

STATE OF THE AREA DEBATE 2005

REPORT of the State of the Area Debate held on 28th April, 2005 in Llantwit Major Comprehensive School.

Present:

Councillor H.J.W. James (OStJ)	(Leader, The Vale of Glamorgan Council)
Councillor A.D. Hampton	(Cabinet Member, Education and Lifelong Learning, The Vale of Glamorgan Council)
Councillor A.C. Williams	(Cabinet Member, Social Care and Health, The Vale of Glamorgan Council)
Councillor A.J. Williams	(Cabinet Member, Planning and Transportation), The Vale of Glamorgan Council.

In attendance:

Councillor A.M. Ernest	(Cabinet Member, Improvement)
Councillor G.A. Cox	(Cabinet Member, Visible Services)
Councillor M.R. Harvey	(Cabinet Member, Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure)
Councillor J.W. Thomas	(Cabinet Member, Housing, Building Services and Community Safety)

The Leader welcomed all present to the Debate and advised that he would be the Chair for the duration of the evening in the absence of the Mayor who was attending a Business Economic Development event in Lithuania, together with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure.

The Leader informed those present that the debate was the third State of the Area Debate that had taken place in the year. The first had been held in Penarth on 13th April and the second in Barry on 20th April 2005. He was pleased to see so many present and confirmed that it was one of the best turn-outs out of the three Debates to date. The Leader announced the format for the evening being a planned series of presentations by the Cabinet Members responsible for their relevant areas, followed by a question and answer session on their content and a general question and answer session to follow later. The Leader further apologised for the absence of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure and stated that information on the presentation that had been planned ie the RAF St. Athan Dragon Project would be available at the Vale of Glamorgan Council offices if members of the public required further details.

In the absence of Councillor Harvey, he advised that Councillor Hampton had agreed to attend the meeting to advise on the achievements of the Education Service in the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The Leader referred to the three key topics which would form the basis of the Cabinet Members' presentations.

1. Opening of the Vale Railway Line – Councillor A J Williams (also Deputy Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council)
2. The Western Vale Integrated Children’s Centre – Councillor A C Williams
3. Achievements / performance of the Education Service – Councillor A D Hampton.

The Leader also referred to the recent changes that had occurred within the Vale of Glamorgan Council over the past few years. He informed the public that the Council had a clear vision which had been outlined in its Corporate Plan and in addition, each service area had identified their own Service Plans which had formed the basis for the Corporate Plan. He advised that despite the many successes and positive changes within the Council, it had adopted the principle of continuous improvement and would continue to improve as interaction with customers increased. He referred to the new modernised style of government, the Cabinet style and the Scrutiny Committees’ role in the process. He stated that the role of the Cabinet was to make decisions on services for the people of the Vale of Glamorgan and that the Scrutiny Committees’ function was to scrutinise the decisions of Cabinet and to help improve the Council’s performance through monitoring and review.

Thus the modernisation of local government had reformed the decision-making process. The Cabinet comprised of ten Conservative members and Labour and Plaid Cymru Councillors had been appointed as Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny, Planning and Licensing Committees of the Council.

He confirmed that the Council had received a favourable District Auditor’s Annual Letter which had concluded that the Council had continued to “demonstrate considerable commitment over the last 12 months to deliver continuous service improvement and that the processes and arrangements developed to achieve the objective were now in place and were beginning to deliver real and meaningful improvements”.

The Council had also “continued to exercise robust and effective management of its financial affairs.” He proudly reported that the education system of the Vale of Glamorgan was the envy of other local authorities in Wales and that the schools had achieved excellent results. The Authority was also seeking to adopt a private funding initiative to further investigate and look at issues affecting education in the Vale of Glamorgan. In particular, the Authority was planning capital works programmes for Cowbridge, St. Cyres School in Penarth and Llantwit Major Comprehensive School.

The Leader then introduced the first of the three presentations on key projects and important developments for the Council.

The Vale of Glamorgan Railway Line

- Councillor A.J. Williams, Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation.

