



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

ANNUAL REPORT

2004 - 2005

Democratic Services
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Vale of Glamorgan Council Scrutiny Committees

Annual Report 2004 - 2005



Chairmens' Foreword

The Council's Constitution provides that an Annual Report on the work and future work of Scrutiny Committees should be presented to the Council.

Attached are the Annual Reports of the four Scrutiny Committees which highlight the work of the Committees for 2004/2005.

We have endeavoured to ensure that Scrutiny continues to make a contribution to the service provisions of the Council by:

- Ensuring the people of the Vale of Glamorgan are central to our agenda;
- Supporting officers of the Council in the delivery of Service Plan objectives and monitoring their progress and performance;
- Ensuring that all Stakeholders have an opportunity to participate in the work of the Committee;
- Increasing the awareness of Committee Members for all service areas;
- Continuing to influence the decision-making process.

Therefore, we remain optimistic and stand by our achievements that scrutiny does, and will continue to, make a valuable contribution to the Council's performance and the delivery of service to the residents of the Vale of Glamorgan.

Chairman of Community Wellbeing & Safety
Councillor Mrs. M.E.J. Birch

Chairman of Corporate Resources
Councillor C.J. Williams



Chairman of Economy & Environment
Councillor N.P. Hodges

Chairman of Lifelong Learning
Councillor C.P. Franks



SCRUTINY COMMITTEES - ANNUAL REPORTS
JUNE 2004 – APRIL 2005

Introduction

The following Report has been produced in accordance with Section 6.03(d) of Article 6 of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution which states that "Scrutiny Committees must report annually to Full Council on their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate."

Background

The main role of Scrutiny Committees is to help improve the Council's performance through monitoring and review and to look at the Cabinet decisions and to help in the development of emerging policies and monitoring performance of the existing policies / strategies and services of the Council to ensure that they remain relevant and meet the changing needs of the community of the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Scrutiny process provides opportunities for non-Executive Members of the Council to examine the services provided, and to ask questions on how decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can or should be put in place and to make recommendations.

The Scrutiny process encourages the Council to measure its own performance and regularly report in public on how well it is meeting its promises. It ensures openness and accountability about the way decisions are made and enables Scrutiny Committees to hold the Executive to account.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Council is how to generate more interest among the public, press and its partners by demonstrating that Scrutiny can make a difference. To this end, a cross-party working group with the involvement of the Chief Executive and other officers have met during the last year to address recommendations of the ACiW Report on the Council's current arrangements relating to Democratic Renewal. A range of improvements to make the Scrutiny function more effective have been developed with in principle cross-party support and a report finalising arrangements will be submitted to the Annual Meeting of Council. However, it is important to note that the ACiW will be returning to the Council in late 2005 to assess the performance of the Council's revised Scrutiny arrangements.

Scrutiny Committees are appointed to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Council has appointed Four Scrutiny Committees with the following terms of reference:-

Scrutiny Committee	Scope
Community Wellbeing and Safety	Housing Community Safety Social Services
Corporate Resources	Corporate Policy and Communications Finance, ICT and Property Legal and Regulatory

	Human Resources Key Projects, including Surplus Land and Property, Capital Schemes and Revenue Proposals over £50,000
Economy and Environment	Economic Development, Leisure and Tourism Services Visible Services (Waste Management and Cleansing, Highway Maintenance, Engineering Design and Procurement, Parks and Ground Maintenance) Public Works and Highways Planning and Transportation Building and Visible Services
Lifelong Learning	Schools (Pupil Support, School Improvement and School Support Post 16 Education and Training Libraries Community Education and Youth Service

Within their terms of reference, Scrutiny Committees: -

- review and / or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Councils functions but with the exception of any matter which is specifically identified in the terms of reference of any other Scrutiny Committees.
- make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions;
- consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants; and
- exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive

Total Number of Scrutiny Committee Meetings held between June 2004 – April 2005

Scrutiny Committee	Extraordinary	Scheduled	Workshops
Community Wellbeing and Safety	3	10	-
Corporate Resources	4	10	-
Economy and Environment	2	10	-
Lifelong Learning		10	-

Call In

One of the principal ways in which Scrutiny Committees can hold the Executive (Cabinet) to account is through the use of their role in the call in procedure.

Call in allows non-executive members of the Council to request that decisions taken by Cabinet are suspended to enable a further review.

