

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (COMMUNITY WELLBEING AND SAFETY)

MINUTES of a meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2006.

Present: Councillor Mrs. M.E.J. Birch (Chairman); Councillor R.F. Curtis (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. J.E. Charles, P. Church, J. Clifford, S.C. Egan, C.L. Osborne, Mrs. A.J. Preston, Mrs. M. Randall, A.J. Readman, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe, K.R. Stockdale, Mrs. M.R. Wilkinson and C.J. Williams.

Also present: Councillors Mrs. V.M. Hartrey, G.C. Kemp and J.W. Thomas.

### 546 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -

These were received from Councillors R.J. Bertin, Ms. R.M. Birch and W.C. Vaughan.

### 547 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on

- 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2006 be approved as a correct record subject to it being noted that the Director informed Committee that in relation to the questions detailed in Minute No. 449, recent reports to committee had addressed some of the questions but formal responses would be forwarded to all Members as soon as possible.
- 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2006 be approved as a correct record.

### 548 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

No declarations were received.

### 549 REPORT OF HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE - 26<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2006 -

The following report of a meeting of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 was received :-

Present: Councillor R.F. Curtis (Chairman), Councillor S.C. Egan (Vice-Chairman); Councillors P. Church, J. Clifford, A.J. Readman, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe and K.R. Stockdale.

Non-Voting Co-Opted Members - Mr. Lixton (Shakespeare Residents Association).

Also present: Councillor J.W. Thomas.

(a) Apologies for Absence -

*These were received from Councillors Mrs M.E.J. Birch and Mrs. A.J. Preston.*

(b) Minutes -

*RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meetings of the Housing Sub-Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2006 and 4<sup>th</sup> September, 2006 be approved as correct records.*

(c) Declarations of Interest -

*No declarations were received.*

(d) The Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Conditions Survey (DCS) -

*Support was sought for the proposed Private Sector House Conditions Survey 2007.*

*Section 3 of the Housing Act 2004 required local housing authorities to keep the house conditions in their area under review with a view to identifying any action that may need to be taken under the provisions of the Act.*

*The previous Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Conditions Survey had been carried out, due to financial constraints, over two consecutive financial years from 2001 - 2002 to 2002 - 2003.*

*The previous survey had been carried out following guidance issued by the National Assembly for Wales and applied to the then statutory standard in relation to housing conditions as prescribed in the Housing Act 1985 i.e. the "fitness standard".*

*The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2005 - 2008 stated that the policy was supported by an evidence base that demonstrated the demand for assistance, recognised the needs of an applicant and was influenced by the general condition of the Vale's housing stock.*

*It was therefore, essential that the information about the housing stock be regularly reviewed and updated in order that the priorities for assistance and area-based action remained valid and relative.*

*The targeting of scarce resources and the decisions to intervene in an area needed to be informed by the condition of the housing stock and up to date information was fundamental to ensuring the effectiveness of the Council's policy.*

*The 2007 survey programme would be designed to meet the following broad objectives:*

(a) to measure the current conditions of private sector housing as an up to date and objective guide to housing development in the Vale of Glamorgan over the next five years

(b) to measure changes in housing condition since the last survey conducted in 2001 - 2002

(c) to measure and compare housing conditions for sub-planning areas within the Vale, to enable objective decisions to be made on resource allocation based on identified need

(d) to compare local housing conditions with national and regional findings from the Welsh House Conditions Survey programme.

Having considered the report, it was

**RECOMMENDED -**

(1) T H A T Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety) be requested to support a bid for capital funding to be submitted in the sum of £80,000 for the 2007 - 2008 financial year to fund a full Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Conditions Survey in 2007.

(2) T H A T, notwithstanding the above recommendation, officers investigate the possibility of joint working with other local authorities regarding the production of the Private Sector House Condition Survey.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To include Housing Sub-Committees support in the Cabinet report seeking funding for a full Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Condition Survey in 2007.

(2) To attempt to reduce the cost of the production of the Private Sector House Conditions Survey.

(e) Section 180, Housing Act 1996 Voluntary Sector Funding Proposals (DCS) -

Support was sought for the allocation of Section 180 funding to voluntary bodies during 2006/07.

The Homelessness Strategy and Plan was currently under review by Scrutiny Committee and the revised strategy would be reported to Cabinet in due course. It was therefore suggested that for this financial year, the priorities that Section 180 funding be used for remain as existing.

