

No.

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2025.

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, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy and S. Lloyd-Selby and H.M. Payne.

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale); G. Doyle, D. Dutch and H. Smith (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representatives); 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) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

### 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 Councillor M.J.G. Morgan; V. John (Tenant Working Group/ Panel Representative).

### MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor J. Aviet declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy Update – as she was a Council Tenant.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy Update – in that he was a Council Tenant.

No.

INITIAL BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2029/30 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer and the Head of Housing and Building Services.

Following presentation of the report, Officers advised the following in response to Members' questions and comments:

- Extensive work was being carried out with Officers involved in the reshaping programme, in order to work through the proposals, with a view to getting ahead of the usual schedule of the budget setting process.
- Although as many responses as possible to the budget-specific consultation had been sought, the aim for consulting with residents on the budget was to draw from a variety of the Council's public engagement exercises to gain a more holistic picture of residents' priorities for the Council's services.
- Finance Officers worked in conjunction with the Communications team to share information with the public regarding the Council's finances, and to ensure that language used in consultation documents was as accessible and jargon-free as possible.
- Officers had developed a range of different ways to get key messages regarding the budget across to residents, including reaching new audiences through the use of Instagram for the first time this year.
- Publishing Equality Impact Assessments regarding savings proposals, alongside the consultation itself, had enabled engagement with residents to be conducted in a more meaningful way this year.
- Responses to the budget consultation were at approximately 500 responses received, which was significantly greater than last year's level.
- Although it was right to continue to lobby for an improved settlement from Welsh Government, in order for change to be implemented, all 22 Welsh Authorities would need to agree to a review of the funding formula.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the Cabinet reference and the appended report on the Initial Budget 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30 Proposals for Consultation be noted, and the following views of the Committee be referred for scrutiny at the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee:

- That lobbying should continue around an improved settlement for the Vale of Glamorgan from Welsh Government;
- The importance of conveying the information contained in the proposals to residents in an understandable format, and to gain resident views effectively.

No.

Reason for recommendation

For the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee to be advised of the views of this Committee, in order for a composite response to be developed and referred back to Cabinet.

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer. The report to Cabinet set out the current 5-year Capital Programme for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 and the short listed Capital Bids that had been submitted for the period in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for review by Cabinet, and to be referred to Scrutiny Committees for consultation.

Having fully considered the report, and with no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the contents of the Cabinet reference and the appended report on the Draft Capital Programme Proposals 2025/26 to 2029/30, be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Public Housing Services, and updated Members on the delivery of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2025. The report highlighted actions achieved to date and any outstanding work that needed to be taken forward between now and the end of 2025.

The strategy had 57 actions which needed to be completed by 2025. Currently, 47 actions had been completed, 7 actions were currently being worked on and 3 actions were yet to be started. All the outcomes set out in the action plan were on target to be delivered by the end of 2025.

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

- This was a tenant-led engagement strategy, and the value derived from it was due largely to the hard work of the current Chair and their colleagues within the Tenant Working Group.
- Although the Tenant Working Group was being reviewed and developed, Officers wanted to continue to engage with existing members of the group, as well as expand involvement among tenants from a variety of backgrounds.

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- Officers' roles included promoting the advantages to tenants of being part of the Tenant Working Group. Benefits reported by its members included the offer of training opportunities, development of transferable skills, increased confidence, and decreased isolation.
- Although there was not currently an update regarding the project, Officers still hoped to develop a Vale-wide Young People's Forum in conjunction with the Community Investment Team, in order to ensure that these voices were heard.
- Officers also intended to look into non-traditional, informal and more creative means of engaging and collecting feedback from tenants, to enable a diverse range of perspectives and views to be considered.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the progress made to date on delivering the objectives and actions set out in the Strategy be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

#### HOMELESSNESS – RAPID REHOUSING PLAN UPDATE (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Public Housing Services and highlighted the significant pressures relating to homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan and updated Members regarding actions being taken to address the situation via the Council's Rapid Rehousing Plan. The report also flagged up additional actions, currently being considered, to assist high numbers of households affected by homelessness and reduce the current use of bed and breakfast type accommodation.

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

- As of the week prior to this meeting, 23 people were being accommodated in the Holiday Inn hotel, and the Housing Solutions team were working with these remaining people to ensure a clear pathway for them to move on to other accommodation, dependent upon which alternative options were available.
- An approximate 3-week delay had occurred regarding the Colcot Clinic housing development, which was undergoing last-minute snagging processes, as was often the case with housing schemes.
- Although work on site was moving at pace, the Olive Lodge scheme was going to go past the original anticipated completion date, and was now more likely to be completed at approximately the end of May 2025. The budget for this project was fixed and therefore on track, and it was the timescales alone that had been a challenge for this scheme, due to issues around weather conditions and the supply of some materials, for instance.

