ensuring that the report and the means of engagement with the self-assessment process itself were provided in as many different formats as possible, which would enable greater accessibility and engagement with the residents of the Vale of Glamorgan in this process.

### Reason for recommendation

In order for Cabinet to consider the comments raised by the Committee prior to the final Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self-Assessment Report being considered by the Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and thereafter presented for endorsement by Full Council.

### 316 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2023 was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, the purpose of which was for the Committee to consider work that had been undertaken in relation to corporate arrangements for safeguarding across the Council.

The Head of Housing and Building Services outlined the report to Members, including the rationale and the reasoning behind corporate safeguarding in terms of the statutory framework coupled with the relevant guidance which meant that all members of staff and Elected Members had statutory responsibilities concerning the safeguarding and protecting of Vale residents.

Subsequently the key areas of consideration were provided to the Committee which included:

- The work around implementing electronic systems for DBS checks and its application to job applicants, housing Ukrainian families, and all Elected Members now required to complete a basic/enhanced DBS check. Subsequently, all Elected Member checks had been completed by the end of August 2023.
- All staff within Housing and Neighbourhood Services had been trained and continued to receive regular updated training on safeguarding, with some staff specifically trained for areas such as participation on the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board and relevant multi-agency meetings.
- Also, the provision of safeguarding measures and support which included the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless tenants, in terms of wrap around support as well as the safeguarding activity provided by the

Community Safety Service related to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence in partnership with Cardiff Council

- Other areas referred to were:
  - Identifying individuals who may be at potential risk of harm and require safeguarding support as part of the ongoing tenant profiling project
  - The Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator (DAARC) Service where a key challenge was to promote via the Community Safety Partnership the need for the Police to refer public protection notices where the victim, following a domestic incident, had not provided consent to do so. This would help to ensure that the most appropriate intervention and support could be offered to such victims. This was a wholly independent service, but persons involved may still be concerned that the Council would be directly involved in any referrals that they made.
  - The work around target hardening of properties within the Vale of Glamorgan for victims of domestic abuse and the positive results that had come from that.
  - Finally, the work of Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) was referred to in terms of safeguarding such as dealing with 63 doorstep crimes and 72 scam cases over the course of 2023. Also of note was the call blocking scheme where a number of such devices had been installed for old and vulnerable persons with potentially thousands of calls having been blocked to date and a significant number of scams prevented as a result of that activity. Other activities undertaken by SRS had involved the protection of young people such as with test purchases of underage sales of alcohol and cigarettes where approximately 22% had resulted in a sale but with such cases subsequently being investigated and enforcement action taken.

Following the presentation of the appended reference and report, a number of comments and questions were raised by the Committee, including:

- Councillor Aviet raised concerns about the potential safety of housing officers due to increased anti-social behaviour (ASB) in her ward which had resulted in residents and tenants being too frightened to call the Police and if this was impacting the ability of housing officers to carry out their role or if they required further support from the Police etc. It was explained that in terms of complaints made by tenants, these were done with anonymity in mind in order to ensure the safety of tenants making such reports. The Councillor was urged to inform tenants that if they did wish to make a complaint then they should ring 101 if it was not an emergency, or if there was an emergency or a crime occurring to contact 999 for an immediate Police response. The Community Safety Team would in turn analyse daily incidents around ASB and other criminal offences and would look at issues in areas that required attention. It was also mentioned that a cost pressure had been put forward for additional resources and capacity within the relevant housing team to review and co-ordinate measures against rising ASB activity within some areas within the Vale. Council tenants could also refer such concerns and complaints directly to Housing staff which would be dealt with in conjunction with the Community Safety Team. Staff were fully trained and had protocols in place



around handling ASB. The Councillor was also urged to notify the Housing team in relation to the specific cases that she had referred to at the meeting. On the Councillor's follow up query about reporting a CCTV camera out of service within her ward area to Safer Vale, it was explained that this would be looked into and an update provided to the Councillor directly.

