

STATE OF THE AREA DEBATE 2004

REPORT of the State of the Area Debate held on 1st April, 2004 at Cowbridge Leisure Centre, Cowbridge, Vale of Glamorgan.

Present:

Councillor A.G. Powell (Chairman) Vale of Glamorgan Council;
Councillor H.J.W. James (Leader);
Councillor A.C. Williams Cabinet Member (Social and Care Services);
Councillor J. Thomas Cabinet Member (Housing and Community Safety);
Councillor H. Jarvie Cabinet Member (Improvement);
Mr. James Cawley Director of Community Services;
Ms. K. Bermanski Local Health Board; and Josh Jones Superintendent South Wales Police.

The Chairman opened the final stage of the 2004 State of the Area Debate by welcoming all present to the Leisure Centre. He advised all present that the Debate would focus primarily on Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety. The Chairman then invited the Leader to give his opening address.

The Leader welcomed all present to the final State of the Area Debate and stated that in his opinion the previous two evenings had been extremely successful. The Leader informed members of the public that in response to the previous year's Debate, comments had been received that the Debate should be taken throughout the Vale of Glamorgan and as such, three venues this year had been agreed. He gave a brief overview of the Council's activities focusing on the work of the Vale of Glamorgan Partnership, the Countryside Council for Wales, the Police and Fire Service and the Welsh Development Agency which had ownership of the Community Strategy; the main purposes of which were

- to improve the quality of life of local communities in the Vale,
- to provide a focus for improved joint working and planning between public agencies and the voluntary and business sectors and
- to contribute the achievement of sustainable development.

The Leader advised the members of the public of the role of the Cabinet and the portfolios the Cabinet Members were responsible within the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Ten Members sit on the Cabinet and their portfolios cover Finance, Policy IT, Legal and Regulatory Services, Visible and Building Services, Economic Development and Leisure Services, Lifelong Learning, Improvement, Human Resources and Equalities, Housing and Community Safety, Planning and Transportation and Social and Care Services. The Cabinet being the decision making body of the Authority which has 4 Scrutiny Committees - Community Wellbeing and Safety, Economy and Environment, Lifelong Learning and Corporate Resources whose main purpose is to scrutinise the decisions of the Cabinet. The Scrutiny Committees support the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole and allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding enquiries into matters of local concern. They are also in turn consulted by the Executive or Council on

forthcoming decisions and the development of policy. The Leader stated that it was only a few years ago that the District Auditor had been issuing letters of public concern regarding the administration of the Vale of Glamorgan Council but since that date a complete reorganisation and restructure had taken place and the District Auditor had recently commended the positive and enthusiastic approach of the Council that had been taken in improvement. He reiterated that by working in partnership together “we can make the Vale of Glamorgan a better place”. In relation to Education Services, the Authority is currently looking at progressing a private funding initiative to improve Education Services within the Vale of Glamorgan and as such, partnership working is key to the proposals. The Leader stressed that the Council cannot afford to rest or even slow down, they must strive for continuous improvement. The District Auditor’s comments have been much appreciated and the Leader stressed that the co-operation of the public in helping the Council to achieve continually improving services will thereby make the Vale a better place for residents and visitors alike. He mentioned the progress in relation to E-Government which would be a mechanism to further assist the public by, for example, allowing a two-way dialogue between the public and officers by facilitating the payment of bills, making complaints and representations to the Authority etc.

The Chairman thanked the Leader for his opening address and proceeded to set out the agenda for the evening’s debate. The aim of the evening would be to cover the areas of Health , Wellbeing and Community Safety. Each presentation would be preceded by an introduction from the Cabinet Member responsible for the service and after each presentation members of the public would be afforded time for a question and answer session. The Chairman introduced Councillor A. Clive Williams the Cabinet Member for Social and Care Services. Councillor Williams gave an outline of the aims of the Department and the theme for the debate – partnership working. It was the intention to work in partnership with other organisations, in particular the Local Health Board.

He paid tribute to all the staff within the Directorate and confirmed that the services from the Authority would be to support people to live as independent a life as possible in their own homes. He described the diverse number of services that the Directorate was responsible for, in particular:

- Care for the Elderly
- Looked After Children and
- Dealing with the Child Protection Register.