As part of the Homelessness Review undertaken by Scrutiny Committee, stakeholders and partner agencies were consulted as to the priorities for the

*Section 180 allocation and there were no objections to the previous years allocation remaining the same. It was proposed therefore, that the following organisations be funded:*

*Home Access Trust - Accommodation Finding and Bond Services. Money to be used to part-fund salary of the Bond Officer - £5,000.*

*Llamau Housing - JIGSO - Advice and assistance to single people aged 16 plus who are homeless/threatened with homelessness. Includes bond service, landlord/tenant support and general housing advice - £12,000.*

*Vale Furniture Grant Project - To provide grants to homeless people who cannot fund the purchase of furniture - £6,000.*

*The priorities to be supported by Section 180 funding, as determined by the local Homeless Strategy were:*

*Objective one: preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness occurring wherever possible, thereby reducing homelessness.*

*Objective two: ensuring the provision of effective homelessness and housing advice services.*

*Objective three: ensuring adequate supply of appropriate support and accommodation, both temporary and permanent.*

*Objective four: informing the public and involving users in developing and improving services.*

*National Rough Sleepers Count - the existing budget was £40,000. The funding above amounted to £23,000. There was therefore a surplus of £17,000.*

*It was proposed that this remaining £17,000 budget be utilised in part to meet the cost of the count. Any remaining budget monies to be carried forward to the next financial year, unless a suitable project could be identified in the interim.*

**RECOMMENDED -**

**(1) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety) be requested to agree -**

**(i) that the following Section 180 Funding allocations be recommended to Cabinet:**

*Home Access Trust - Accommodation Funding and Bond Board Services. Money to be used to part fund salary of the Bond Officer - £5,000*

*Llamau Housing - JIGSO - Advice and assistance to single people aged 16 plus who are homeless/threatened with homelessness, to*

*include bond service, landlord/tenant support and generalist housing advice - £12,000.*

*Vale Furniture Grant Project - to provide grants to homeless people who cannot fund the purchase of furniture - £6,000.*

*(2) T H A T the Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety, be authorised to reallocate the balance of £17,000 to fund the Rough Sleeper Count and any balance of the fund carried forward to 2007/08 unless a suitable project can be identified in the interim.*

*Reasons for recommendations*

*(1) To allocate funding.*

*(2) To allocate funding or ensure the availability of resources.*

*(f) Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006 (DCS) -*

*Members were informed of the new Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006 which was being introduced in stages, and which came into effect on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2006 together with the implications in respect of future temporary accommodation provision.*

*The Order was divided into 3 parts:*

***Part 1***

*Came into effect on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2006.*

*It stipulates that when determining whether temporary accommodation provided under the homeless provisions is suitable for a person, the following matters must be taken into account.*

*The specific health needs of the person*

*The proximity and accessibility of social services*

*The proximity and accessibility of the support of family and other support services*

*or*

*Any disabled of the person.*

***Part 2***

*Comes into effect on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2007.*

*Bed and breakfast will not be considered suitable for families with children, pregnant women and a household that contains a minor (16 and 17 year olds). The exceptions being those described in table one*

**Table One**

**Exception for families with children, pregnant women and a household that contains a minor using Bed and Breakfast accommodation under part vii of the Housing Act 1996**

<b>Time Limit</b>	<b>Applies to:</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>B&amp;B Siz</b>
1-14 nights (2 weeks)	16/17 year olds Families with children Pregnant women	<b>Basic</b>	Any
15-42 nights (6 weeks)	As above	<b>Basic</b> Provided client offered suitable alternative accommodation within first 2 weeks	Small
		If alternative accommodation offered is shared it must be to the higher standard	
		<b>Higher</b>	Any size
43+ nights	As above	<b>Basic</b> Provide client offered suitable alternative accommodation within 2-6 weeks	Small
		Alt. A/C offered must be self contained for families and pregnant women	
		Must also have support for 16/17 yr olds	
		<b>Higher</b> Provided client offered suitable alternative accommodation within 2-6 weeks	Small
		Alt. A/C offered must be self contained for families and pregnant women	
		Must also have support for 16/17 yr olds	

**Part 3**

Comes into effect on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2008.

Bed and breakfast will not be considered suitable for all homeless priority needs groups, identified in part vii of the Housing Act 1996.

Shared accommodation will be expected to meet the higher standard of accommodation.

The exceptions being those described in table two.