Councillor Williams advised members of the public that the passenger service from Bridgend to Cardiff, would be open to passengers on Sunday, 12th June, 2005. He also offered a brief history of the service, stating that originally it had commenced in 1897 with eight intermediate stations between Barry and Bridgend and that the last passenger train had run in June 1964. To date, the line had only been used for freight and passenger diversions. In considering opening the railway line, the Council had considered key objectives:

- to service existing and expanding communities on the Waterfront strip;
- to improve access to Barry;
- links to the usage of the airport; and
- the need to reduce car travel and provide a viable alternative.

Funding for the project had been secured from the Welsh Assembly Government and the strategic regional authority. In 2002, initial work on track and signalling had taken place and the necessary planning permissions had been obtained for the interchanges in Autumn of 2004. Work had commenced in January 2005. Thus to date, the conversion of two new stations and access works at Llantwit Major and Rhoose had taken place, together with an improved rail platform at Bridgend and the necessary interchanges were currently continuing to be delivered as separate Council projects to promote seamless travel. However, during the development of the project, a number of complications had occurred. In particular, in 2002, Railtrack itself had gone into administration which led to a delay of two years in developing the project. There had been split roles between the Welsh Assembly Government, Railtrack/Network Rail and the Council which had caused undue delay; land purchase issues at Llantwit Major Station and the interchange, together with the effect of staff turnover at Network Rail and various legal and risk issues that had been involved had increased the delay in providing the service. Nevertheless, on Sunday, 12th June, 2005, the railway would open to the public. The service would be provided on an hourly basis between 6.00am and 23:00 hours Monday to Saturday and two hourly services between 9.00am and 21:00 hours on Sundays. He further advised the public that from Bridgend to Cardiff it had been estimated that travel time would take 53 minutes; Bridgend to Llantwit Major 14 minutes; Barry Central to Llantwit Major 17 minutes and Cardiff Central to Llantwit Major 39 minutes.

The company operating the trains was known as "Arriva" and aggressive marketing of the facility would follow in the forthcoming weeks via leaflets, articles and incentives etc. The official Welsh Assembly Government opening had been scheduled for 13th June, 2005. However, members of the public raised concerns about this date as they had originally been informed that the opening date would be 12th June. The Leader and Cabinet Members agreed that it was up to the constituents of Llantwit Major that if they wished to hold their own opening on 12th June, no-one would stand in their way. However, it was suggested that a community based event be planned to celebrate the

opening to include schools and local community groups. In conclusion, Councillor Williams encouraged the public of Llantwit Major and outlying areas, to utilise the service in view of all the hard work that had gone into bringing the project to fruition. The success of the project would be “dependent on patronage”, he said.

Integrated Children’s Centre –
Councillor A Clive Williams Cabinet Member for Social and Care Services

The Cabinet Member reported that the Children’s Centre would effectively be an extension to the existing Llantwit Major primary school buildings. The aim of such a service would be to provide a number of services on a single site which would make it easier for those who needed the services to access them and Councillor Williams referred to the term ‘wrap-around care’ which had four key elements:

- Child Care;
- Training (for parents);
- Open Access Play;
- Early Years education.

In relation to Child Care, this would enable parents to go to work and take up training initiatives whilst their children would be cared for during the day. Training would also be provided for parents and parent support groups which would be mainly delivered by Surestart.

Open Access Play - this was referred to as a central part of the national approach for successful child development. Play development was currently managed by the Leisure Department of Environmental and Economic Regeneration and it had not yet been agreed where in Llantwit Major the Open Access Play would be focused.

Early Years Education - this would be a facility for younger child to attend and receive education on a regular basis.

Councillor Williams highlighted that one of the important elements in projects of this type was partnership working. In the case of the project in Llantwit Major, the Llandaff Diocese, Learning and Development, Community Services, Environmental and Economic Regeneration Directorates, Surestart and the Vale of Glamorgan Children’s Partnership, had worked closely and completed much of the ground work for the project. The service was about integrating services on a single site which could also provide a focus and centre for developing services within the project. An outreach worker would be appointed and jointly funded by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Llandaff Diocese to play a key role within the project and developing new links across the wider Western Vale.