The Audit Commission for Wales stated that the Council “has one of the most open and least constrained call in procedures in Wales. It has assigned all its Scrutiny Chairs to opposition groups. This approach supports the principle of open Scrutiny and is to be welcomed “

Call in statistics

June 2004 – April 2005

Scrutiny Committees	Community Wellbeing and Safety	Corporate Resources	Economy and Environment	Lifelong Learning
No of call ins received	0	1	5	0
Withdrawn		-	-	
Refused		-	-	
Approved for call in purposes		1	4	
Cabinet decisions endorsed by SC		1	1 + 1# = 2 (# call-in had been for the purposes of reviewing the processes which had resulted in the Cabinet decision, rather than the decision itself)	
Recommendations referred to Cabinet		-	1 + 1* = 2	
Cabinet Final Rejected Decisions Noted Endorsed		1	1 + 1* (Cabinet noted the call in relating to the composition of Advisory Committees but addressed the issue raised in the call-in to the satisfaction of the Scrutiny Committee later in the same meeting)	
Decisions Pending		-	1	
Referred to Full Council		-		

Recommendations referred to other Committees			1 (Scrutiny - CR)	
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Total number of Call ins Received - 6

Requests for Consideration of Matter

June 2004 – April 2005

* No means Number of

Scrutiny Committee	*No. of requests received	Requests withdrawn	Pending	No. of requests for further info.	No. of requests noted by Committee	No. of requests referred to Cabinet
Community Wellbeing and Safety	1					1 referred to Scrutiny E+E
Corporate Resources	1		1		1	
Economy and Environment	6			1	2	4
Lifelong Learning	1				1	

Total Number of Requests Received - 9

References from Cabinet to Scrutiny Committee (Consultation)

June 2004 - April 2005

* No means number of

Scrutiny Committee	* No. of references	No. Scrutiny Committee Noted / Endorsed	No. of Recs referred to other Committees or Council or for further reports	No. Recs referred to Cabinet	No. Recs Noted by Cabinet	No. of Recs accepted (a)/ rejected (r) by Cabinet
Community Wellbeing and Safety	6	6				
Corporate Resources	6	4	-	2	1	1 (r)
Economy and Environment	10	6	1 (CR & CWS)	3	1	2 (a)
Lifelong Learning	3	3				

Total Number of References Received - 25

References received from Scrutiny Committee to Scrutiny Committee

June 2004 - April 2005

Scrutiny Committee	* No. of references received	No. of Scrutiny Committee Noted / Endorsed	No. Recs referred to Cabinet	No. Recs Noted by Cabinet	No. of Recs accepted (a) / rejected (r) by Cabinet
Community Wellbeing and Safety	1	1			
Corporate Resources	8	7	1		1 (r)
Economy and Environment	0				
Lifelong Learning	0				

Total Number of References received - 9

References from Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet

June 2004 – April 2005

Scrutiny Committee	Total No. of References Made	No. of recs Noted by Cabinet	No. of recs accepted/ endorsed	No. of recs pending	No. rejected by Cabinet	No. partially agreed	Referred to other Committees / Working Groups
Community Wellbeing and Safety	4		1			3	
Corporate Resources	3	1		1		1	
Economy and Environment	10	1	3	5	3	2	2

Lifelong Learning	1			1			
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Total Number of References received - 18

The Constitution of the Council provides that Scrutiny Committees also determine a work programme for the Municipal Year.

The following pages identify the Four Scrutiny Committees of the Vale of Glamorgan, their membership, work programmes and achievements to date.

Scrutiny Committee Community Wellbeing and Safety

Membership

Councillor Mrs. M.E.J. Birch (Chairman); Councillor R.F. Curtis, (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Ms. M.E. Alexander, R.J. Bertin, Ms. R.M. Birch, 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, W.C. Vaughan and C.J. Williams.

Under the Council's Constitution each of the Scrutiny Committees is entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of people / organisations as non – voting co-optees to the Committees. The Scrutiny Committee Community Wellbeing and Safety has appointed the following organisational representatives: -

Shakespeare Residents Association
 Colcot Residents Association
 Gibbonsdown Residents Board
 Vale Housing and Homelessness Forum
 Vale Housing Federation
 Vale Council Residents Forum.