**Table Two**

**Exceptions for all priority need groups using Bed and breakfast or shared accommodation under part vii of the Housing Act 1996**

<b>Time Limit</b>	<b>Applies to</b>	<b>Standard</b>
1-14 nights (2 weeks)	All priority need groups	As for 2007 (Table One) but now includes basic standard shared accommodation
15-42 nights (6 weeks)	As above	As for 2007 (Table One) but now includes basic standard shared accommodation owned by a LA/RSL
		Provided client offered suitable alternative accommodation within first 2 weeks
42 night	As above	As for 2007 (Table One)

*There is provision within the Order for clients to choose to remain in the B&B or the temporary accommodation providing the Local Authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation within the preceding period i.e. the first two weeks of within the 6-week period respectively.*

*Local Authority and RSL owned properties had been given an extension to postpone implementation of this requirement until 2011 if the property was in management on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2008. The Assembly's Homelessness Division expected Local Authorities to utilise the Social Housing Grant Programme to reconfigure existing provision to meet the standards.*

### **Current Provision**

*Hafan Treharne Hostel.*

*This 24 bed hostel was a purpose built family hostel that was reconfigured in 2003 to provide single room accommodation with shared kitchens and bathrooms. The hostel has over three floors, each divided into two wings. Each wing had four bedrooms. There was one bathroom and two toilets that were shared by the occupants in each of the four bedrooms. In addition there were three large rooms. The ground floor large room was used as a meeting room, the first floor as a sleeping room and the top floor as an office.*

*There was also an office and kitchen for staff on the ground floor.*

*Adjacent and attached to the hostel was a house that had been divided into two, two bedroom flats. These were used as temporary accommodation for families. Both the hostel and the flats were let on a licence. Clients receive support from Support Workers under the Vale's tenant support scheme or via the hostel support workers.*

**VATS Scheme**

*The Council have the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme, which can assist in the provision of temporary accommodation. A bond and the rent in advance can be provided to clients who meet the criteria to assist them in locating accommodation in the private sector. The tenant has an Assured Shorthold Tenancy.*

*The clients receive support from the staff in the homelessness prevention team. They are also eligible for support under the tenancy support scheme.*

**Non Secure Tenancies**

*In an effort to provide suitable accommodation for families a small number of Council and Housing Association properties are being used on a non secure basis as temporary accommodation. These are let on a licence.*

**Bed and Breakfast**

*There are two bed and breakfast establishments that are used and located in the Vale. The Authority also utilises a Bed and Breakfast establishment that is used outside of the Vale. These are let on a licence.*

*The clients receive support via the Authority's Hostel staff.*

**Women's Aid**

*Clients residing in Women's Aid accommodation, who apply as homeless, fall within the terms of party vii of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are subject to the requirements of this Order as the property they occupy is owned by United Welsh Housing Association.*

**Implications of the Suitability of Accommodation Order**

*The implication of the changes being implemented in 2006 is that there is a limited supply of suitable temporary accommodation that is located in all areas of the Vale. This is especially the case in both Penarth and the rural Vale. This will have the effect of placing people in temporary accommodation in the Barry area away from their family and support networks as well as having to change GPs and schools etc. which may place the authority in breach of the requirements of the Order.*

*There is no specific disabled temporary accommodation available to clients who are accommodated under the homelessness legislation.*

*In 2007, the implications relate to the use of B&B accommodation. An audit had been undertaken of the B&Bs and there were no B&B used by the Vale for homeless clients that met either the basic or higher standard of accommodation. However, currently one of the B&Bs would meet the standards if the owner or manager was considered a "fit and proper person" and if they accepted the management standards being implemented.*

*The Vale Assisted Tenancy Schemes (VATS) provided family accommodation in the private sector. Whilst this was excellent accommodation for the prevention of someone becoming homeless it had less value as providing temporary accommodation under the terms of the homeless legislation.*

*Landlords were reluctant to take on clients where it was known the tenant may vacate the accommodation within the 6 month Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The tenants, if they relinquished the tenancy, would be liable for the whole 6 months rent. The local authority may lose the bond in compensation of the client leaving early. Landlords had been reluctant to take up the offer of the Vale securing other tenants to replace the outgoing tenant. They would prefer the guaranteed 6 month tenancy.*

*In 2008, (2011 for Local Authority and RSL owned) all shared temporary accommodation will have to meet the higher standard. Hafan Treharne hostel provided shared accommodation and would meet the required standard for shared accommodation stipulated in the Order, if it restricts the residents to single people or the number of residents sharing a kitchen and bathroom is restricted to the maximum stipulated in the Order.*

*An audit would have to be undertaken of the Women's Aid accommodation and discussions held with United Welsh over relevant alterations to the accommodation.*

*Part 2(1) para 6(2) of the Order stated that when providing accommodation to satisfy the requirement to move a person from a basic B&B to a higher standard, to satisfy the two week criteria, if the accommodation offered was shared, it must meet the higher standard.*