Councillor Williams informed the Debate that other areas of the Vale had been examined and that although there were needy areas elsewhere that would require development the Council had recognised that there had been significant and longstanding gaps for services to Children and Families in the

Western part of the Vale. Funding had been a particular issue for the development and again partnership had played a vital role with revenue and capital costs being met by joint contributions from the Council, the Llandaff Diocese the Children's Partnership (Cymorth) and the Big Lottery.

Councillor Williams concluded by stating that the efforts and resources that had gone into the project were very much a reflection of the Council's commitment both to partnership in general and to families in the Western Vale in particular.

Achievements of the Education Service of the Vale of Glamorgan Council -

The presentation covered the scale of the service, the key service areas, school performance and other achievements. Councillor Hampton also highlighted the challenges facing the Education Service in the future. He advised the Debate that the Directorate of Learning and Development was the largest in the Council, spending almost 50% of the budget. There were 62 schools:

- Secondary - 8
- Primary - 48
- Special - 3
- Nursery - 3.

The Revenue budget for the service was £72.9m. and the Capital budget £6.3m. Teaching staff and non-teaching staff amounted to 2,000 and pupils 21,000.

The Directorate of Learning and Development comprised of the following four main service areas:

1. School Improvement Service. The aim of the service was to ensure that schools were monitored, supported and challenged to improve and to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
2. Strategic Management - included arrangements for distributing resources to schools through formula, planning future school place provision, dealing with admissions and managing the school buildings, development and maintenance.
3. Access and Inclusion - special educational needs, behaviour support and exclusions.
4. Lifelong Learning - the Library Service, Youth Service, Adult Education and Job Search.

The Cabinet Member further reported on educational performance for 2003/04. He advised the Debate that the Vale schools were the top performers in Wales in 6 out of 8 areas within key stage 1 and key stage 2. For example, in English at key stage 1, 88% of children of the Vale achieved at least level 2. This was the best performance throughout Wales in the

primary sector. In respect of GCSE/'A' level, the Debate was advised that for the Vale of Glamorgan GCSEs points 46.5%, 'A' level points 22.2%; the Welsh average was 36.8% for GCSE and 20.5% for 'A' level and he reported with pride that the Vale of Glamorgan achieved the best results in Wales for the groups for 2003/04.

Other Achievements

- Estyn Inspection
The Estyn Inspection Report confirmed that a "significant improvement in LEA performance had taken place";
- Welsh Medium School
The completion of the Welsh Medium Secondary School at Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg had taken place;
- Budget Forum
Partnership Working with Schools to develop a Budget Forum including Headteachers, Governors and Teaching Associations, had proved successful and had become a model which had been recommended by the Welsh Assembly Government;
- School Organisational Plan
The Authority had a clear and comprehensive School Organisation Plan for Primary and Secondary Provision managing places to meet needs;
- Adult Education in Wales
The Vale of Glamorgan had the highest proportion of enrolments in Adult Education in Wales;
- Partners
The Vale of Glamorgan was also working with partners to enhance opportunities for young people to shape services which affect their lives through the Young People's Partnership. The Cabinet Member was most pleased to report the achievements within the service but also highlighted the future challenges, namely:
- Education Funding
No authority in Wales delegated a higher percentage of their resources to schools than the Vale of Glamorgan Council. Despite this, and the additional money which the Council put into education in recent years, the Vale schools were still comparatively under-resourced;
- School Buildings
A number of schools within the Vale were in an unacceptable state of repair. The Council had recently constructed/developed an innovative funding approach and was seeking more support from the Welsh Assembly Government. A meeting to further this issue had been set up with the Minister for 12th May;

- National Initiatives

Councillor Hampton reiterated that the Council continued to work with schools to address the challenges created by new National Initiatives. These included the establishment of ELWA, the new funding organisation for sixth forms, workforce remodelling which would require all teachers to have 10% non-contract time by September 2005 and responding to a new 14 to 19 curriculum which had been designed to enhance choice so that pupils could follow academic and vocational routes as deemed appropriate.

