

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 4th March, 2024.

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 H.M. Payne.

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale) and G. Doyle (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel); Councillors A. Asbrey, S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement), N.C. Thomas, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

855 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.”

856 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from D. Dutch (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

857 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

The following declarations of interest were received.

Councillor J. Aviet declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Service Plans and Performance Targets to Deliver the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2024/2025. The nature of her interest was that she was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant, with tenant services referred to within the report. This was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council's Constitution.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Service Plans and Performance Targets to Deliver the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2024/2025. The nature of his interest was that he was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant, with tenant services referred to within the report. This

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was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council's Constitution.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared an interest in agenda item 9 (i) – 2024 Update to the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022-2025. The nature of his interest was due to him being a recipient of a telecare service from the Council (telecare services having been referred to in the report in question). He had dispensation to speak and vote at Council meetings on general matters, but to speak only if the issue was prejudicial, on issues relating to telecare services (paragraphs (d) and (f) of the relevant regulations).

Councillor H.M. Payne declared an interest in agenda item 9 (i) – 2024 Update to the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022-2025. The nature of her interest was the reference to Llamau in the report, which was her employer. She had dispensation to speak only at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings when matters regarding housing and homelessness were discussed relating to finance and property given the Councillor's role for Llamau (paragraphs (c), (d), (f) and (h) of the relevant regulations).

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in in agenda item 9 (i) – 2024 Update to the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022-2025. The nature of her interest was a personal and not a prejudicial one, due to family members being in receipt of services for Social Care and Telecare, referred to in the report in question. She had dispensation to speak only on issues relating to Telecare and Care Package services at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings (paragraphs (d) and (f) of the relevant regulations).

858 CIVIL PROTECTION UNIT (CPU) UPDATE –

The presentation was given to the Committee by the Principal Civil Protection Officer who outlined the key points concerning the background to the Civil Protection Unit (CPU), its staff, structure and activities.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council, under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), had a statutory responsibility as a category 1 responder with other agencies such as the emergency services, health boards, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), to ensure the duties under the CCA were discharged.

The Principal Civil Protection Officer went on to outline various updates concerning:

- The COVID-19 Inquiry, the CPU and the wider Council were providing their contributions to the COVID-19 Inquiry, citing the positive work that had been undertaken by the CPU and Council during the Pandemic.
- Building Security Group in order to bolster building security for Council buildings and facilities, including ID passes access and egress policies.
- Martyn's Law, concerning the around greater protective security at events and crowded buildings / venues (following the lessons learned from the Manchester Arena bomb attack).

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- Partnership and Collaboration, i.e. via the South Wales Local Resilience Forum (SWLRF).
- The CPU had undertaken an Emergency Plan Framework Review.
- Updates on the various incidents which the CPU were involved in were also detailed ranging from a water mains incident in Wenvoe through to the OHANNA boat dumped on Llantwit Major beach and in terms of localised flooding incidents, which, so far, had not been seen on a major scale within the Vale.

Following the presentation, a number of comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Hanks referred to the boat that had been dumped on Llantwit Major beach and stated that it had been there for quite some time prior to it being broken up. She asked what had happened and who was responsible for dealing with this. It was explained that the beach was owned by the Crown Estate, not the Vale of Glamorgan Council, and therefore there was an extra layer of complication in order to get the matter resolved. It had required the involvement of the local Coastguard Service in order to drag the boat in to stop it breaking up or drifting away in the water. Subsequently, the Crown Estate had broken it up with Vale of Glamorgan support and with the Coastguard Service offering support in keeping people away from the wreckage.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby asked how members of the public or an Elected Member could report or alert the CPU to incidents such as the ones that had been raised at the presentation. In response, it was explained that the CPU were normally alerted of a major incident through the emergency services such as the police and fire services, but they could also be contacted by the public via Contact One Vale (C1V) and via an online form. Such alerts would be picked up by an officer from CPU who were on call 24/7 with this being based on a rota system. If it was a non-emergency incident, then Elected Members could also contact the CPU direct through the relevant officer.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation regarding the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) Update be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

859 YOUTH JUSTICE AND EARLY SUPPORT SERVICE: YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN COMPLETED JULY 2023 (DSS) –

The purpose of the report was to inform Committee about, and to give them an effective oversight of, the Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024. This was presented by the YJESS Manager.