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- The Council had entered into a development partnership with Cardiff City Council and, following a robust tendering process, Lovell Homes had been selected as the developer for the building work in Cardiff and the Vale. Lovell Homes were considered an exceptional housing developer, particularly around social and affordable homes.
- Over the next ten years the Council was due to deliver approximately 500 new homes in the Vale of Glamorgan, and as part of that process, Officers were continuing negotiations regarding acquiring additional new build sites to improve the Council's land supply, which was part of the barrier to building at pace and scale.
- Officers were pleased to have a recent visit from the Welsh Government Cabinet Minister for Housing, who viewed new and existing sites and was very impressed by the quality of the homes being built. Officers advised that the Council was well thought of by Welsh Government in terms of being able to deliver on housing plans, and it was welcome that the Vale was able to benefit from slipped funds that other Authorities had not been able to spend.
- There were still challenges to be met, such as the approximately 7,000 people currently on the housing waiting list, significant homelessness pressures, and the increased complexity of some clients' cases.
- A Property Acquisition Policy was already in place in order for the Council to be able to buy existing properties, but was being reviewed and revisited.
- Committee had previously recommended that the relevant ward members be consulted on acquisitions of property within their wards, and this was being added to the new Policy. Officers anticipated bringing this new Policy to the Committee before the summer recess.
- The Housing Allocations Policy was set up so that when housing was in scarce supply, the most vulnerable and those in the greatest need had access to the available accommodation.
- It was an unfortunate but prevalent stigma and misconception that those in the greatest need were often viewed incorrectly as being 'undesirable' residents. The Council had a good track record of housing vulnerable people, sometimes in high numbers, within developments, without the occurrence of the sorts of issues that some people would predict or scaremonger around, as a result.
- When vulnerable tenants moved into an area, particularly when in high numbers, there was intensive management support available to residents so that people could manage their own new tenancies, could blend with their new neighbours, and so that any issues could be quickly and effectively dealt with. This approach would continue in respect of new housing developments, ensuring that tenants were not set up to fail, and that move-in processes went smoothly.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the current service pressures arising from homelessness and progress made in implementing the Rapid Rehousing Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T the steps being taken to reduce the use of temporary accommodation be noted.

No.

Reason for recommendations

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

**PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD (PSB) PROJECT UPDATE: WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN OUR COMMUNITIES THAT EXPERIENCE HIGHER LEVELS OF DEPRIVATION (CX) –**

The report was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources and the Senior Community Development Officer, and advised Members that the Public Services Board (PSB) second Well-being Plan was published in 2023. Since its publication partners had been working to progress the Well-being Objectives set out in the Plan and the actions aligned to these Objectives. Many of the Objectives and actions were aligned to the work undertaken to tackle inequity in the Vale of Glamorgan, particularly within its most deprived communities. In addition, “working with people who live in our communities that experience higher levels of deprivation” was one of the three key priority workstreams for the Plan.

Since August 2023 a Senior Community Development Officer had led work to engage with the communities and organisations working in the areas to identify possible opportunities for partners and others to act to improve existing inequities and improve well-being for residents. An overview of this work was provided in more detail throughout the report which set out the key findings to date and next steps, including planned workshops on the topics of employment and health.

The work of the PSB was reported to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The Committee had requested the work of the PSB be also reported to other Committees whose remits aligned to elements of its work to broaden the understanding of the PSB’s work amongst a wider range of Elected Members.

Following presentation of the report, Officers provided the following advice in response to Members’ questions and comments:

- There were always going to be gaps in relation to reaching all sections of the population with engagement activities, however, Officers undertaking this work had visited a wide variety of groups and organisations in order to seek the views of as wide a range of residents as possible within the relevant areas. In the Buttrills area, for example, Officers were engaging with older people, families and young people, and had visited businesses, and faith groups, with further visits to residential homes planned. Officers were open to suggestions on further groups which could also be targeted.
- Officers were working alongside the Domestic Violence Team within the Safer Vale Partnership and also with South Wales Police to better understand the data around violence and sexual offences, and more work was needed in this space, alongside other key areas, during the next phase of the project.
- As violence and sexual offences had been identified as a key area of crime within the more deprived areas of the Vale of Glamorgan, Officers from Safer

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Vale could provide a report to the Committee regarding the response to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) issues.

- It was vital not to let down the communities involved, and particularly the large numbers of participants engaging with the project's workshops. Involving these community members in community-led initiatives and in co-producing schemes that they could take ownership of, was a key idea being worked on currently.
- Project ideas would be tested and developed in and with the communities involved, to ensure that they were the right areas of focus for activities and eventual outcomes.
- The Creative Communities team were currently visiting Barry secondary schools, and also engaged with young people in a variety of ways including attending youth and family events, as well as youth clubs alongside the Youth Service. Officers agreed that further work could be carried out with 6<sup>th</sup> Forms, particularly regarding their employment workshops.
- Officers were balancing the statistics and data they had available with the first-hand reports from the public and professionals regarding the communities involved, in order to triangulate this evidence to provide a fuller picture of what work was most needed.
- Officers had attended a Veterans' group's session at Victoria Park Community Centre in Barry, and were interested to find out what similar provision may be available for such groups in the area since this particular group had recently come to an end.
- The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation was most recently updated in 2019, however the Council supplemented this data with more regular economic analysis on a monthly basis. Officers would provide some Vale-specific information to members of the Committee.
- Officers reassured Members that the areas focused on were the top three most deprived as compared to the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan, including its rural areas.

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the work undertaken through this project to work with people who lived in our communities who experienced higher levels of deprivation be noted.
- (2) T H A T Committee receive further updates on the work of this project as appropriate.
- (3) THAT Committee receives a report from the Community Safety Partnership team on the response to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence issues.

#### Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order that Members are updated as to the progress of the project and the support available to residents who experienced higher levels of deprivation.

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(3) In order for Members to be informed of the work being carried out to combat these issues, which were identified as being among the key areas of crime within the Vale of Glamorgan's most deprived communities.