Since the theme of the evening’s Debate was Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety, the presentations that were due to take place by the Director of Community Services, the Local Health Board and the Superintendent, would centre around working in partnership with each other and Councillor Williams introduced James Cawley to the audience.

James Cawley’s presentation focused on two critical partnerships:

- Children and Young People’s Partnership and
- Health and Social Care and Wellbeing.

Children and Young People's Partnership Framework

The initiative had been introduced approximately 2 years ago by the Welsh Assembly Government, the aim being that all children should have a "flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development". Children should have access to a range of activities, not only educational aspects but play, leisure, sporting and cultural activities. The Partnership Framework was about ensuring that information to children was of paramount importance and one of its main purposes was to try and join up activities to combat for example crime, health adopt a schools initiative, whereby children can access healthy food and that they are educated to understand that their health was of significant importance. To date, one of the highest priorities that has been identified within the Vale of Glamorgan is in the Western Vale which is an integrated Children's Centre is to be based in Llantwit Major. The Centre was described as a facility that would put together existing services and expand on others. Some of the facilities that the Director of Community Services would look to increase would be Breakfast Clubs in schools and the provision of day care nursery facilities.

Health and Social Care and Wellbeing Partnership in conjunction with the Local Health Board

At this stage of the presentation Mr. Cawley introduced Kath Bermanski, Director of Nursing with the Local Health Board. The Partnership was described as a fairly new initiative and was at early stage in the process of defining exactly where the Authorities would be heading in the future. The Partnership would link with the Children and Young People's Partnership but would focus on all other age groups. The whole focus was to understand the needs of the population, look at the provision of the current services and identify ways of meeting the needs of the people within the current services as well as identifying new initiatives. It would be important that members of the public were involved in the whole consultation process within the Partnership. A Health Needs Assessment had already been undertaken which would be completed early in the year and as part of the consultation exercise the Department was currently drafting a strategy which would be consulted on later on in the year. The aspects of the strategy would consider the provision of how the Authorities would provide long and medium term care. For 2004, the priorities would be to continue to work jointly and to set priorities for the next four years. Various numbers of public events will take place throughout June and September within the areas of Cowbridge, Penarth and Barry which will take the form of consultation and exercises with members of the public. Mr. Cawley advised the audience of a local initiative that was currently being piloted called the "Colwinston Housing Scheme" which was a pilot scheme for affordable housing within rural communities. Mr. Cawley concluded by re-enforcing the vital role that Community Services has within the Vale to ensure that the needs of the population are met. The following question was raised by a member of the audience in relation to the Colwinston Housing Scheme - "Can you explain how the scheme will actually work?" Mr. Cawley answered the question by stating that the Colwinston Scheme would be worked in partnership with the Housing Association and that the scheme although is a small scheme, the intention is that they work with the community to ensure how affordable housing can be developed. Mr. Cawley offered to the Councillor to the Llantwit Major Town Council the opportunity

for his officers from the Authority to discuss the many issues that would affect the scheme. The offer was accepted.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Cawley, Kath Bermanski and Councillor A.C. Williams for their presentations.

Councillor John Thomas, Cabinet Member for Community Safety was then invited to address the proceedings on Community Safety issues.

Councillor Thomas advised members of the public that he was Chair of the Community Safety Partnership and also the Chairman of the Authority's Licensing Committee. He reiterated the fact that the Authority worked in partnership to provide community safety with partners for example, the Police, Fire Service, voluntary groups and other organisations within the Vale of Glamorgan. The main objectives of the Community Safety Partnership were to reduce crime by working together and the Community Safety Team handled a budget in excess of £500,000 on an annual basis. Councillor Thomas was pleased to introduce Superintendent Josh Jones to the meeting.