- On Councillor Hanks' comments about the hard work that had been undertaken by the Housing team in tackling the ongoing homelessness issues in spite of challenges and pressures on resources, it was explained that it was an extremely busy time for the service with a number of competing pressures including the cost of living crisis and changes in legislation.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby asked about the call blocking scheme which could be accessed by elderly and vulnerable persons via SRS, how this was being communicated to residents and if there was anything that Councillors could do in their local areas to raise awareness of such support with elderly and vulnerable residents. It was explained that although there was a communication strategy in place, there were only a limited number of call blockers available with such requests having to be assessed by SRS officers in order to make a decision whether this solution would be suitable or not for the resident concerned. This was because of demand simply far outstripping supply. However, Committee were asked to note that a number of telephone companies did operate call barring services which could be put in place for telephones and the Head of SRS would be contacted in order to make the Councillor and the wider Committee aware of the process for residents to apply for these measures, as well as raising wider awareness of the SRS work around scams and doorstep frauds. It was appreciated that for older persons access to social media may not be appropriate, but that SRS had measures in place to raise awareness outside of social media, with further information to be provided.
- Councillor Perkes referred to the DAARC project and asked whether there had been any further progress with the Police on referring Public Protection Notices (PPNs) which did not have the consent of the victims involved. It was explained that the Council were still in discussions with the Police on this to stress the need to change their current protocol and to provide referrals both with and without consent. This currently meant that lower-level risks on instances of domestic abuse etc. were not being shared with the DAARC project which could lead over a period of time to their escalation and the Council and related agencies would not be made aware until these had become high risk cases. This constituted a missed opportunity in dealing with these issues from the start, thereby preventing the escalation and harm done to the victim or survivor. The Police had responded by saying that they would review their current protocols and would update the Council in due course on the progress and update on this review. Also, it was important that victims and survivors were aware of the opportunities and other avenues which they could refer themselves to for support if it was not appropriate to do so at the time when the Police attended their incident.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report.

317 QUARTER 1 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the Quarter 1 (Q1) revenue monitoring position for 2023/24. As part of this the officer presented some slides to the Committee in order to highlight those areas most relevant to its remit. Key areas of interest for the Committee included:

- A £20k virement request relating to central support budgets allocated to Private Housing rather than Regeneration in error. A £60k virement covering a transfer from Policy for the new Empty Property Enforcement funding.
- There were a number of key pressures faced by Directorates that fell within the remit of the Committee which included –
  - Environment and Housing: Animal Welfare investigations within SRS which were linked to illegal dog breeding. Also pressures relating to accommodation costs to meet homeless needs as well as those costs for providing support to assist Ukrainian families moving into the Eagleswell School site.
  - Regarding Place Directorate and pressures around Private Housing and DFGs, the fee income was currently behind profile and forecast not to be able to meet the target by year end. This was due to the lack of available contractors to carry out the relevant works.
  - In terms of projected revenue outturn position this was a mixed view, with the Youth Offending Service and Regulatory Services showing as breakeven, with no planned use of reserves at this stage, through to Council Fund Housing and Private Housing forecast as having adverse variances and the need to drawdown from reserves to cover costs, etc.
- The savings targets within the remit of the Committee were highlighted for 2023/24, which included a number from General Fund Housing services as well as those for Regulatory Services and Private Housing. Of those areas it would only be savings projected for Private Housing in relation to DFG provision which would not be achieved this year due to income for increased DFG provision as a result of the removal of means testing.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget be noted.

(2) T H A T the virements included as part of the report as set out in Table 1 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

318 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023 (DEH) –

The report as presented by the Finance Support Manager, provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, for the Committee's consideration. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March through to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023, including any changes requested within the report. The report also set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved Programme of £125.813m, being the Council approved Programme of £103.968m plus slippage of £8.733m from 2022/23 and additions of £13.112m.

It was important to note that many areas were continuing to experience an increase in costs associated with the 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, as well as anticipated variances.

As part of the presentation, the officer provided a number of slides to the Committee outlining key areas within its remit, which included:

- Target Hardening Grant – An award of funding had been successful and funding of £44k had been secured from Welsh Government for the installation of CCTV, cameras and intruder kits.
- Cartref Porthceri External Repairs Phase 2 and Salisbury Road No. 91 (YOS) External Repairs Phase 2. As the work under both these schemes mirrored works being undertaken under the Cartref Porthceri Residential Home – Drainage Repairs and Underpinning of Building scheme, it had been requested to merge these 3 budgets to provide one new budget of £256k and name it the 'Cartref Porthceri Residential Home – Drainage Repairs and Underpinning of Building scheme.
- Delegated Authority had been approved to allocate the 2023/24 Capital budget of £45.019m. Table 5 in paragraph 2.26 of the report reflected these approved changes plus approved slippage. The total budget of £53.711m was reflected in the final column.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- On Councillor Lloyd-Selby's query around the Target Hardening scheme, it was explained by the Head of Housing and Building Services that this involved providing funding from the Council Supporting People Programme to victims of domestic abuse or violence in order that they could have CCTV and other measures put in place at their homes in order to make them feel safer. This was to enable those victims and survivors of domestic abuse who wished to remain in their homes to do so safely as opposed to moving into a refuge or to another property within the local area. This had resulted in 100% satisfaction rate from recipients of these measures. The Committee were also informed that a risk assessment was undertaken at the outset to ensure that the work was appropriate and mitigated the risks that were identified. Where this was not suitable then other measures could be put in place. On the follow up query concerning the funding for this grant it was explained that this was a one-off grant which was funded by the Council through its Supporting People Programme, which itself was a recipient of Welsh Government funding.
- Councillor Haines raised the issue concerning the significant use of Emergency Powers (EPs) mentioned in Appendix 1 of the report and sought clarity as to the reasons behind their use. It was explained that the EPs were used in cases where capital projects needed to be proceeded with but Cabinet were not sitting at the time to make a decision in order to progress this and so through the use of the EP this progression was approved by the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Leader and senior officers. Therefore, this was a quick way of getting a project approved into the Capital Programme in order that officers could continue vital work with it. The Head of Housing and Building Services provided the example where, due to rising costs, the Council's building and other contractors were no longer willing to be fixed into a contract for any longer than 28 days. Due to this, the use of EPs would be needed as without their use the Council would have to retender due to the costs often being outside of the Council's financial regulatory framework which would allow officers to approve themselves. The increase in the use of EPs had been as a result of such pressures on the fixed contracts.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee as set out in paragraph 2.4 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 years' Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report be noted.

### Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

### 319 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DEH) –

The performance report, presented by the Director of Environment and Housing, outlined the Council's progress at Quarter 1 (Q1) (1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2023) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2023/24) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q1 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance.

3 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q1 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24. 1 Corporate Well-being Objective (Well-being Objective 3) had been attributed an Amber performance status at Q1. In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, 91% (66 out of 73) were attributed a Green performance status, 1% (1) attributed an Amber performance status and the final 8% (6) were attributed a Red status. Of the 14 measures reported, 64% (9) were attributed a Green performance status, 7% (1) an Amber status and 29% (4) were attributed Red status.

The Director of Environment and Housing outlined the areas of achievement which lay within the remit of the Committee, including:

- The processing of all anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents;
- Development of the Vale Tenants Newsletter, including a range of news and "You Said" feedback section;
- Clauses in new build contracts continued to create opportunities for apprentices and volunteers to gain onsite and trade experience;
- Overall satisfaction in the latest STAR (Tenants Satisfaction Survey) survey was 76%, which was a significant and positive result. The survey would be analysed and staff working groups would be taking forward any issues identified;
- There had been a significant estimated reduction in carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) produced from private rented properties due to direct SRS improvements.

In terms of areas for improvement, development and concern, these included:

- The Council had pushed back the Phase 2 implementation of the new Northgate Housing Software Solution and the delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy for Housing and Building Services to September 2023 in order to avoid overlap of Phase 1 and ensure there was sufficient internal staff resource available to support the project.

- Reference was made to the Leisure Strategy, which would be updated as part of a wider regional approach and model.
- A number of challenges had also been identified such as pressures on the revenue budget when service demands continued to increase. The Council would be looking to work more effectively with the voluntary sector to try and ensure that services were maintained to the public.
- Other areas of concern lay around the collapse of JEHU builders at one of the Council's major housing developments, shortages in housing accommodation and temporary housing as well as insufficient funding for building infrastructure, repairs and refurbishment and shortages in land for housing development, coupled with increasing pressures on housing and homelessness. As part of this it was important for the Council to ensure that public expectations were managed when working with and delivering services for the community, with a need to highlight the reduced funding and less resources available to the Council to help implement these.

The Director of Environment and Housing referred to Appendix B and the performance exceptions. These highlighted the current status of Red performing actions identified and showed the direction of travel. For this Committee, the exceptions included a number of areas and service plan actions as well as performance indicators which also included commentary on how these areas would be addressed. These areas included voids, reprofiling services, affordable housing, adaptation of services / DFGs, and the ongoing issue around Marcross / Channel View.

Following the presentation of the report, the Vice-Chair queried voids, in particular around the issues that were compounding the resolution of these and undertaking works on such empty properties. It was explained that a number of factors were involved around this issue including the time needed to undertake extensive works on certain properties due to damp or structural issues. Certain properties also required occupational therapy assessments and works of adaptation before a new tenant could move in. In sum, this meant that potentially a small number of properties would have longer void periods.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Well-being, with permission to speak, referred to the performance exception concerning alternative sewerage arrangements for residents of Channel View, Marcross and Croft John, Penmark. He explained that this was an ongoing issue which had been around for some time stretching back into the 1980s.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 1 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being 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 key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.