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The report highlighted how the YJESS, formerly the Youth Offending Service (YOS), which was designated as a key public service, planned to deliver services during this period. The YJESS Manager also referred to the process to be undertaken for the next iteration of the Plan for 2024-2025.

The YJESS Manager set out the background to the YJESS, the makeup of its membership and structure, its core purpose (to ensure that relevant youth justice services were available across the local authority area), the legislative and statutory duties placed on the YJESS in producing the annual Youth Justice Plan, its funding arrangements, as well as significant changes to the guidance and requirements on how the Plan should be drafted and submitted for the Youth Justice Board (YJB). This was to ensure that the data and information contained within the plan was used by the YJB as “an intelligence source to provide support to the sector through their oversight function. Analysis of the information identifies good performance and can provide focus on regional and national themes”.

The YJESS Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024 itself (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) was outlined, under the various prescribed headings ranging from Introduction, Vision and Strategy through to the Local Context, Child First and Voice of the Child and finally Challenges, Risks, Issues and Looking Forward. The Committee were also told that significant progress had been made against actions since the 2022 – 2023 plan, centred around the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) following the 2022 His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection. The inspection recommendations covered key areas which remained important themes for the service and were now requirements of the planning guidance. Many of the recommendations had been completed, and some had been incorporated into the operations of the YJESS, in order to be moved forward. For example, in areas such as disproportionality and participation and engagement, as well as implementing the appropriate actions and monitoring the effectiveness of the YJESS in these areas. One area, going forward, which would need to be incorporated into future planning was contextual safeguarding.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Hanks asked what the age range was for children covered in this report, i.e. 18 years and under. It was confirmed that generally the age ranges covered were 18 years old and under. However, the YJESS did operate a more flexible transition process in relation to children based on their individual needs, i.e. if a child or young person needed to transition to adult services such as Probation. A decision would be made based on the YJB guidance on the needs of that child / young person, including developmental considerations and additional learning needs, which may impact that child's or young person's ability to operate as an adult. This meant that support could continue beyond the usual set chronological age limits i.e. up to and including 19 years of age, if deemed appropriate.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby queried the timelines for finalising the Plan and report, and when the 2024-2025 iteration would be ready, as well as who the Plan was intended for and how it was shared with young people and

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their families so as to ensure that it was easy for them to understand. It was explained that the Plan had to be completed in accordance with the established parameters for the YJB in order to secure funding. The Plan was submitted, once finalised, to the YJB and which would be published once all the relevant Local Authorities had submitted their plans. YJESS was often running behind in terms of funding, with the budget officially running from April, but the actual confirmation of the budget not being received until June. Also, due to capacity and sickness absence within the YJESS, this had impacted the timeline for submitting the Plan. However, work within this area was ongoing, with regular monitoring of data and reporting of performance indicators. The Plan was made accessible to children, young people and their families through both getting their feedback and ensuring that it was shared in as accessible a format as possible, i.e. infographics. Further work would be done to increase its accessibility going forward as well.

- The Vice-Chair referred to the possibility of making ward level data accessible to Elected Members, the impact of disproportionality within the Youth Justice system and what was being done within the Vale of Glamorgan to widen the diversity of staff working within the Youth Justice system in order to help address this, and on the Girls Group programme and the possibility of extending it to not just young boys, but specifically for boys from a black and ethnic minority context. On the latter points, a lot of work had been done to tackle these, including the impact of social media in terms of escalating conflict, as part of the programme in question. Due to the complexity of this, a multi-agency approach had been adopted, at a group, sub-group and individual level. Work was ongoing to apply this approach to young boys, with some group sessions already having been run. YJESS would continue to analyse reoffending data for young girls, which indicated high levels of abuse, trauma and additional needs involved as factors. Preventative work was being undertaken in areas such as schools. Disproportionality was a national issue, and this impacted on children both at risk of offending and having committed offending, and which included both ethnic and other factors around a child's background. For ethnic disproportionality it was important to focus on early support and prevention in order to target discrimination, etc. which could impact behaviour, through better monitoring, data collection, analysis and action planning in order to target support and improve outcomes for children within or diverted from the Criminal Justice System. This would require a more individualised approach in working with children rather than a group one. Information on ward level data would be looked in to and shared with the Committee.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Youth Justice and Early Support Service Youth Justice Plan 2023-2024 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

860 QUARTER 3 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DEH) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the Quarter 3 Revenue Monitoring position for 2023/24. This was presented by the Finance Support Manager, who highlighted the following:

- A positive piece of news was that there were no budget virements relevant to the Committee in the report.
- However, the revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures as well as the cost-of-living crisis, support for the Ukrainian refugees and other resettlement schemes.
- In recognition of the deterioration of the in-year revenue monitoring position based on the previous Quarter 2 full year projections and the need to identify in year savings, safeguard reserves for future volatility and maximise the accuracy of the projections a number of steps had been taken by the Senior Leadership Team and managers across the Council in recent months. For example, tighter controls around non-essential expenditure and recruitment, reviewing capital spend, reviewing the use of reserves and bringing savings targets forward into 2023/24.
- Key pressures facing services within the Committee's remit included:
 - Accommodation to meet the need of homeless people and families currently resettled within the Vale.
 - Cost of providing support to assist Ukrainian families moving into the Eagleswell school site.
 - The shortfall of fee income for the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).
 - The use of reserves for Private Housing, due to fee income and overspends.
- The report also listed savings targets pertaining to this committee and that Private Housing was unable to achieve its £20k target but all others were expected to be achieved within the year.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Hennessy queried whether the development at the Eagleswell school site was still on budget, and when this would be ready. The Head of Housing and Building Services stated that the budget was in line with the original estimates and on target; but, in terms of occupation the scheme was behind, due to in part to transportation arrangements for the housing units, which had to be facilitated by the local police. Occupation was expected to be achieved at the end of April / early May 2024.
- On the Councillor's follow up request for the Committee to visit the site once completed, this was agreed to and would be arranged in due course.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report subsequently

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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 Budget Virements for 2023/24 presented in the report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

861 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2023 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2023/24 Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 within their remit. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6th March, 2023 through to 31st December, 2023, and included any changes requested within the report. The report set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved programme of £103.677m, but it was important to note that this was unlikely to be delivered and slippage was requested of £7.692m with a forecast Outturn of £96.763m.

Relevant items for the Committee within the Capital Programme included:

- A request to remove the Penarth Renewal Area scheme budget of £5k. Any further work on the project, which was unidentified as yet would need additional funding, which would require a future Capital bid once the relevant details were known.
- Empty Homes Grant. This scheme was on the 2023/24 Capital Programme with a budget of £931k. As the grant was administered and paid out by another Local Authority, it had been requested to reduce the scheme by the grant amount of £846k. Following confirmation that only a small number of grants had been allocated to residents this financial year, it was also anticipated that match funding was only required in the sum of £10k. It had been requested to carry forward £75k of this year's budget in to the 2024/25 Capital Programme and retain a budget of £10k in 2023/24 Capital Programme.
- There was one Delegated Authority that has been approved within the remit of the Committee, which reprofiled the Housing Improvement Programme 2023/24 to 2028/29. The reprofile was undertaken to ensure that the Capital Programme was in line with the Housing Business Plan.
- The request to vire or transfer £30k from the Individual Schemes budget to the 7 St. Paul's Avenue scheme budget.

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Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Lloyd-Selby queried the timescales for the St. Paul's Avenue scheme opening. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that the scheme was complete but was waiting for furnishings to be installed. This scheme was a contracted service, undertaken by Lamau to provide support to young people based at this location and would start imminently. On the funding position, it could be possible to draw down some additional Capital funding, but those proposals were being considered at the moment as part of the slippage discussions that the Council were having with Health and other partners.
- The Vice-Chair referred to the Llandow Household Waste and Recycling Centre and asked for an update on its progress. It was explained that a report on this would be going to Cabinet on 21st March. This was also confirmed by the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services.

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 be noted as contained in Appendix 1 attached to the report.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee, summarised in paragraph 2.5 and detailed in the report at paragraph 2.61, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 Capital Programme and future years' Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, summarised in paragraph 2.3 and 2.4 and detailed within the body of the report at paragraph 2.22, 2.27 and 2.55 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

862 SERVICE PLANS AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS TO DELIVER THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2024/2025 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, in conjunction with the Operational Manager, Public Housing Services, the Head of Shared Regulatory Services and the Operational Manager, Regeneration, who

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gave updates on their respective service areas and actions / targets set.

