

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 6th November, 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.M. Ball, S.J. Haines, W.A. Hennessy, S. Lloyd-Selby and H.M. Payne.

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale) and G. Doyle (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representative); and Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), C.P. Franks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson, S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement), R. Sivagnanam (Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services), N.C. Thomas and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

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”.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors S.M. Hanks and M.J.G. Morgan; and D. Dutch (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representative).

MINUTES –

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

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

PRESENTATION: SOUTH WALES POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER (PCC) –

Councillor Dr. Johnson had requested consideration of the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales' (PCC) priorities for the role, and how they will impact upon The Vale of Glamorgan, and that the PCC be invited to present to the Committee on these matters.

The item was presented by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Emma Wools, who advised Committee on their priority areas of work in the role and how this related to crime in the Vale of Glamorgan. Following their presentation, the PCC advised the following in response to questions and comments from the Committee:

- Regarding anti-social behaviour, work was already being undertaken to identify hotspot areas, and to look at a strategy for combatting this, including through community policing and through supporting young people with safe spaces and activities, with the aim of decreasing anti-social behaviour;
- Although the policing estate was continuously under review, there were currently no plans to close Barry Police Station. However, it was also important to ensure that the Police had a presence within communities in alternative ways, not only through Police stations and office buildings;
- With regard to e-bikes, the Force had for some time taken a proactive approach to combatting problems arising from such vehicles, and further work was planned regarding those who sold e-bikes, and around safety information being circulated to parents and young people who used them;
- With regard to stalking and harassment, the increase in such crime was not unique to The Vale of Glamorgan, it was also Force-wide and part of a national picture. This included a spectrum of behaviours which encompassed online and offline activity. Further information regarding stalking and harassment crime within The Vale of Glamorgan could be provided to Committee in due course;
- Regarding policing in towns and rural areas, there was a strong relationship between PCSOs and the community, and this was key to combatting crime. One of the PCC's pledges was to enhance and protect neighbourhood policing and the PCC was keen to ensure that they were mitigating crime through community policing as best as possible, with the finite resources available.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, with permission to speak, referred to the South Wales Police Crime Panel made up of Councillors from all Counties within South Wales Police Force area, how it scrutinised the PCC's work.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement, who was a member of the Panel, advised that its role was to act as a 'critical friend' to the PCC. The Cabinet Member further advised that approximately six meetings of the Panel were held per year, considering the precept, finances and priorities of the PCC's role. They advised that general problem areas and issues were discussed with the PCC and with members of their team, who were also in attendance at meetings.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the presentation from the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner be noted, and that the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner be thanked for their time and contributions.
- (2) T H A T the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to address the Committee again to update Members once the Police and Crime Plan has been published, and as and when further updates to Committee are appropriate thereafter.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the presentation and to discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order for Committee to be updated on the future work of the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner in the Vale of Glamorgan.

DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2025-30
(REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 10th October, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Director of Environment and Housing together with a presentation. Following this, officers advised of the following in response to questions from Committee Members.

- The Corporate Plan was a strategic document so would not include all details on all areas, however there would be further Directorate or Service Plans brought to Committee to support this document with further detail.
- The Corporate Plan covered information on the strategy around sustainable housing, but further detail would come to Committee on this in due course.
- With regard to paragraph 2.17 of the covering report, work was being undertaken to make the scrutiny process more effective, and Committee's role in scrutinising the work reported on, more accessible. The Director advised that it was difficult to have proper and effective scrutiny of a very large amount of actions and detail within some reports, and that work to address this issue would ideally enable Scrutiny Committees and residents to be able to comment more effectively on such reports. Work would include making all documents easier to understand, more streamlined, and more easily challenged by both residents and Scrutiny Committees.
- The level of consultation responses received through the Let's Talk About Life in the Vale Survey was positive, and significantly higher than levels seen engaging in other consultation exercises. Nevertheless, officers would continue to aim to improve levels of engagement, and to increase the percentage of residents responding to consultations.

- Regarding placemaking, the Council had signed up to the Placemaking Charter, and although resources were not available to implement a Placemaking Plan for St. Athan specifically, officers could undertake more of the community mapping work with the Town and Community Councils in such areas.
- Regarding areas, such as St. Athan with high populations but which were not classed as towns, the Council nevertheless aimed to capture the views of residents from such areas.
- As of the end of October, 2024, thirty families had moved into temporary accommodation units at the Eagleswell Road development in Llantwit Major, ten of which were Ukrainian families. It was currently intended that approximately 45 Ukrainian families would occupy accommodation at the site, following a phased approach to increasing the site's overall occupancy.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the reference, report and Draft Corporate Plan be noted, and that the suggestion that the Plan include figures regarding the number of Vale of Glamorgan residents who are in employment, be shared with the Director of Corporate Resources.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the item and discussions at the meeting and to inform revisions to the Corporate Plan as part of the programme of consultation, prior to Cabinet considering a final draft.

HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY (ECO4 FLEX AND NEST – WARM HOMES WALES) (DP) –

The report was presented by the Team Leader within Economy and Neighbourhood Regeneration.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) was a UK government scheme that placed legal obligations on energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to domestic premises which were designed to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions. The scheme was administered by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) on behalf of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS).