In conclusion, the final challenge he reported, would be to ensure that the Authority continued to build effective partnerships with school governors, teaching associations and other organisations. The Council had an important role to play but the successes that were outlined were a credit to all involved in education to date within the Vale of Glamorgan. The achievements in the Vale were second to none in Wales and he thanked the excellent work of governors, teaching and non-teaching staff across the whole of the Vale of Glamorgan.

The following question and answer session then ensued.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Answer</u>
<p>A local councillor stated that in her opinion the youth facilities were under-funded in Llantwit Major. Why hasn't Llantwit Major got a 'drop-in' centre?</p>	<p>Councillor Hampton responded by stating that unfortunately the budget for youth provision within the Local Authority had been cut for the year. The Authority had prioritised its resources for the education of pupils within the Vale. However, he highlighted the successful projects namely "Area 41" and outreach facilities which had been established and that as a Cabinet Member, youth provision was an important aspect which he would continue to enhance at every opportunity.</p>
<p>Rotary Club Member - Do you know what the fare structure will be for the new railway line? Will there be parking fees and concessionary fares?</p>	<p>Councillor A.J. Williams - Stated that at present no notice had been received regarding the fare structure from Arriva and he also hoped that the parking fees would not be excessive.</p>
<p>A resident - Congratulated the Council on the re-opening of the railway line and questioned the date of the opening as a number of people within the community had wanted to be involved in the opening</p>	<p>Councillor Williams responded by stating that the Welsh Assembly Government had moved the date from Sunday 12th June to Monday 13th June. Officially the trains would be running on 12th June but the opening would take place on 13th June. He was aware of the disappointment within the community and both he and the Leader suggested that to avoid any unpleasantness, that the village of Llantwit Major actually hold their opening ceremony on 12th June and work with the community in developing a successful opening for the community.</p> <p>Councillor Gwyn John advised the Debate that he had received information that fares would be £4.20 for a return from Llantwit Major to Cardiff and £19.20 for a weekly ticket. These fares apparently were to be reviewed in January 2006. However, no formal notification had been received.</p>

<p>A resident - The Welsh Assembly Government have agreed that travelling by bus would be free for the over 60s. Could we expect the same for travelling by train? The gentleman also congratulated the Council on its support of the railway and for the hard work undertaken in bringing it to its conclusion for the opening on 12th June, 2005.</p>	<p>Councillor Williams concurred with the sentiments that were made by Mr. Price and suggested that all present write to their local Assembly Member voicing the issue.</p>
<p>Member of the public - Is the Severn Barrage to be built?</p>	<p>Councillor Williams responded by stating that in his opinion the Severn Barrage was not on any agenda at present and that to date, there was no connection between the Barrage and Llantwit Major Railway Station. Other than for passengers the only provision on the line would be freight trains taking coal to Aberthaw.</p>
<p>A local home owner raised a question concerning her property.</p>	<p>Councillor Williams responded by stating that issues in relation to particular properties was inappropriate to address at the Debate and that in the particular case as the person had made a complaint to the railway network that it was inappropriate for Councillors to respond on this issue.</p>
<p>A resident asked whether the Council had a detached youth service strategy e.g. for parks and other areas.</p>	<p>Councillor Hampton responded by stating that outreach work had been carried out in the Vale e.g. in Romilly Park. Youth workers had issued questionnaires to young people on what they would like to see within the Vale and the questionnaires were currently being analysed. The Head of Service for Youth Provision within the Vale was currently working on a strategy to try to encourage youths to be more involved in their communities.</p>