Forward Work Programme - October 2004

In October 2004 the Scrutiny Committee agreed a work programme for the Municipal year which identified the following topics :-

The Annual Budget
 Domestic abuse and its implications for the Vale of Glamorgan
 Foster Care Provision
 Services for Older people
 Crime reduction
 Performance Monitoring Reports
 Service Plans
 Monthly Revenue and Capital Monitoring.

Meetings

During the period the Committee held 13 meetings 10 of which were scheduled and 3 extraordinary to deal with extra items of business and items requested by the Chairman.

The Committee had planned to rotate venues throughout the Vale of Glamorgan during the municipal year but due to circumstances beyond its control was unable to accomplish this task. However, it is accepted they would continue to look to arrange to rotate venues for 2005 / /2006. The Committee would also endeavour to take the opportunity to consider themed agenda items pertinent to the Local area where the meeting would be due to take place.

Call – ins

No call – ins of Cabinet decisions were made by members of the Scrutiny Committee.

Requests for consideration of matter

One request for consideration was received in relation to the Physical Regeneration Fund the purpose of which was to apprise the committee on the process for identifying and assessing projects . The Committee considered that the Council should be committed to prioritising Communities First areas and requested that a further report on the Fund be presented to the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) who in turn endorsed the recommendations.

Work undertaken during the year

As a result of the above the work of the Committee during the year included: -

- Examining / monitoring Quarterly Service Performance
- Initial Revenue and Capital Budgets Proposals
- Re establishing the Housing Sub Committee
- Revenue and Capital financial monitoring
- Questioning outside organisations ie Local Health Board on service provision to people of the Vale of Glamorgan
- Monitoring Emergency pressures and Delayed Transfers of Care issues
- Monitoring progress and developments on the Council's Children's Placement Strategy
- Assessment of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry and implications for the Council in relation to child protection
- Crime and Disorder Strategy.
- Establishing the principle of preventative work being recognised as a priority in the budget process
- Pioneering work on the role and importance of Scrutiny in general.

Presentations

The Committee received presentations on the following subjects:

- Communities First activities / funding
- Performance Evaluation of Local Authority Services – by the Social Services Inspectorate for Wales
- The progress to date and challenges facing Mental Health Services
- Review of the Corporate Plan
- Child Protection issues in the Vale of Glamorgan
- Departmental Service Plans.

Throughout the year, Members requested additional information on various topics for example, the number of refuge spaces funded by the Council, the structure of the Vale of Glamorgan Safety Partnerships 2004 and child care information which was forwarded to Members for information purposes.

References to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee

Consultation

The Scrutiny Committee raised the issue and concern regarding being a more pro-active and effective consultation tool and that Cabinet be requested to report issues to the Scrutiny Committee prior to its decision-making. The Audit Commission in Wales had also noted this in its report on Democratic Renewal where it advised that pre Cabinet Scrutiny should be undertaken and protocols drawn up. The Cabinet agreed to the recommendation of the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee subject to the words “whenever necessary” being added.

Emergency Pressures Delayed Transfers of Care

The Scrutiny Committee had recommended that they investigate the feasibility of providing an intermediate service to assist people in the care process and that the means of providing such a service be funded from the Councils reserves. Cabinet resolved that a report be presented to its Cabinet Advisory Committee for Social Care and Health. (Min No 1814)

The Scrutiny Committee would also be investigating ways to provide such a service.

Workforce Development issues

The Scrutiny Committee had made a number of recommendations on this issue (Min NO 1620) and the Cabinet had accepted 3 out of the 5 put forward.

References from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee

A number of references were received from the Cabinet to Scrutiny in 2004/05, in particular Workforce Issues in Social Care, Housing Capital Programme - Allocation of Basic Credit Approvals / Housing Repairs and Major Repairs Allowance and Children's Placement Strategy, Development of Services to Women and Babies in the Vale.

References from Scrutiny Committee to Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) had referred the Leisure Membership Scheme, which allows a membership fee to be charged and provide people within the Vale of Glamorgan with the following entitlements:

- Reduced member rates on leisure services
- A membership card which would be accepted as a deposit on hire equipment
- Advanced bookings of six days
- Special promotions
- Savings on non member admission fees.

Re - appointment of Housing Sub-Committee

During the year the Housing Sub - Committee was re-appointed by the Scrutiny Committee with the terms of reference to consider all matters arising under the following issues and report on suggested changes and improvements to Council Policies to the Committee:

Terms of reference:

- Audit of housing need
- Housing options appraisal
- Void management
- Cyclical Maintenance Programme
- Methods of paying rents
- Community safety issues on housing estates
- Rolling programme of visits to housing estates
- Supporting people.