Highlights included:

- The report presented the planned service activities (as outlined in Service Plans) and associated performance targets within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee. These were the Committee's specific areas of focus associated with the delivery of the Council's Annual Delivery Plan for 2024/2025 as aligned to the four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. (attached at Appendices A and B to the report).
- Progressing the Annual Delivery Plan would help to meet statutory obligations and duties, with the relevance of the Well-being Objectives were continually reviewed.
- The commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 were reflected in 16 Service Plans which were provided for information in the background papers to the report.
- In line with the Annual Performance Calendar, Elected Members had continued to help shape the way in which performance related activity and reports were presented.
- Updates were provided on the various service area targets by the relevant officers, ranging from:
 - Housing and Building Services, which included work around preventing homelessness, implementing a Local Housing Strategy to address current and projected housing need and to increase the supply of good quality, accessible and affordable housing, developing and supporting in response to the cost-of-living crisis and the associated issues of housing, etc., and training.
 - Shared Regulatory Services (SRS), which included taking forward the new Digital Strategy and the efficient delivery of services, including inspections and back-office work, safeguarding the vulnerable, i.e. protecting children from harmful substances and dealing with Rogue Traders and scams, through to addressing recruitment and retention, the drafting of the SRS Business Plan for 2024-2025 and reviewing future service delivery options in light of ongoing financial pressures.
 - Regeneration, which included engagement with and strengthening relationships with the third sector, social enterprises and Town and Community Councils, to progress the placemaking plans in Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth, additional support being provided for Social Services to maximise them being able to access funding through the Regional Partnership Board and deliver capital projects, through to the implementation of the Independent Living Policy, as well as the proposed formation of a single Independent Living Team.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Payne referred to the ADP Action 41 concerning the delivery of the new Council homes within the Barry area, and to the need for the Council to provide a positive message on these developments in order to

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counteract some of the negative coverage that such developments received in social media. In response it was agreed that the Council needed to look at enhancing communications around such developments and to emphasise the positive benefits that they brought, both in terms of the provision of new social housing for local residents and the benefits of such investment within the local economy such as involving local sub-contractors which in turn helped the local economy and employment opportunities within the area. It was also important to emphasise the benefits of such developments in helping to address the current housing crisis. The Head of Housing and Building Services would take these comments back to the Council's media officer in order to look at how social media communications could be enhanced.

- Councillor Haines referred to placemaking and the repeated efforts by St. Athan Community Council to try and engage with the Vale of Glamorgan Council on this but had had no reply so far. The Councillor felt that due to the number of potential houses that might be coming into the St. Athan area under the Replacement Local Development Plan, the Council should engage with the Community Council and asked the Operational Manager, Regeneration, if he could reach out and speak to them. In response, the Operational Manager, Regeneration said that he and his colleagues had spoken to St. Athan Community Council, pointing out that they were one of the first or initial pioneers of the early stages of the community mapping project. The relevant Council team had met with Members of the St. Athan Community Council around the community mapping process in order to provide a strong evidence base for any potential future development on placemaking and services for St. Athan, as well as any potential funding for this in future. The Operational Manager referred to the successes around the development of placemaking and associated services in areas such as Cowbridge and the importance of building strong relationships with local Members in both Town and Community Councils. This was supported by an internal Placemaking Group in order to bring all the relevant projects together to help develop local communities. The Councillor stressed that he and the local Community Council had been trying to impress on the Vale of Glamorgan Council that in the near future St. Athan potentially could have a much higher population than areas such as Cowbridge but it was felt that the Council engaged more with Cowbridge and Llantwit Major Community Councils, but not so much with St. Athan community. The Operational Manager explained that this was due in part to capacity and the closure of the European Union funded rural programmes, but also because of the specific funding for placemaking for town areas which derived from Welsh Government, which required a placemaking plan for each town in order to access the relevant funding for projects. This would be fed back in order to highlight this missing part of the placemaking process around rural areas and the need for stronger rural development programmes. This was also due to cuts in socio economic rural programmes whereas funding for urban areas had remained. It was added that significant amounts of funding were not necessarily required, but rather the Council looked to support the local communities support themselves in taking the lead about the future of their communities, such as the work that had already been undertaken in St. Athan around a local funding event which had brought

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local families and the community together in conjunction with the Council to discuss how local children could use the local green spaces. In response, Councillor Haines said that he would reach out to the Operational Manager in order to discuss this further.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the planned service activities for 2024/25 as they relate to the remit of the Committee (attached at Appendix A to the report) be noted and endorsed.

(2) T H A T the proposed measures and service performance targets for 2024/2025 relating to the remit of the Committee (attached at Appendix B to the report) be noted and endorsed.