Superintendent Jones explained that he had been a Police Officer for 17 years and that in his experience within the Vale of Glamorgan there was a genuine partnership between the Police, the Local Authority and other agencies in a combined effort for Community Safety. He informed the public of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and proceeded to present statistics on crime levels etc., within the Vale. He stated that overall crime levels within the Vale of Glamorgan were down by 4%; violent crime had seen an increase of 4% which was partly due to the increase in the reporting of domestic crime; burglary was down statistically by 20%; he contributed part of this reduction to the fact that there were over 300 Neighbourhood Watch schemes currently in operation within the Vale of Glamorgan. Theft of motor vehicles was down by 17% and theft from motor vehicles was down by 4%. In relation to robbery, to date, there was no change compared with the previous figures. He reported that on average there were at least 25 to 30 crimes carried out a day in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Detection Levels

Overall detection 34.6%

Violent Crime 73%

Burglaries 27%

Theft from motor vehicles 16%

Theft of motor vehicles 31%

Robbery 54%.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership had driven through the aim of a safer Vale of Glamorgan by planning and setting targets that had to be met. The priorities of the Partnership were to combat autocrime, burglary, drugs and alcohol abuse, youth offending, vulnerable groups - to make a safer environment for people to live. Recently the Partnership had appointed a Domestic Violence Co-ordinator and the Substance Misuse Action Team would be pro-active within schools discussing education enforcement and diversion. The Youth Offending Team was also a

Partnership with the Vale. South Wales with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership was looking at the number of speeding issues that had taken place within the area and that it worked in partnership with other forces to ensure that there was no duplication of the work. An example where agencies work together in conjunction with the Police was identified as Romilly Park where the number of incidents that have been reported to the Police had fallen by 63%. The Local Authority, together with other agencies and the Police, had looked at identifying a number of initiatives to limit the incidents at the park, some of them being opening one gate at night and putting a light in the centre of the park.

These measures had been extremely successful in combating the problems at the park. Superintendent Jones concluded his presentation by stating that in his opinion a number of improvements and initiatives had been made and will continue to be made to ensure that the Vale of Glamorgan is a safer place to live and visit.

The following question and answer session then ensued.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
Can you envisage more Community Police Support Officers for the Vale of Glamorgan?	Currently there are 8 CPSOs for the Vale of Glamorgan, 2 in the rural Vale, 4 in the Barry area and 2 in Penarth but due to limited resources it was difficult to fund any more at this stage. However, Superintendent Jones confirmed that there was currently a Community Beat Officer in every ward within the Vale.
Are any traffic calming measures going to be introduced in the St. Brides Major Area?	Superintendent Jones confirmed that in order to ensure traffic calming measures are placed in a particular area, the current criteria requires that 4 fatalities had occurred within a defined period. In Superintendent Jones' opinion, this was not an appropriate method of determination but unfortunately it was the one they had to work with.
The CCTV camera in the Llantwit Major area had recently played a big part in apprehending a youth in the area. Could we now have more CCTV cameras in areas like this to help facilitate the Police when apprehending criminals?	Yes, as Officers, we would encourage CCTV in all business areas. In particular it had been agreed that CCTV be installed in night clubs as a condition of their licence. The Police would certainly wish to encourage the expansion of CCTV provision and there was a need to work closer with the Community Safety Partnership. However, it was the lack of resources that made this an increasingly difficult task.

<p>Would it be possible to have a Police presence in the precinct area of the town of Llantwit Major?</p>	<p>Superintendent Jones offered to speak to the Llantwit Major Town Council on the issue of Police presence within the town precinct at a future meeting of the Town Council</p>
<p>What areas do the Community Police Officers serve?</p>	<p>CPOs are based mainly in Rhoose and Llantwit Major but they are encouraged to go into other areas as and when required. However, it was finite resources that determined where the officers were to be based.</p>

At this point in the programme, the Chairman thanked once again all the Cabinet Members, officers and partner organisations that had made presentations to the Debate and then he opened the floor for questions on any issues from the general public.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
<p>The new one-way system in Llantwit Major had resulted in the fact that people were avoiding the village and that various shopkeepers were having to close their premises due to lack of trade.</p>	<p>The one-way system had caused considerable problems. However, the Authority was not aware that any trade had been lost as a direct result of implementing the system. In order to establish the one-way system the proposals had been subject to the statutory process i.e. the consultation period before it was actually agreed to be implemented. However, due to the number of concerns that have been raised in the area recently, the Authority was currently looking at the possibility of reversing the system for a trial period.</p>
<p>The Vale of Glamorgan is a lovely place to live. What strategy does the Authority have to ensure that those parts of the Vale are retained i.e. green field sites. Does the Vale look at brown field sites?</p>	<p>There was currently a very robust system and strategy on planning issues within the Vale. A Unitary Development Plan existed and the Authority was now at the final stage in terms of its production. Firstly and foremost, the Authority had looked at brown field sites for development before looking at green field sites. Every local authority had to prepare a planning strategy for the next five years and the Vale of Glamorgan Council had done its level best to resist</p>