Membership of the Sub - Committee:

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

Also invited to attend as non-voting co-opted members, one representative of each of the following organisations:

Shakespeare Residents Association
Colcot Residents Association

Gibbonsdown Residents Board
Vale Council Residents Forum
Vale Housing and Homelessness Forum
Vale Housing Federation

Forward Work Programme:

A Forward Work Programme for the year was agreed by the Sub-Committee which included:

- An update on the benefits service
- Review of HOMES4U
- Private sector housing renewal – Houses in multiple occupation/Grants/Disabled facilities grants
- Homelessness
- Housing options appraisal

Meetings

The Sub-Committee met 4 times during the period and reported its findings / observations to the Scrutiny Committee. Tours of the Penarth Renewal Area and Council Housing sites also took place during the year.

Work undertaken during the year by the Sub - Committee

The Housing Sub Committee requested that a letter be written to the Welsh Assembly Government in relation to the rise in homelessness and lack of social housing available. They also requested that the Minister be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss issues of homelessness in the Vale but this invitation was subsequently declined.

In relation to Houses in Multiple Occupation the Scrutiny Committee had requested a further report on the Council's arrangements, which was presented to the Housing Sub - Committee. The Housing Sub - Committee after due consideration, subsequently recommended that an additional Environmental Health Officer be appointed to undertake a full programme of proactive inspections of high risk HMOs. The Cabinet was advised of this recommendation and subsequently agreed to support the appointment of an additional Environmental Health Officer.

In November 2004, the Housing Sub-Committee recommended to the Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety) that a report be made to Council proposing that a politically balanced means of considering the Housing Options Appraisal be established as it was considered that this would have significant implications for all Directorates of the Council. In order to afford every opportunity to fully scrutinise all relevant issues, the Council, in December, 2004, appointed a Housing Options Task and Finish Group.

The Committee received updates on its HOMES4U and it was noted that it had been identified as Good Practice throughout Wales and that it had been featured in the CIOH Good Practice on Lettings and Homelessness in June 2004.

Examples of Achievements during the Municipal Year

The above report highlights some achievements for the Scrutiny Committee during the Municipal Year, however, the Committee notes other significant achievements as below :-.

The appointment of an additional Environmental Health Officer for Houses in Multiple occupation will hopefully have a significant impact on the service and allow for inspections to take place that would otherwise have been unable to be undertaken.

The addition of reporting quarterly performance monitoring of services to the Scrutiny Committees has allowed Members to increase their knowledge in the specialist service areas and provide up to date information which officers and Members can work on to further improve service delivery and target the areas at most need.

The Scrutiny Committee whilst recognising the achievement of the Council in reaching certain Performance Indicators contained within the Policy Agreement with the WAG, noted with interest the phased introduction of new Performance Indicators (National Assembly Strategic Performance Indicators NASPIS) and Core Data Sets, commencing from the next financial year.

Regular requests for up to date information on monitoring Community Care budgetary pressures and Emergency pressures in delayed transfers of care have resulted in the Committee again highlighting areas for improvement and generated discussions to take place with partner agencies in respect of shared funding arrangements as indicated by the Welsh Assembly Guidance.

A one day seminar has thus been proposed by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on the 4th April 2005 whereby all parties / partner agencies would be invited to attend to discuss issues of mutual concern. It is anticipated that this seminar will occur in the Autumn.

Future Work Programme 2005 / 2006

The Scrutiny Committee intends to continue to strive for improvement of services and receive regular updates / monitoring reports in relation to service delivery and the budgets within the Committees remit in the forthcoming months.

At its meeting on the 4th April 2005 the following additions to the above were included as work programme items :-

- Bi-monthly updates on the Authority's Children's Placement Strategy
- Mental Health Services in the Vale of Glamorgan
- Early Years Nursery Provision –That the Committee was aware that the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) would be receiving reports on the provision of nursery education and if deemed necessary would request further research to be undertaken by the Improvement and Development Team. The Members of the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning) had expressed the view that should such reports and research be requested they would also need to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety).
- Emergency Pressures Delayed Transfers of Care updates
- Looked After Children issues –The item has also been included on the Work Programmes of the Scrutiny Committees (Corporate Resources) (re “costs to the Council”) and (Lifelong Learning) (re “improved life chances”) for an independent review by the Improvement and Development Team and the resultant report would be likely to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee (Community Wellbeing and Safety)