The latest iteration of ECO (known as ECO4) focused on improving the least energy efficient homes as only properties in Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) band D-G could be treated. It also required a more complete upgrade of those homes, shifting to a multi-measure 'whole-house' retrofit approach to achieve an upgrade of a property's energy efficiency rating by 2 SAP bands. Examples of qualifying retrofit measures included solid wall, cavity, floor and loft insulation, and/or the repair and replacement of broken heating systems and the installation of renewable heating systems such as air source heat pumps and solar panels.

Under the Ofgem guidance the "Flexible Eligibility" element to ECO4 (known as ECO4 Flex) allowed Local Authorities to set their own criteria for identifying and

targeting households that met the eligibility requirements. ECO4 Flex was therefore a household referral mechanism within the wider ECO4 scheme which enabled Local Authorities to collaborate with the obligated energy supplier and third parties such as Citizen's Advice and NHS professional healthcare workers to tailor energy efficiency schemes to their respective geographic area.

ECO4 applied to measures installed from 1st April, 2022 and would cover a four year period until 31st March, 2026. ECO4 Flex was available only to owner-occupied households and private rented sector households that met the eligibility requirements.

The ECO4 Flex scheme aligned with the ambitions of both Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) and this Council by alleviating fuel poverty and contributing to energy efficiency targets through the retrofit of the domestic housing stock.

The report provided a summary of scheme developed to date since adoption of the scheme at Cabinet.

Following presentation of the report, the Team Leader advised the following in response to queries from Committee Members.

- There was currently no data available regarding why the health eligibility criteria provided higher levels of applications than those from applicants who were struggling financially, however the Council was actively doing what it could to target those most in need when promoting the schemes.
- Officers had a good working relationship with EON Energy and could discuss what EON could do to support the application process being as accessible as possible.
- The Team Leader would take back feedback from Committee Members regarding targeting schools and young people in poverty when promoting the schemes, and also on working with organisations which support young families. The Team Leader also agreed to take on board feedback that the Council could use its own data to target those most in need of support, and to signpost them to both schemes.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report be noted and also circulated again to all Elected Members.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting, and to assist Elected Members in highlighting the schemes to residents.

YOUTH JUSTICE AND EARLY SUPPORT SERVICE: END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT (DSS) –

The report was presented by the Service Manager for Youth Justice and Early Support Service (YJESS) who advised Committee that the report brought to the Scrutiny Committee's attention the performance of the YJESS for the period April

2023 to March 2024 and was designed to enable Elected Members to have effective oversight of the performance of the YJESS.

Following the officer's presentation, in response to questions from Members of the Committee, they advised that officers would need to collaborate with the Community Safety Team to look to provide more specific data regarding the areas in which most crimes committed by young people involved in the service had occurred.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY PRIORITIES AND SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT UPDATE (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, highlighted the priority areas for the development of new social housing in the Vale of Glamorgan. It also highlighted how the supply of new social housing is being maximised via the use of grants and internal borrowing.

Following presentation of the report, officers provided the following advice in response to Committee Members' questions and comments:

- With reference to paragraph 2.14 of the report, 10 units provided within the site at St. Athan referred to the Social Housing Grant contribution, and an additional 10% had been delivered through the Social Housing Grant.
- The Programme Delivery Plan (PDP) was provided in a prescribed format, in relation to how the Social Housing Grant was allocated.
- The report outlined approved schemes, however there was also a reserve list of potential schemes which was not yet ready for publishing. The Council was always looking at potential schemes, for example those in reserve programmes.
- Although a longer term approach was taken, demand was not currently able to be met, however work was being prioritised in the areas of highest need, and on the types of accommodation most needed.
- Most schemes in recent years had been located in the Barry area, for example the Barry Waterfront development, however officers would like to see further work in other areas of the Vale.
- Land supply was an issue in areas such as Penarth, however negotiations were undertaken with landowners in areas such as these. Land supply would be a key challenge for the team ongoing.
- The Vale of Glamorgan had been successful in terms of delivering schemes, in particular those around affordable housing, and officers hoped that this would sustain into the future.
- Regarding the Council not currently operating a matrix system to prioritise schemes that would be included in the PDP, this was in order to give the service greater flexibility than a more prescriptive approach may enable.

- Adopting a flexible approach would assist the Council in addressing the finite land resources, as would looking at larger sites and conversions of other types of property, for example former offices, as well as property acquisitions.
- Emphasis was put on the need for one bedroom properties, and officers sought to see as many one bedroom units within developments as possible.
- The development at Holm View in Barry was a good example of a mix of accommodation types including bungalows, one bedroom units, family homes and accessible homes.
- Work was conducted with colleagues within the Authority regarding empty homes, and in relation to placemaking and formerly habitable spaces that were now unoccupied above shop premises, for instance. Discussions had been undertaken with colleagues regarding town centres and the future of accommodation there. This was part of a wider conversation regarding town centre strategy.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the priority areas for the development of new social housing in the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.

(2) T H A T the progress being made to maximise the amount of grant available to enable new social housing to be built, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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