

No.

VOLUNTARY SECTOR JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 29th January, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Vice-Chair in the Chair); Councillors I. Buckley, A.M. Collins and J.M. Norman

Representatives of the Voluntary Sector: R. Connor (Glamorgan Voluntary Services), L. Newton (Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health) and Councillor C. Hawkins (Town and Community Councillor Representative)

Also present: Councillors S.M. Hanks and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health)

740 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer 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.”

741 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors R.M. Birch (Chair) G. Bruce and C. Iannucci and H. Smith (Barnardo’s).

742 MINUTES –

AGREED– T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16th October, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

743 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in Agenda Item 7 – Strengthening our Communities and Work to Tackle Poverty and Current Cost of Living Crisis – Reference from Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee: 18th October, 2023 in that she had a dispensation to speak and vote on general matters relating to the Vale Food Bank but to speak only when matters regarding finance or property in respect of the Vale Food Bank were being considered at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings.

744 SOCIAL SERVICES AND THIRD SECTOR -

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding having regard to the on going work between Social Services and the Third Sector. The department worked closely with various organisations e.g. Family Information Services/Dewis, Adferiad, Cardiff and Vale Parents Federation, Cardiff YMCA, Care and Repair Cardiff, The Care Collective and the Alzheimer Society, Action for Children, Llamau and Barnardo's, YMCA, Young Family Matters and NYAS (Children's Advocacy Service). The Head of Service stated that the services provided covered a number of areas including parental support. The Youth Justice and Early Support Services also worked with victim focus, domestic violence, Citizens Advice, Job Centre and Foodbank. Adult Services covered areas such as Vale Plus, Innovate Trust and Cartrefi Cymru, Vale People First, Friendly Trust, Advocacy Matters, MIND in the Vale, Platform and CAVAMH (Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health). Other organisations that received funding and the services they provided included Aid Connect Cymru, Cowbridge and Llanblethian and Dinas Powys lunch clubs, Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern, Divert Cymru, Penarth and District Live at Home, Dewis Centre for Independent Living, Hafod Care, Care Quality Ltd and Sight Cymru.

There was also a requirement for Local Authority to establish Section 16 forums and the Head of Service was the SRO for this service. It has been agreed that in terms of commissioning as they had their own distinct challenges Cardiff and the Vale would establish their own forums. The Head of Service advised that to date an engagement meeting had taken place in December 23, the production of a survey in January 2024 with the intention that in March 2024 the Board would be established and a future work programme developed in 2024.

R. Connor (GVS) thanked the Head of Service for his detailed presentation which covered the work with the Third Sector commenting that she welcomed the introduction and development of the 16s Forum and in her view the Council was genuinely working in partnership with the Third Sector and hoped that this would continue to be developed. However, she said many third sector providers were under resourced in particular having regard to the expectations of the service they were expected to provide noting that 45 % of the third sector was covering services that had previously been covered by Local Authorities. Ms Connor enquired as to how the Head of Service planned to work in partnership and ensure that the third sectors are appropriately resourced to meet the needs of the ever growing population.

The Chair sought further information on the role of the Section 16 forum querying how many orgs or individuals would be likely to join and the proposed make up arrangements between the Council and the third sector. The Head of Service in response stated that there were exiting strong relationships between the Council and various organisations that he would not wish to be lost. Although there had not been as many responses to the survey as he had hoped he would be analysing the results in due course. Also although the Local Authority would take the lead with regard to the Forum he very much looked to take a partnership

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approach with the third sector and would be proposing to establish specific workshops during the year to focus on certain elements.

In conclusion, the Chair advised that it would be good practice for the Voluntary Sector to receive a further update at the end of the year of the work and requested that all Members be forwarded the presentation slides for their information.

It was subsequently,

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the Head of Resource Management and Safeguarding be thanked for a comprehensive presentation.
- (2) T H A T further updates be presented to the Committee at the end of the next financial year.
- (3) T H A T the presentation provided at the meeting be forwarded to all Members of the Committee.