Mini-reviews of services, as part of the Committees work programme, have also been commissioned with the assistance of the Improvement and Development Team Officer and the Democratic Services Officer. The following reviews will therefore be undertaken during 2005 / 2006 :-

1. Substance misuse - a review to consider existing services aimed at preventing substance misuse amongst young people, identify gaps in service provision and to make recommendations aimed at reducing substance misuse within the community. Review to be undertaken from June to August 2005.
2. Domestic Violence - a review of domestic violence and the effects on the community and how the Council responds to it. Review to be undertaken from October to December 2005.
3. Homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan - a review of the effectiveness of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the impact on the community.

Review to be undertaken from December 2005 to February 2006.

The Committee also intends to visit the Hub Project at the Barry YMCA and hold a Days seminar in June / July to consider shared funding issues within Community Care and Children's Services in relation to Mental Health Services.

The Community Services Directorate will be working towards the Joint Review of Social Services which will be undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government in 2006 and regular updates on progress will be provided for all Members during the year. This will also take the format of workshops which will be undertaken to apprise Members of current issues and all Members of the Council will be invited to attend. The preparatory work for the Joint Review of Social Services will complement the work being undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee. The Scrutiny Committee

recognises the importance of the Joint Review of Social Services and will be looking to support the Council in this area accordingly.

Scrutiny Committee Corporate Resources

Membership

C.J. Williams (Chairman); N. Moore (Vice-Chairman); Ms. E. Burnett, Mrs. J.E. Charles, P. Church, Mrs. C.V.L. Clay, J. Clifford, A.D. Dobbinson, N.P. Hodges, G. John, Mrs. M. Kelly Owen, C.L. Osbourn, A.G. Powell, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe, B.I. Shaw, Mrs. M.R. Wilkinson and M.R. Wilson

Forward Work Programme of the Scrutiny Committee for 2004 / 2005

In October 2004 the Scrutiny Committee identified a number of issues for inclusion in their work programme and these related to the following:

- Review of the Council's Constitution
- Out of hours Emergency Service.
- Budget

Meetings

During 2004 / 2005 the Committee met 14 times. 10 of the meetings were scheduled and the remaining 4 had been extraordinary meetings.

Working undertaken during the year

The work of the Committee in the past year included Monitoring / Reviewing/ Assessing the following: -

Corporate Plan Review
Improvement Plan Review
Quarterly Revenue and Capital monitoring
Quarterly Performance Service monitoring
Trading Accounts monitoring (in particular, Grounds Maintenance)
Housing Investment Options Appraisal
Initial Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals
ICT Facilities for Members
Recommendations of the Democratic Renewal Working Group
Medium Term Financial Plan
Home to School Transport Policy and Associated Procedures
"One Vale" E-Government Programme Implementation Plan
Revenue and Capital Financial Monitoring

Presentations

The Committee received presentations on Departmental Service Plans and in relation to the Vale of Glamorgan E-Government Action Plan.

Examples of Achievements During the Municipal Year

(i) Out of Hours Emergency Services -

During the year the Committee has given consideration to the Council's existing service arrangements in relation to Out of Hours Emergencies. Progress has been made by the Committee in terms of verifying particular service arrangements/difficulties that currently exist within the Council's Environmental Health Division. Whilst the Scrutiny Committee recognises the potential for staffing/financial implications for the Council in providing a guaranteed response to such emergencies, the Committee to date has not made any specific recommendations to the Cabinet on this subject, pending a further report from the Director of Legal and Regulatory Services.

The Scrutiny Committee was also mindful that the Corporate Management Team had also commissioned a wider review of Out of Hours service provision across all Council services. This review is awaited.

(ii) Licensing Act 2003 -

The Scrutiny Committee gave consideration to Cabinet proposals in relation to staffing issues to allow the Council to implement the Licensing Reform arrangements. The Business Case for a revised staff structure including the financial implications for the Council was examined in detail. The Scrutiny Committee was satisfied with the arrangements put in place by the Cabinet to safeguard the Council's interests.

(iii) Quarterly Performance Monitoring - Democratic Services -

During the course of monitoring service performance in respect of the above service, the Committee raised a number of concerns relating to staffing arrangements, within the Electoral Registration/Member Services Section. The Scrutiny Committee requested the Cabinet to urgently review the staff structure to ensure that service demands/objectives were met.