*The effect of this meant that any family, pregnant women or 16 & 17 year olds who were placed in basic B&B after 2007, could not then be moved to shared accommodation i.e. at Hafan Treharne Hostel, unless it met the higher standard. Hafan Treharne Hostel only met the higher standard if it is used for single people or the number of residents sharing a bathroom is restricted to the maximum stipulated in the Order. This may mean that if a family was placed in one of the wings of Hafan Treharne Hostel other rooms within the wing would have to remain vacant so that the maximum number using the kitchen and bathrooms were not exceeded.*

*Clients residing in Women's Aid accommodation who apply as homeless fall within the terms of Part vii of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore their accommodation would have to meet the higher standard or the client would have to leave the Women's Aid accommodation immediately they apply as homeless and be provided with suitable alternative accommodation.*

*There was a risk that there would be insufficient Social Housing Grant (SHG) available to undertake reconfiguration of existing accommodation, the budget was set by the Welsh Assembly Government and each of the 22 Local Authorities bid for resources.*

*Arising from discussions on the content of the report, Members expressed concern that Treharne Hostel was being used to accommodate children.*

*RECOMMENDED -*

- (1) T H A T the report and implications be noted.*
- (2) T H A T the Director of Community Services provide a further report to the Housing Sub-Committee outlining the options to increase the provision of temporary accommodation, with specific information to deal with the inappropriate use of Treharne Hostel.*

*Reasons for recommendations*

*(1) To inform Members of the Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006.*

*(2) To comply with the relevant parts of the Order.*

*(g) Review of Void Management/Letting Procedure - Initial Findings (DCS) -*

*Members were provided with feedback regarding the review of the void management/costings procedure.*

*The Council had commissioned Tribal/HCH to undertake a Housing Investment Review. This review had highlighted various issues including the need for the Council to examine the void management/lettings procedure.*

*Following discussions with Members, staff and tenants, a clear request for a review of the void management/lettings procedure had been established. The initial outcome of the review had indicated that a new void management/lettings procedure should be based around the following principles:*

- the void management/lettings allocation procedure should commence at the date of notice to terminate a tenancy*
- only key health and safety void repair work should be undertaken during the period of notice to terminate the tenancy*
- all other outstanding void repair work should be completed within 28 days of the start of the new tenancy*
- the void properties should be advertised and allocated through Homes4U during the notice of termination of the tenancy period*
- the use of security screens should end and alternative security measures should be introduced, including the installation of security/alarm systems in all void properties, this work should be done during the notice of termination of tenancy period*
- a targeted declaration scheme should be introduced for void properties providing that the proposed declaration scheme does not affect the viability of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.*

*It was*

*RECOMMENDED -*

- (1) T H A T the principles contained within the void management/lettings procedure review be approved.*
- (2) T H A T the Director of Community Services be requested to develop a more detailed proposal for consultation with tenants.*

*Reasons for recommendations*

- (1) To ensure that elected Members agree to the new proposals.*
- (2) To ensure that tenants understand the new proposals.*

*(h) Social Housing Grant Bid 2008/09 (DSC) -*

*Members were provided with an overview of the Social Housing Grant SHG bids to the Welsh Assembly Government for 2008/09.*

*Details of the Social Housing Grant bids which had been submitted to the Welsh Assembly Government for 2008/09 were given in Appendix 1 attached to the report.*

*RECOMMENDED - T H A T the 2008/09 Social Housing Grant bids to the Welsh Assembly Government be noted.*

*Reason for recommendation*

*To ensure elected Members are kept informed of the 2008/09 Social Housing Grant bids to the Welsh Assembly Government.*

*(i) Forward Work Programme (DLRS) -*

*The Sub-Committee considered a Forward Work Programme and timetable for the consideration of items.*

*RECOMMENDED -*

- (1) T H A T meetings of the Housing Sub-Committee be held on a monthly basis, to consider the Forward Work Programme, on the dates indicated below:*

*16<sup>th</sup> November, 2006  
18<sup>th</sup> January, 2007  
22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2007  
19<sup>th</sup> April, 2007.*

*With a date to be arranged some time during week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2007.*

(2) *T H A T the Sub-Committee's work programme comprise the following:*

*16<sup>th</sup> November, 2006*

- *Housing Investment*
- *Energy Policy*

*18<sup>th</sup> January, 2007*

- *Affordable Housing*
- *Homes4U Policy*
- *Homelessness Leasing*
- *Joint Schemes (Social Services)*

*Meeting to be held during week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2007*

- *Private Sector Property Appreciation Loans*
- *Homes4U Shop Front*
- *Penarth Central Renewal Area and Future of Area Renewal*
- *Void Presentation*

*22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2007*

- *Rent Setting/Service Charging*

*19<sup>th</sup> April, 2007*

- *Items to be determined.*

(j) *Item which the Chairman had decided was urgent -*

*RESOLVED - T H A T the following item which the Chairman had decided was urgent be considered.*