745 GLAMORGAN VOLUNTARY SERVICES (GVS) ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23 (VS) –

R. Connor, Glamorgan Voluntary Services presented the report which provided an overview of what had been achieved and the outcomes of the Voluntary Sector's work in the previous 12 months. The Annual Report was being presented to the Committee as required under the terms of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Glamorgan Voluntary Services Deed of Grant. The report considered the achievements in year, the development of advice services, its role as an information service and the provision of practical services e.g. reliable printing, help with desk top publishing, the loan of display equipment for exhibitions and presentations etc. Various networks of the service also continued to be a popular way for voluntary and community organisations to access and share information. In particular, reference was made to the Vale Housing and Homelessness Forum which it was noted was the longest established of all the networks and Forums. It had been operating since GVS came into existence. The Forum also met jointly with the Vale Supported People Housing Group four times a year. Another element of the work of the GVS related to funding the information service which provided support for 81 groups throughout the year with a reported £650k of funding obtained as a result of the advice and information given by GVS. Reference was made to the three additions of the sustainable funding newsletter which were produced and contained information on a range funds along with news articles to assist groups in their service for vital funds. Five funding events had also been held with representatives from funders giving valuable advice on a one to one basis to Third Sector organisations. It was noted that some 200 people had attended these sessions.

During the year despite the pandemic 17 group training events had also been delivered all aimed at building the capacity of local organisations.

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Paragraph 2.16 of the report referred to some of the key strategic partnerships on which GVS played a key role. The report also referred to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing network and other organisations who received funding from GVS.

With regards to volunteering, GVS offered a one stop resource for information, advice and guidance on all aspects of volunteering for both volunteers and recruiting organisations, it being noted that volunteering offered a valuable experience which could aid study, help someone decide if they were thinking about a change in career or simply give them the opportunity to put something back into their community.

Paragraphs 2.30 to 2.34 of the report provided some highlights of volunteering development work undertaken in 2022/23. The report also highlighted that GVS was committed and determined to make the best use of funders money and had therefore made efficiency savings in several areas. Some of the saving initiatives included encouraging all contacts to receive GVS Vista magazine and supplements via email, introducing an e-bulletin service, restricting telephone calls made to mobile phones, installing energy efficiency alterations to lighting, turning off electrical items that were not in use and encouraging staff to only print if required. Other projects were also referred to as outlined at paragraph 2.41 of the report.

Following a query from Cllr Norman in relation to the involvement of volunteers and whether or not volunteers required DBS checks Ms. Connor advised that the Third Sector organisations always wished to encourage and involve more volunteers although the numbers had dwindled over the years and to expand the service would require more resources as it was important that the right level of support and training was provided to anyone engaging in volunteering work. With regard to applications for DBS checks, she considered that some people may be put off but that usually the cost was borne by the organisation that they volunteered for.

The Chair enquired as to whether there was any peer to peer mentoring scheme support available for volunteering work across the sector in the Vale in view of the limited resources available. R. Connor advised that there was a resource within GVS and the networking forum for volunteering advice etc but the sector had recently received information that Welsh Government had advised that in the draft budget the Volunteering in Wales Fund was to be significantly reduced.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

AGREED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the Glamorgan Voluntary Services Annual Report 2022/23 be noted.
- (2) T H A T R. Connor, Glamorgan Voluntary Services be thanked for a detailed report.

746 RESHAPING: THE NEXT PHASE OF TRANSFORMATION (REF) -

The reference from Cabinet of 18th January, 2024 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources who advised that the report set out the proposals for the next phase of the Council's transformation programme for Reshaping. Reshaping being the transformational change programme which had been launched in 2015 and which enabled the Council to mitigate the impact of austerity whilst delivering significant financial savings.

Having regard to the significant financial challenge facing the Council in the medium term the report stated it was now time for Reshaping to be refocussed and that the report set out a framework and early ideas for progressing transformational change and the five themes of target operating model, service transformation, strengthening communities, digital innovation and economic resilience. Cabinet had referred the report to the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee for consideration.

The Director of Corporate Resources commented that it was important for the programme to have a more financial imperative towards it and in particular to look at how the Council operated the organisation, how it uses technology and how it met the needs of its residents.

Having regard to the section on service transformation, the Chair enquired as to whether the Director envisaged this to be a proactive or reactive programme. In response, the Director advised that in reality it would probably be a bit of both stating that the Council was always open to approaches from community groups and would welcome discussions with them going forward. The Chair advised that in her experience community groups and organisations within the Vale have good ideas but do not necessarily know they can approach the Council to have such discussions. This was something the Director stated the programme would be important for raising awareness order to encourage those discussions to take place.