The Cabinet subsequently noted the concerns of the Scrutiny Committee and asked the Chief Executive to submit a report setting out proposals in respect of the section. This report is awaited.

(iv) Initial Budget Proposals (Revenue and Capital)

The Scrutiny Committee gave careful and lengthy consideration to the service areas budgetary proposals which fell within the Committee's remit and also to the recommendations of the three other Scrutiny Committees in relation to the initial budgetary proposals (Revenue and Capital) which fell within their respective remits. The Committee acknowledged the difficulties facing officers given the objectives of a wider Base Budget Review undertaken by the Council since April, 2003 and the Corporate priority criteria for submitting bids in respect of Capital and Revenue programmes.

The Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendation of the three other Scrutiny Committees and also made specific recommendations in relation to bids and savings which fell within its own purview.

All of the recommendations from the four Scrutiny Committees on the initial capital and revenue budget proposals were subsequently referred to Cabinet for consideration, who in turn then referred these onto the Cabinet Budget Working Group for further consideration.

It is pleasing to note that the recommendations of all four Scrutiny Committees were in the main accepted by the Cabinet Budget Working Group.

Policy Agreement : Achievement of Targets

The Scrutiny Committee whilst recognising the achievement of the Council in reaching certain Performance Indicators contained within the Policy Agreement with the WAG. The Committee also noted with interest the phased introduction of new performance indicators (National Assembly Strategic Performance Indicators NASPIs) and Core Data Sets, commencing from the next financial year.

Requests for Consideration of Matter

Two requests for consideration were received. One from Councillor N.P. Hodges on 10th March, 2005, relating to delays in carrying out schemes identified in the Council's Capital Programme and the potential of the impact of the delays on the budget for 2005/06. This matter is pending consideration by the Committee.

The second request was received from Councillor A.G. Powell, relating to the Licensing Act 2003, in particular, the implications of the reforms for the Council.

References from Cabinet

A number of references were referred from the Cabinet to Scrutiny in 2004/2005, in particular the Initial Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals, Home to School Transport Policy and Procedures and Housing Investment Options Appraisal.

References from Scrutiny Committee to Scrutiny Committee

A total of eight references were received from the Council's three other Scrutiny Committees during the year and these are detailed as follows:

- Community Wellbeing and Safety (2) (Initial Revenue Budget Proposals and Initial Capital Budget Proposals)

- Economy and Environment (4) (Initial Revenue Budget Proposals, Initial Capital Budget Proposals, the Old Place, Llantwit Major and Leisure Membership Scheme)
- Lifelong Learning (2) (Initial Revenue Budget Proposals and Initial Capital Budget Proposals)

Future Work Programme 2005/2006

The work programme for 2005/2006 will be developed in line with the Cabinet Forward Work programme and will include issues identified by the Committee and the continuance of performance monitoring and consideration of future budgets.

In addition, the following matters will also form the work programme:

Draft Scope for Discussion

- **Corporate Projects Review**

To consider the impact of corporate projects across the Vale including how these have contributed to the regeneration of the Community.

Review to be undertaken from July to September 2005.

- **Job Evaluation**

A review of the effectiveness of the Job Evaluation process, how successful this has been implemented within the Council and the impact on staff.

- **Looked After Children**

A review of looked after children costs the Council, including the use of independent providers, and the links between Education, Social Services and Housing.

Review to be undertaken from January to March 2006.

Scrutiny Committee Economy and Environment

Membership:

Councillor N.P. Hodges (Chairman); Councillor S.T. Wiliam (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. E. Burnett, Mrs. J.E. Charles, P. Church, J. Clifford, Miss J. Cole, R.F. Curtis, N.J. Gibbs, Mrs. V.M. Hartrey, G. John, Mrs. M. Kelly Owen, Mrs. A.J. Moore, Mrs. A.J. Preston, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe, W.C. Vaughan and M.R. Wilson.

Forward Work Programme Of The Scrutiny Committee For 2004/05

In September, 2004, the Scrutiny Committee identified the following issues for inclusion in its Work Programme:

- Dyffryn House and Gardens
- Dealing with the Challenge of Traffic
- The Health Agenda from the Prospective of an Ageing Population
- Town Centre Improvement and Regeneration.

Meetings during 2004/05

The Committee met 12 times. 10 of the meetings were scheduled and the remaining 2 had been extraordinary meetings. 1 of these meetings was held at Dyffryn Gardens.