(k) *Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition -*

***Urgent by reason of the need to make a decision prior to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee***

*The Chairman referred to those attending the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition, to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007, as reported to the Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 and expressed disappointment that no Member of the Housing Sub-Committee had been nominated to attend.*

*RECOMMENDED - T H A T Cabinet be recommended to consider nominating a Member of the Housing Sub-Committee to attend the Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007.*

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**The Scrutiny Committee having considered the above report,**

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the recommendations contained in the report be endorsed and the following be referred to Cabinet:

(d) Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Conditions Survey -

(1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to support a bid for capital funding to be submitted in the sum of £80,000 for the 2007 - 2008 financial year to fund a full Vale of Glamorgan Private Sector House Conditions Survey in 2007.

(2) T H A T notwithstanding the above recommendation, officers investigate the possibility of joint working with other local authorities regarding the production of the Private Sector House Condition Survey.

(e) Section 180 Housing Act 1996 Voluntary Sector Funding Proposals -

(1) T H A T Cabinet be requested to agree the following Section 180 funding allocations

- Home Access Trust - Accommodation Funding and Bond Board Services. Money to used to part fund salary of the Bond Officer - £5,000.
- Llamau Housing - JIGSO - Advice and assistance to single people aged 16 plus who are homeless/threatened with homelessness to include bond services, landlord/tenant support and generalist housing advice - £12,000.
- Vale Furniture Grant Project - to provide grants to homeless people who cannot fund the purchase of furniture - £6,000.

(2) T H A T the Director of Community Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety be authorised to reallocate the balance of £17,000 to fund the Rough Sleeper Count and any balance of the fund carried forward to 2007/08 unless a suitable project could be identified in the interim.

(k) Chartered Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007 -

T H A T Cabinet be recommended to consider nominating a member of the Housing Sub-Committee to attend the Institute of Housing Conference and Exhibition to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2007.

550 QUALITY AND PROVISION OF BUS SHELTERS (DEER) -

The Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) had on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 received a request for consideration of matter in order to examine the quality of Council owned bus shelters to discuss ways of improving them and to evaluate existing provision and determine whether that was adequate and subsequently made the following recommendations:-

(1) T H A T the report be referred to the Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety) and the Community Safety Partnership for information.

(2) T H A T measures be immediately put in place to collect statistics in respect of incidents of vandalism (identifying bus shelters specifically) and associated costs and that a report on the same be made to this Committee in six months.

The report before Committee noted that the Council currently had 186 bus shelters located on bus routes across the Vale of Glamorgan and another 35 were maintained and owned by Adshel. Many of the shelters had been inherited from the former highway authorities in 1996 and were in varying condition. An allocation of £36,532 was allocated within the Highway Maintenance budget for repairs to bus shelters which was used for repairs, maintenance and new provision although that provision generally referred to the replacement of existing shelters. It was accepted it was generally very difficult to find suitable locations for new bus shelters given that bus users wanted bus shelters to be provided but not directly outside their own properties.

It was also recognised that the use of shelters as a meeting point for youths which could cause annoyance to neighbours was prevalent and liaison with the police was regularly carried out. No incidents of youth annoyance had recently been reported to the Department although Members themselves were aware that problems were occurring within the community. Members welcomed the report and queried the cost of bus shelters and were advised of the following:

- Flagpole bus-stop - £100
- basic shelter - £2,000
- new style bus shelter to be placed in Holton Road to include seating, lights etc., - £10,000 - the figure included installation costs. The more facilities that were placed in bus shelters the more expensive they were.

As a result of the above it was

#### RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T the report be referred to the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) for consideration, in light of the youth provision report that they had recently received and the fact that the Vale of Glamorgan was below the Welsh average for funding per person within the Youth Service.

(2) T H A T recommendation (2) of the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) as above be supported and that a further report be also presented to this Committee in relation to the matter.

#### 551 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2007/08 (DFICTP) -

The initial revenue budget proposals for 2007/08 for the services which formed part of the Scrutiny Committee's remit were submitted for consultation. Committee was informed that the Council's budget was determined largely by the Revenue Support Grant settlement set by the Welsh Assembly

Government. A provisional settlement had been announced on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 with details of the final settlement expected in late November/early December. The Council was required, under statute to fix the level of Council Tax for 2007/08 by 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2007 and in order to do so, would have to agree a balanced revenue budget by the same date. Committee was advised that to be in a position to meet the statutory deadlines and the requirements for consultation as set out in the Council's Constitution much of the work on quantifying the resource requirements of individual services would need to be carried out before the final RSG settlement was notified to the Council. The Council had provisionally been advised that for 2007/08 it would receive from WAG, RSG of £107,041,000 and Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) of £29,117,000. The sums together constituted the Council's aggregate external finance and represented an increase of 5.2% over that which had been received for 2006/07 and it was net of an assumed 1% efficiency saving. The provisional settlement had also included additional resources for new responsibilities. Those specifically identified for the Vale of Glamorgan Council were set out as follows:

<b>Additional Resources 2007/08</b>	<b>£000</b>
Adults - Social Services	313
Children - Social Services	198
<b>Sub-Total - Social Care System</b>	<b>511</b>
Special Educational Needs	256
Landfill Tax	123

The Welsh Assembly Government had announced that the Council would provisionally continue to receive a Deprivation Grant of £167,000 and a Performance Grant of £1,239,000. However, it was noted that these were both unhypothecated grants in that they were not earmarked for particular services. Confirmation of the continuation and/or amounts receivable in the form of other specific and special grants e.g. the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) Grant were yet to be received.

Committee was further advised that the overspend of £1,481,000 on Children's Services was primarily due to the cost of child placements with a further £665,00 expenditure in this area as a result of a lower than anticipated available balance on the Social Services reserves. Community Care and Health were also projecting an overspend of £2,846,000, a significant proportion of which was reported as due to the number and cost of care packages. In respect of the adverse variance of £130,000 for catering this was reported as mainly due to a reduction in the number of meals being provided and increased costs in meeting the requirements on nutritional standards. An underspend for Private Sector Housing/Community Safety of £118,000 was reported as mainly attributable to an increase in subsidy income and savings on staff salaries. The report highlighted that every effort should be made by the Directorate to reduce the deficit and any remaining balance would need to be refunded from reserves. It was further noted that £2,250,000 had already been required to be met from reserves to balance the Council's 2006/07 overall budget.

At its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2006, Cabinet had approved the budget strategy and timetables for 2007/08 as part of the 2006/07 to 2009/10 Medium Term Financial Plan (Minute No. C2575). A summary of the overall base budget for 2007/08 was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and inflation amounts of £1.3 million of which £760,000 related to pay awards and £543,000 for general price increases were noted.

Attached at Appendix 2, to the report, was a list of 2007/08 cost pressures as identified by the service areas. These included costs that related to Social Services that were a continuation of the level of overspending in 2006/07. No reduction of costs had been taken into account to date which may arise from the Social Services Budget Action Plan. Cost pressures for the Scrutiny Committee service areas amounted to £9.6 million for which it was advised some would need to be met from within existing estimates. These would include the cost of redundancies which may be incurred in order to maintain the budget within the resources available and it was reported again that these costs could be significant.

The budget was therefore presented to the Committee for consultation. Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee was the lead Scrutiny Committee and would consider both the initial revenue budget proposals and any comments that Scrutiny Committees made no later than 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2006. The Cabinet Budget Working Group would also hold a series of meetings in December and January with the relevant Cabinet Members and officers to consider the budget proposals, recommendations would then be submitted in order that the Cabinet may make its final budget proposals no later than 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2007. Cabinet's final budget proposals would then be considered at a special meeting of Council to be held by 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2007.

The report further highlighted the concern in relation to the continued level of overspending by Social Services and the cost pressures identified for 2007/08 had assumed that the overspend had not been addressed. It was highlighted that it was not financially prudent to fund the current expenditure from reserves except for a very limited time whilst the recovery plan was actioned to bring expenditure down. As had previously been reported the reserves were currently under pressure and consequently the Council was faced with two options:

- The first being to reduce the Social Services overspending and
- the second being to increase the services base budget which could only be achieved by transferring resources from other services with a consequent impact on that service area or by increasing the level of Council Tax to generate additional resources.

It was reported that the Council could adopt a mix of the two options however, it was absolutely essential that the underlying causes for the Social Services overspending were identified and resolved. If this did not happen overspending could continue and threaten not just the financial stability of the Council but the ability to deliver other statutory services.

The table below provided Members with the information in respect of the resources that had been applied in previous years to support both Children and Family Services and Community Care and Health over and above the allocated base budgets.

<b><u>SOCIAL SERVICES - USE OF RESERVES</u></b> <b><u>2003/04 to 2006/07</u></b>	<b>2006/07</b> <b>£'000</b>	<b>2005/06</b> <b>£'000</b>	<b>2004/05</b> <b>£'000</b>	<b>2003/04</b> <b>£'000</b>
Amended Original Budget	38,673	33,870	31,549	31,262
Actual (Projected Outturn 06/07)	43,655	39,062	25,057	33,489
<b>Expenditure in excess of Base Budget</b>	<b>4,982</b>	<b>5,192</b>	<b>3,508</b>	<b>2,227</b>

Members agreed that a “root and branch review” of Social Services was required and that statutory obligations must be maintained. In relation to efficiency savings the officers present advised that all Departments had been requested to make 1% efficiency savings but that it was for Members to consider the allocation of resources and prioritise accordingly. In respect of “Making the Connections” the officer advised that various Departments of the Council were working closely in dealing with this item particularly in procurement where they were working with other local authorities for joint working arrangements to be established.