<p>A resident -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At the train station, a large slab of concrete with graffiti was unsightly. What was the intention of the Local Authority to deal with this? 2. CCTV monitoring - would the 3 cameras at the station also be able to look at the surrounding area? 3. It has been suggested that the floor area for each pupil in schools had to be increased by 50%, where is the extra money coming from to fund this? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Councillor Williams stated that he would arrange for the issue to be investigated to see what options could be available. 2. In the case of CCTV, this was considered a good idea and the Council would look to rearrange CCTV to cover all the areas that were suggested. 3. The WAG had stated that all schools "must be fit for purpose by 2010" and the Cabinet Member concurred that WAG should find the money for this as it would be a significant amount of money that would be required.
<p>A local town councillor - Has the Council got any plans to promote tourism in the Vale?</p>	<p>The Leader responded by stating that a Tourism and Events Marketing Manager had been appointed and that the Tourism and Events Marketing strategy was currently being addressed. The Authority was looking at addressing the street signs and direction signs which were linked with tourism itself and that in his opinion he would be looking to ensure that tourism was documented in every strategy throughout all service areas within the Council.</p>
<p>A local councillor- Why didn't the Council adopt the same policy as the Councils of Cardiff, Bridgend and Swansea and freeze the increase of their allowances for the year 2005/06. This would save £100,000 which could then be used on services in the Vale?</p>	<p>The Leader responded by stating that in his opinion, all members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council worked hard and he felt that the question was unfair as it had not been put to MPs, MEPs and Assembly Members. He further responded by stating that £100,000 that could possibly be saved by doing this, would have an insignificant impact on services within the Vale and what was really needed was proper funding from the WAG. The Vale of Glamorgan was the lowest funded authority in Wales by WAG. He felt that the members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council</p>

	<p>worked considerably long hours and have received accolades from the District Auditor in the efficient way that services within the Vale of Glamorgan have been run; that the Authority is thinking smarter, is more efficient and is constantly striving to improve. The WAG had brought in the allowances in order to encourage local people to become elected members and to ensure a decent wage for the services provided.</p>
<p>A resident asked if there was any chance that the Council could change the date of the opening of the railway line?</p>	<p>The Leader responded by stating that the date had been set by the Welsh Assembly Government but he further reiterated that in his opinion the community could hold their own opening on the Sunday as previously planned.</p>
<p>1. A resident asked why there had been a significant rise in Council Tax in Llantwit Major and how the Council could justify this rise?</p> <p>2. The resident stated that the Council Tax in Llantwit was higher than any other place in the Vale of Glamorgan.</p>	<p>1. The Leader responded by stating that there were several issues that impacted on the Council Tax charge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Vale of Glamorgan had increased it by 4.7%. (ii) The Welsh Assembly Government had re-banded properties and the Vale was not responsible for the revaluation of bands. (iii) The South Wales Police precept. (iv) The Town Council level of precept. <p>He stated that it was not only the Vale of Glamorgan Council that was requesting an increase but that part of the increase had come from other service areas, e.g. South Wales Fire Authority.</p> <p>2. The Leader responded by stating that Llantwit Major Town Council's precept was higher than any other Council within the Vale and the question of why it was should be put to the Town Council itself.</p>

<p>3. The resident also raised a question in connection with a problem he was having with a neighbour.</p>	<p>3. The Cabinet Member suggested that he provide his details to the Cabinet Officer, Mr. Mark Petherick who was available at the Debate and that all the issues be detailed and looked into asap.</p>
<p>Cowbridge Resident - raised the issue of school buildings within Cowbridge being unacceptable.</p>	<p>The Leader responded by saying that Cowbridge School, St. Cyres, Penarth and Llantwit Major School were high priority schools for the Vale of Glamorgan and they would be looking at improving school accommodation over the next few years.</p>
<p>A local councillor - Would the Authority agree that the present HOMES4U Scheme had serious flaws.</p>	<p>Councillor John Thomas, Cabinet Member for Housing, Building Services and Community Safety stated that the HOMES4U scheme had been brought in by the Council approximately 2 years ago. The letting scheme in his opinion, had flaws and had locally received criticism. However, the scheme allowed for choice and allocation was on a priority basis. The only way that the scheme could be provided was on a needs basis.</p> <p>Considerable problems had been identified throughout the Vale but these were generally due to the lack of available properties. A reduction in the social housing grant had resulted in the fact that the Council could not provide extra affordable housing - they had to work together with partners and that the principle had to be needs led.</p>
<p>A local resident raised the issue of the Old Place and requested details on the current situation.</p>	<p>The Leader responded by stating that a report had been placed before the Cabinet identifying that a stone mason would acquire the property for a £1. There had been many implications relating to this and the Cabinet had been reluctant to let the property go for a £1 until all issues had been looked at. Expressions of interest had been sent out and on</p>