Having regard to paragraph 2.14 of the report and the place-based approach, Councillor Buckley requested some further information in relation to this area of activity. The Director, in response, advised that some significant funding for Transforming Towns had been received to enable the Council to look at place based work in the four towns. The Council was looking to adopt a place-based approach as to how services can be delivered and how they are invested. He stated that the project would be looking at the assets available within the county and also the needs and demands in a particular area.

R. Connor in commenting on the Community Asset Transfer process advised that she was pleased to note that the Council was looking to streamline the process going forward. From the Third Sector perspective she would be looking for consideration in regard to the services that could be considered for further involvement by the Third Sector. The Director in response advised that although it had been said previously he did consider that the current year was the most challenging year ever financially with the Council wanting to try and protect the

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services that mattered the most to the residents of the Vale. There was now an opportunity for the Council to think differently and that the Council had a willingness to work in this way and to undertake considerable engagement with the sectors as it worked through the programme.

The Chair, in conclusion stated that in light of the comments made at the meeting it was clear that the Committee welcomed the approach to transformation it being acknowledged there would be a proactive and responsive approach to engagement. She was also encouraged by the intention to streamline the Community Asset Transfer process and referred to the Third Sector's comments in relation to welcoming the opportunity to work more closely with the Council in relation to service transformation approach.

Having regard to the comments made at the meeting, it was subsequently

AGREED – T H A T Cabinet be informed that the Committee welcomed the intention to streamline the Community Asset Transfer process and the Third Sector welcomed the opportunity to work more closely with the Council in relation to the service transformation approach.

Reason for recommendation

Having considered the report and discussions at the meeting.

747 STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES AND WORK TO TACKLE POVERTY AND THE CURRENT COST OF LIVING CRISIS (REF) –

The report had been referred to the Committee for consideration by the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee in order that any comments could be referred to Cabinet for consideration and that updates on progress to date be also provided to the Committee.

The Operational Manager for Corporate Strategy and Insight in presenting the report stated that it provided an update to the Committee on the work being undertaken to tackle poverty and the cost of living crisis within the Vale of Glamorgan and to set out the Council's approach to responding to three Audit Wales reports on the challenges of poverty in Wales. The three reports encouraged changes in how the Council worked with the community, the Third Sector and social enterprises. The reports formed part of Audit Wales' work on tackling poverty across Wales. The report also detailed how the Council was undertaken an integrated and collaborative approach to how to respond to the work of Audit Wales, recognise the interconnections and reflected on the recommendations set out in the four reports to embed changes in how the Council worked and with whom. It being noted that the report had been referred to a number of other Committees within the Council, it was accepted that all the comments from each Committee would be taken back to Cabinet together, in order for Cabinet to consider all comments received. The officer stated that it was important for the Town and Community Council Charter and the Voluntary Sector Compact to be developed together in a consistent way. The key issues for

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consideration within the report were referred to as the impact of deprivation and the cost of living crisis in the Vale, improving the co-ordination and integration of activities, reference to the Audit Wales reports with it being noted that in addition to the work outlined in response to the Audit Wales reports there were a number of pieces of work being taken forward as part of the Council's work on the cost of living crisis which were reflected in the Annual Delivery Plan. The Council also continued to be involved with and supportive of projects which improved access to food including the Vale Food Bank, Big Bocs Bwyd and similar school based projects, food pantries such as the GVS Food Share at CF61 in Llantwit Major and the Penarth Food Pod run by the Council Housing Team. In 2022/23 Welsh Government had awarded the Council £33,196 to develop warm spaces and as part of issuing an effective response to the cost of living challenge detailed in the ADP 2023/24 a cost of living reserve had been established. A total reserve at April 2023 being £854,000.

The proposed approach as contained within the report related to engagement and progress reporting and as such it was proposed that a programme of engagement workshops and discussion be undertaken facilitated by a third party. This would help provide some independence and challenge but also continuity across the discussions and development of the Council's work with the sectors and in response to the Audit Wales recommendations. The work would be managed by officers in the Strategy and Insight Advisory Group, the Regeneration service and Democratic Services and would be sponsored by the Director of Corporate Resources.