Members questioned the progress that had been made to date by the Chief Executive in addressing the overspend of Social Services. The Director of Community Services advised that the Chief Executive was in the process of working with the SOLACE consultant and that workshops had been arranged with officers within the Social Services Department which were due to commence by the end of the week. Members also requested a list of consultants used by the Social Services Department and the costs incurred by over the last year which the Director replied he would forward to all Members of the Committee and which would be available for the Scrutiny Committee Corporate Resources Task and Finish Group on the use of consultants throughout the Council.

In relation to foster carers Members were advised that a successful campaign had been undertaken during the summer months although as there was a prescribed process it could take a considerable amount of time to come to fruition.

In respect of the sale of assets, Members also raised concerns in relation to the fact that once assets were sold there would be nothing left to consider.

Reference was made to paragraph 11 of the report which referred to grants for projects and stated that before any project or initiative was to be met either wholly or partly by way of a grant in order to proceed an exit strategy had to be approved. Members queried if exits strategies were in place for all grant

funded projects and the Director responded by advising that there was work that was being undertaken to ensure that a number of exits strategies were in place. However he reported that there was currently no flexibility in the budget to map out exit strategies for all organisations.

In consideration of the recommendations in the report the Scrutiny Committee

**RECOMMENDED - T H A T** it was difficult to provide any substantiated comments since the outcome of the Social Services Action Plan was not known and that the minutes of the debate at Committee should be forwarded to Corporate Resources and Cabinet for their consideration.

## 552 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2007/08 (DFICTP) -

The report was submitted for consultation on the initial capital proposals for 2007/08 and Committee was advised of the progress on the 2006/07 capital programme for the period ended 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2006 (as detailed at Appendix A to the report). In respect of the capital programme for 2007/08 on 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 the Welsh Assembly Government announced the provision 2007/08 General Capital Funding. The provisional allocation for 2007/08 was £8,175,000 which was a £297,000 increase over the current year. The final settlement was expected to be announced in December 2006.

The Major Repairs Allowance which was the grant that provided capital funding to the Housing Revenue Account had not yet been announced by WAG. On 6<sup>th</sup> September, 2006, Cabinet, under Minute No. C2615 approved the use of the 2007/08 MRA for schemes totalling £850,000. Any further proposals for 2007/08 HRA capital programme would be reported at a later date. It was highlighted that at the year end any unspent MRA could be carried forward into the new year subject to approval from the Welsh Assembly Government. To date, at the end of 2005/06 a grant of £2.8 million remained unspent and approval to carry forward this balance had not yet been received but Members would be advised of the outcome via future reports.

Appendix B to the report detailed the indicative 2007/08 Community Wellbeing and Safety capital programme and an indicative asset renewal budget of £150,000 had been included for Social Services which constituted an unearmarked provision. In addition to the capital bids that were shown in Appendix B and Appendix C to the report also included capital bids received but had not been put forward for inclusion in the 2007/08 programme. The Corporate Asset Management Group had prioritised schemes that had fallen within their remit and the method of prioritisation was detailed in the authorities Capital Investment Strategy.

<b>Priority Level</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
1	Health and Safety Legislation
2	Other Legislation/Statutory requirement
3	Sufficiency; Corporate Plan; Economic Sense
4	Condition; Suitability

5	Welsh Assembly Government objectives
6	Low Priority

However, due to the shortage of capital funding only Priority 1 and 2 schemes had been included in the indicative capital programme for 2007/08. The bids were presented to Scrutiny Committee for consultation and comments were requested to be forwarded to Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Committee who would then report to Cabinet.

Members raised concern as to the “build up” of the MRA which remained unspent. They were concerned that the Welsh Assembly Government may not agree to carry forward the balance and that many residents within the Vale of Glamorgan were currently frustrated in that their homes were not being kept up to standard. Although they were advised that there was a lack of staff provision to carry out some of the schemes, Members considered that the increase in the underspend was a matter for concern and that it was too high a risk that the Council was considering taking. Members also raised concerns in relation to the Harbour View project and the security costs that were required at the site. The loss of revenue in respect of rent, and the costs of securing the site were in their view significant and the Director was requested to provide a detailed breakdown of the costs to date, for all Members.