	receipt of these, the Authority would be in a better position to decide the best course of action necessary.
A local resident - Any plans for planting trees in Llantwit Major?	The Cabinet Member for the service area was not present at the debate but the request would be placed before him for a response.
Llantwit Major Chamber of Trade and Local Town Councillor - The question related to the fact that it was a perception that the Council's interest ceased at the end of the Cwm Ciddy Pub.	The Leader stated that the reason the development in Llantwit Major had been a significant investment e.g. the Children's Centre, the railway service and the fact that the Authority would be spending on Llantwit Major School in relation to its infrastructure, he felt that it was unfair to say that the interests of the Council stopped at the Cwm Ciddy. However, the 10 Members of the Cabinet all have areas within the Vale where they would like to see investment but the Council has to base its decisions on need. For example, the Authority had been criticised for not having a Welsh speaking school within its area and as a result of need and necessity, the Authority had to establish a Welsh Medium school for children throughout the Vale.
A local resident - 1. The first question was to the Police Officer - how many Community Police Support Officers that had been recruited.	1. Superintendent Josh Jones was present at the meeting and responded stating that the Vale of Glamorgan was one of the safest places to live, visit and work and this had been borne out by recent statistical figures stating that there was a 20% reduction in crime within the last two years within the Vale. He reassured those present that Police Community Support Officers had been appointed; 12 in total, 3 for Penarth, 6 for Barry and 3 for the Rural Vale.

<p>2. Out of hours primary care service. In my opinion primary care for the Western Vale at the Barry Hospital was an unreasonable expectation for the Western Vale.</p>	<p>2. The Chairman of the Local Health Board responded. The reason for the change in service provision had been a resource issue and that the Local Health Board had to provide a reliable service on less resources. However, he stated that in his opinion the furthest end of the Western Vale could receive a service from the Princess of Wales Hospital.</p>
<p>Llantwit Major Chamber of Trade and Town Councillor -</p> <p>1. Is it true that the one-way system in Llantwit Major may be reversed?</p> <p>2. Would refurbishment take place of the other end of the town since the system had been approved.</p>	<p>1. The Leader responded by stating that no objections had been received to the one-way system and once the current system had been in place for the trial period, it would be finally adopted if there were no objections.</p> <p>2. In relation to the refurbishment, this would be looked at once agreement had been reached on the one way system if it was identified as a permanent fixture.</p>
<p>A local resident - Why can't the Council put up advertisements and send leaflets to people within the Vale regarding no dogs being allowed in play areas?</p>	<p>The Leader responded by stating that this had to be a partnership between local people and the Council. The Council had arranged for dog fouling bags to be distributed to homes in the Vale. The Council had also appointed an Enforcement Officer in relation to these issues, but in his opinion and also the Cabinet Member's opinion, people within the Vale must understand the responsibility they have as dog owners and that whenever they walk their dog they must be responsible for collecting/disposing of the faeces that remain. Yes, the Authority has a responsibility to educate people about the dangers and issues that can arise from dog fouling and that no dogs should be allowed on play areas. It should also be the responsibility of</p>

	the local people themselves that they don't use these facilities for their dogs.
--	--

The Leader concluded the Debate by thanking everyone for attending and for taking an interest in the displays of what the Council had to offer. He also thanked the Council's "Partners" for attending, particularly Superintendent Josh Jones who had made a valuable contribution to the debate. The Council had appreciated the time and trouble that people had taken to attend the event and that the Council was extremely delighted with the response by people. He hoped that all present had enjoyed the Debate and the question and answer session and that the areas where questions could not be answered, the person would receive a response from the relevant Cabinet Member concerned with the issue. He indicated that the purpose of holding Debates was to hear what people had to say and for the Council to identify the issues of most common concern for local residents. The Council was doing its utmost to ensure that improvement took place and as a result of the Debate, would have a very good idea of the key areas that local residents would wish addressed. For the future, he thought that State of the Area Debates could concentrate on improvements that had been made so that when people came to future meetings they could look at the questions that had been raised at previous debates and how the Authority had improved them for the future.

In closing, he thanked all involved for the arrangements for all three Debates that had taken place and thanked all members of the public for attending and making the Debates a success.