In commenting on the report R. Connor advised that the Third Sector was looking forward to working very closely with its partners in the local authority to ensure that the communities would not suffer and by working together recognising each other's strengths she stated that both organisations could make a big difference to the lives of local residents. It was important for the organisations not to be scared of making big transformational changes and referred to the considerable assets in the Third Sector and community groups within the Vale.

The Operational Manager commented that it was important for all to understand perspectives and that the comparisons that had been undertaken to date were very interesting with also it being important to see how this work would be taken forward.

The Chair stated that with regard to the references to the drivers of the cost of living crisis it was important for these to be considered and strengthened as well as clear messaging being disseminated across the Vale about what it could do going forward. Although, it was also noted that much sat outside the control of the Council and Welsh Government itself. Further work would also be required in respect of how the impact of complying with the Welsh Government's Charter for Benefits would be measured and that Welsh Government had produced clear ambitions in the Charter as to how local authorities raised awareness of for example people's access to financial benefits etc. The Director of Corporate Resources commented that the Council was giving some early thought to ensure consistency of approach with regard to the recommendations of the Charter and to how information was disseminated to the public, how accessible it was and

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whether this would be via working further with the Vale's 50+ Forum or the use of technology with it being important to link the work and understand the impact.

The Chair, in summing up, emphasised the importance of working together and the value of recognising the role of experts in their field with it subsequently being

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the comments made at the meeting be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

(2) T H A T Cabinet notes that the Committee welcomes the commitment to strengthen engagement and asked Cabinet to recognise the cost in terms of strengthening communities, in particular recognising the Council will have an impact.

Reason for recommendations

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

748 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (CX) -

The Director of Corporate Resources advised that he had requested that the report be brought to the Committee to provide the Committee with an update in respect of the progress across the Council in responding to the climate emergency and delivering the Council's commitment as part of Project Zero.

The report and attached Appendix A detailed the wide range of activity being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and to take forward Project Zero. Progress from April to September 2023 included: ongoing work on new active travel routes and A rated council housing; funding secured to retrofit some of the Community Centres with photovoltaics, LED lighting and other energy efficiency measures; a successful 2023 Vale Food Trail held in the summer; and funding secured for new posts.

At the request of Committee, RAG (red, amber, green) ratings of progress during the period had been introduced at Appendix A detailing progress against the 80 underlying steps within the Climate Change Challenge Plan. The report also provided details of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's 2022-2023 carbon emissions, an update regarding the finances associated with Project Zero and the use of the Project Zero reserve and updated on the approach to programme management.

The Director further commented that Appendix A to the report detailed the wide range of activities being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and to take forward Project Zero and that the comments of the Committee including the Third Sector organisations comments were welcomed.

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The Climate Change Challenge Plan at Appendix A identified 18 challenges with a senior responsible officer identified for each challenge. In accepting that the Plan was a significant programme it was important to raise awareness and to highlight its prominence by bringing it to the Committee for consideration. The Chair commented that the RAG rating identified within the document was really helpful however, it could be difficult to understand the direct impact of what was being achieved and requested that in future reports a case study be considered to be included which outlined what the activity was achieving with an example that in particular for the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee the case study could focus on the partnership approach that was being taken with the Third Sector.

Following a comment from R. Connor as to what sense the Council had as to how the Third Sector was aware of the programme and what it could do to communicate further advised that from her perspective sustainability projects were high on the agenda, referring to examples such as reducing utility bills etc. However, she could also arrange to share a shorter version of the report with all the organisations it served if the Council's communications team could provide a press release that covered all aspects of the report and the action plan, she would be happy to disseminate the information. Furthermore she commented that as a member of the Public Services Board she stated they were also committed to the programme.

The Director of Corporate Resources in conclusion responded advising that he would be in touch in terms of the bite size information that could be provided and was grateful for the opportunity to further raise awareness through their communication channels with it subsequently being

AGREED –

(1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report and Appendix A in relation to the challenges in the Climate Change Challenge Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T future reports be presented to the Committee to include a case study in order for the Committee to ascertain what a particular activity was achieving with regard to Project Zero.

Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to discussions at the meeting.