Members concerns in respect of this matter and in relation to accommodation at Bryneithen which were of a Part II nature were agreed to be considered at a later stage in the agenda.

In respect of Appendix B to the report and the reference made to the adult respite care/EMI beds provision of £500,000 Members were advised that a feasibility study was being undertaken in association with the Local Health Board and Cardiff and the Vale Trust in respect of the future use of EMI services. Members were also advised that there was a growing demand for EMI services and support for respite care provision for families responsible for clients with EMI needs and a report would be presented to Members in due course on the matter.

Reference was also made to a Telecare strategy and Members were advised that a report would be presented early in the new year which would advise if the Social Services Department had been successful in a bid to WAG for a grant.

#### RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the information as requested above from the Director of Community Services be forwarded to all Members as soon as possible.
- (2) T H A T the Committee expresses its concerns at the level of MRA grant which remained unspent and believed the underlying problems were the staffing levels in the Housing Department.

- (3) T H A T a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee to identify how the Department/Council proposed to spend the MRA.
- (4) T H A T the recommendations and the details of the discussions by the Committee be forwarded to the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) for consideration and to Cabinet.

**553 INITIAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET PROPOSALS  
2007/2008 AND REVISED BUDGET 2006/2007 (DCS AND DFICTP) -**

The initial Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for 2007/2008 were submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for consultation. Committee was reminded that each local housing authority was required by Section 74 of the 1989 Local Government and Housing Act to keep a Housing Revenue Account. Section 76 of the Act required local authorities to set a budget for their Housing Revenue Account (HRA) on an annual basis and the budget had to be set in order that the Housing Revenue Account would not be in deficit at the year end. The level of rent increase was based on the Subsidy Determination issued by WAG, which was not due for release until January 2007 although it was reported that a provisional figure were due during December 2006. Committee was advised that as the increase was normally based on the retail price index plus 1% the draft budget included an estimated rent increase of 4.6%. Consultants had also completed a review of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Council's Housing Stock Options. One of the recommendations that was made was for a review of the charging basis for Council tenant rents which new consultants had already begun work on but it was not anticipated at this stage that any changes would be made in April, 2007.

Set out below was a table that compared the original budget with the proposed revised estimate:

	<b>2006/07 Original Budget</b>	<b>2006/07 Proposed Revised Estimate</b>	<b>Variance (+) Favourable (-) Adverse</b>
	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>	<b>£'000</b>
<b>Housing Revenue Account</b>	(127)	(7)	-120

It was noted that the net increase of £127,000 in the budget was due to several reasons, an increase in security measures at High View at a cost of around £80,000 and electricity and gas prices had also risen by approximately £55,000 on sheltered properties and communal lighting during the year. General efficiency savings accounted for any reductions in the budget. The proposed 2007/08 budget was set out at Appendix A and Committee was advised that the increase suggested for rent and other services would be subject to a future report as soon as the information was available from WAG.

Members of the Committee highlighted the £80,000 that was being used for security at Harbour View and considered that it was not "fair" for this sum to be paid entirely from the Housing Revenue Account as the money should be better utilised by being redirected for Council tenant accommodation throughout the Vale. They also considered that the Security costs charged to the HRA account for Harbour View be apportioned on the same basis as the eventual distribution of capital receipts between the HRA and General Fund. Members considered that the amount of money that was being spent on security was excessive and reaffirmed their request for detailed information in respect of this issue.

#### RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the views of Committee as above in respect of the Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for 2007/2008 and revised budget 2006/2007 be forwarded to Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) and Cabinet.
- (2) T H A T a future report in respect of the increase suggested for rents and other services, as soon as the information was available from the Welsh Assembly Government, be reported to this Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) T H A T the Security costs charged to the HRA account for Harbour View be apportioned on the same basis as the eventual distribution of capital receipts between the HRA and General Fund.

#### 554 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC -

RESOLVED - T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

As a result of discussions at the Scrutiny Committee Members requested information from the Director of Community Services in respect of matters that were Part II in nature (Exempt Information paragraphs 15 and 21)

1. The cost to the local authority of each bed at Bryneithin.

The officer advised they could not confirm at the meeting the exact figures but advised that a reduction in the number of beds at Bryneithin had to be made in view of the SSiW's amendment to their minimum standards. The SSiW minimum standard requirements advised that shared rooms were no longer to be used and as a result this had had a knock on effect for the local authority. The officer further highlighted that in respect of EMI needs the level of care and as such staffing requirements was also higher. Members were however advised that private sector homes would also be required to meet the standards.

2. Harbour View/High View - Members were advised of the current position in relation to the tenants at the property and that it was likely that a planning application for the site would be made in early 2007.