Reason for recommendations

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

863 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DEH) –

The purpose of the report was to present Quarter 3 (Q3) performance results for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 in delivering the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. This was led by the Head of Housing and Building Services.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Performance Team, the format for this quarter's (Q3) Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report had been revised temporarily, in order to continue to provide Members with an overview of progress in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the remit of each Scrutiny Committee.

The presentation appended at Appendix A to the report provided a summary of progress against the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the remit of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Following the presentation of the report, there were a number of queries and comments raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Payne referred to Objective 2 with regard to workforce planning and the impact of current budget constraints on this. It was explained that the budget constraints ranged from building services and the building services operator trading account whose income was derived from undertaking work for clients, as well as the current financial position for the Local Authority, through to the limits on providing competitive pay, particularly in a sector where private operators and social housing partners could sometimes provide higher levels of pay. This aspect in particular was

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seen in all areas of the Council, not just Housing and Building Services. This was being addressed by HR and Finance Officers at the Council, but this remained challenging due to the constraints of the current budget. Particularly challenging were those roles where there were higher technical skills which, were increasingly difficult to fill which was seen across the Environment and Housing Directorate.

- On Councillor Haines' reference to Objective 3 on the limitations on land currently available for housing, he enquired about the feasibility of using more brownfield sites. It was explained that many such sites were not under Vale of Glamorgan Council ownership but the Council continued to look at opportunities in conjunction with Welsh Government as part of the Replacement Local Development Plan and land owners and agents had been contacted around potential sites. There were currently negotiations on a number of potential sites which could be used for housing, but these were in the early stages and currently confidential, but the hope was to include these in the Housing Improvement Plan going forward. The Committee were reminded that the Council was also in competition with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and private housing developers around the use of land for housing as well.
- The Vice-Chair, concerning Objective 3, with regard to the real terms reductions in the Housing Support Grant and whether this needed to be revisited in light of subsequent Welsh Government funding, was told that that was the case and this would be reflected in the next agenda item to be presented to the Committee on the 2024 update on the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022-2025.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 3 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

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

Reason for recommendations

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

864 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

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

No.

865 2024 UPDATE TO THE HOUSING SUPPORT GRANT DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2025 (DEH) –

(Urgent by reason of the need to finalise the Council's annual spend plan with Welsh Government and to find savings of around £100,000. Decisions made in relation to the savings have contractual implications with the Council's support provider partners and could result in the need to make redundancies. Delayed decisions may affect the Council's ability to achieve the savings needed)

The report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, the purpose of which was to highlight the financial pressure on Housing Support Grant services and for Committee to scrutinise the options for achieving necessary cost savings.

The Housing Support Grant (HSG) Programme was the policy and funding framework for delivering housing related support to vulnerable people in different types of accommodation and across all tenures.

Welsh Government had announced an indicative grant allocation for 2024-25 of £4,791,831.58 per annum. Though nominally static over the last three years, this was effectively a real terms cut of 8.7% over the same period, which had direct resource implications and departments would be impacted by reduced HSG funding in the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 and cost savings had been identified as a result.

The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that he had been very recently advised by Welsh Government that an additional £13m had now been allocated to the HSG budget which equated to approximately a 7.5% increase in core funding for 2024/25. In light of this, the options and recommendations outlined in the report were no longer valid as such and would need to be revisited in light of this good news story in terms of funding. In addition, confirmation would be required from Welsh Government as to the final, exact amount to be provided in additional funding and to incorporate that into a new report and submission of the spending plan by late March to Welsh Government, although due to the last minute nature of this update Council would be looking to extend the deadline accordingly.

Due to the above, a new report would be provided to Cabinet / Scrutiny in the near future and so Committee were asked to note the current report at this time, subject to a further update and revised report being provided following the change in circumstances outlined above. This was subsequently considered by the Committee, who agreed to do this.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the 2024 update to the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022-2025 be noted at this time, subject to a further update and revised report being provided following the change in circumstances due to the recent additional funding given by Welsh Government.

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Reason for recommendation.

Due to the recent change in circumstances concerning the Welsh Government funding for the Housing Support Grant, a new report would need to be drafted to take into account the changed circumstances and in order to get Cabinet and/or Scrutiny's consideration of these revised proposals, as well as to be able to submit the related spending plan to Welsh Government by the end of March 2024.