	<p>any development which in the opinion of the Authority was not appropriate. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation interceded at this point by stating that the Vale had a stringent policy on planning applications. He pointed out that all the decisions were subject to appeal and in a number of cases the appeals had been overturned by the Welsh Assembly Government. He pointed out the recent decision on Darren Farm and asked members of the public to be vigilant. The Inspector had recommended the development to the west of Cowbridge, a decision which the Vale of Glamorgan had vehemently objected to. An appeal was held and on this occasion the Vale of Glamorgan Council won the appeal. However, the Welsh Assembly Government had recently announced that an Inspector's decision would be final on a Unitary Development Plan Inquiry. This would mean that the local authority would have no form of redress on any decision an Inspector makes. Councillor Williams urged the public to write a letter to their Assembly Member and local MP stating that they were extremely concerned at the proposals that the Welsh Assembly Government wished to implement on Planning Inquiries. He urged the public to ensure that the Welsh Assembly Government listened to the opinions of the people before making a final decision on the procedures at Inquiries.</p>
<p>What is the Vale of Glamorgan Council going to do about the beach at Llantwit Major and the dog fouling issues thereon?</p>	<p>The Authority was fully aware of problems and were currently working with a local gentleman who had recently submitted plans for a slipway/walkway to the beach. It was essential that some form of access would be made as soon as possible. An assurance was given that access would be completed before the summer months. The Authority was also currently working with local landowners and the Community Council to bring the beach back to bathing status. In relation</p>

	to dog fouling, Enforcement Officers would be appointed shortly whose prime role would be to enforce dog fouling issues and from May 2004, a clear presence of Enforcement Officers would be visible within the area.
The area of Cowbridge originally an historical town, has recently been subject to a number of new traffic issues that have been developed for the area. What can be done about it?	Yes, Cowbridge is an historic town with modern traffic problems. The Authority is currently looking at measures and ways of encouraging people to use other means of transport. Solutions for the town are considerably difficult because of the makeup of the town but the Authority regularly strives to look at new initiatives to be developed for the area.

The Chairman proceeded to close the Debate by thanking everyone who had taken part in the Debate for their attendance including the members of the public that had attended each and every venue by making the Debates interesting and informative. He then handed over to the Leader for the his closing remarks. The Leader thanked all those who attended and had taken part in the third and final Debate and also thanked those for their input into the 2 previous evenings. He stated that each Debate had been rewarding and challenging and echoed thanks to everyone concerned including the staff and the people who had worked so hard behind the scenes to make each and every one a success.

The overriding theme from the 3 Debates could be seen that partnership working was a key to ensuring effective service delivery to people of the Vale of Glamorgan. He stated that Partnership Initiatives had cross-cutting issues and that the presentations that had been presented at the Debates had shown true Partnership achievement within all the service areas. He summarised the State of Area Debate at Cowbridge by stating that the public would like to see more Police Officers on foot, more Community Police Officers throughout the Vale of Glamorgan, more CCTV equipment through the Vale of Glamorgan, a reduction in the number of takeaway facilities within the area, that anti-social behaviour issues are tackled and the Police Force be encouraged to provide increased Police presence within precinct areas throughout the Vale.

The Leader concluded by stating that the previous year's State of the Area Debate had been held in Barry Memorial Hall and as a result of that Debate members of the public had requested that the State of Area Debate be taken to a number of venues within the Vale of Glamorgan. Three venues had been agreed this year - Barry, Penarth and Cowbridge but evidence could be seen from the questions that were raised at the meeting that other areas in the Vale would also benefit from a State of Area Debate, in particular, Llantwit Major.

The Leader echoed the Chairman's sentiments and congratulations to everyone that had taken part and attended the Debate and closed the 2004 State of the Area Debate at 8.05 p.m.