Work undertaken during the year

The work of the Committee in the past year included monitoring / reviewing / assessing the following:

- Corporate Plan Review
- Revenue and Capital Monitoring
- Quarterly Performance Service Monitoring
- Initial Revenue and Capital Budget proposals
- Vale of Glamorgan Unitary Development Plan and other planning/ development control related matters
- Proposed Post Office Closures
- Street Naming Policy
- Leisure Membership Scheme
- Charges for 2005/06
- Community Centres User Satisfaction Survey

and recommendations from the following Sub-Committees:

Improvement Review; Town Centre; and Traffic.

Presentations

The Committee received presentations from the DEER, his Heads of Service, and other officers in relation to, for example, Service Plans, Quarterly Performance Monitoring, Dealing with the Challenge of Traffic, and Town Centre Improvement and Regeneration.

The Head of Commercial Urban Area - Wales and the West, and the External Relations Manager, Post Office Limited had addressed the Committee in relation to proposed Post Office closures within Barry and Llandough; and the Stakeholder Liaison Manager (South), Arriva Trains Wales was to address the Committee on 26th April in response to a request for consideration relating to train services.

Examples of achievements during the municipal year

- (i) Raising awareness - having already received a comprehensive presentation on Service Overviews and the main issues for the next four years as a means of inducting, particularly the new members of, the Committee into the current work undertaken in the Directorate of Environmental and Economic Regeneration, the regular reporting of quarterly performance statistics has allowed members to increase their knowledge in the various specialist service areas as well as providing up-to-date information to enable both members and officers to identify those services / service delivery most in need of improvement.
- (ii) Initial Capital Programme Proposals 2005/06 - having considered the above, the Committee accepted the proposals as submitted subject to further consideration being given to the inclusion in that Capital Programme of the following:

VS2 Multi-use Games Area, Cadoxton - £10k.

ED2 Penarth Leisure Centre: CCTV - £30k.

VS13 Pedestrian Access: Harding Close, Llantwit Major - £40k.

(Members stressed the need for item VS13 above to be reassessed as a Priority 1 as opposed to Priority 6, having regard to the urgent need for a safe pedestrian access to be created at the site in view of a previous fatality in the area).

Following consideration by both the Scrutiny Committees (Corporate Resources) and the Budget Working Group, each of the above three matters were approved and have been included in the 2005/06 Capital Programme.

- (iii) Proposed Post Office Closures - following the presentation by representatives of Post Office Limited referred to above, the Committee had
- expressed concern at the proposed closures and the limited timetable for consultation;
 - sent a copy of the report of the DEER considered at that meeting to Post Office Limited; to the WAG; and to all relevant AMs and to the MPs for the VOG and Cardiff South and Penarth constituencies;
 - asked Post Office Limited to give consideration to the location of a branch Post Office at Llandough Hospital (as a means of addressing concerns relating to the proposed closure of the branch in Llandough);
 - asked Post Office Limited to give careful consideration to the quality of service, standards of accommodation and condition of those facilities located within franchised branch offices.

Post Office Limited had subsequently responded that whilst it had been decided to proceed with the permanent closure of the branches at Weston Hill and Llandough, the points raised in respect of the branch office at Vere Street were still under consideration. Post Office Limited had also agreed to invest £26k. in the Windsor Road branch to improve the environment and quality of the service at that site.

It should be noted that Post Office Limited has only recently decided to proceed with the closure of the Vere Street branch. The robust case put forward by the Scrutiny Committee will have contributed to the delay in that decision having been made.

- (iv) Establishment of the Town Centre and the Traffic Sub-Committees - both the above Sub-Committees had been established to facilitate a more focused and in-depth investigation of issues relating to Town Centre Improvement and Regeneration and Dealing with the Challenge of Traffic respectively. Whilst it may be premature to speak of “achievements”, the Sub-Committees have assisted in generating debate on valuable cross-cutting issues. The Town Centre Sub-Committee recently agreed that the SWOT analysis considered at its last meeting be forwarded to all Town Councils and Chambers of Trade as a means of engaging the same in considering some form of closer collaborative working in order, inter alia, to involve the local community directly in any improvement / regeneration proposals prior to such proposals being forwarded to the Cabinet. The Traffic Sub-Committee has already received various presentations in respect of options for improving public transport / facilities for pedestrians and cyclists; the Council Traffic Plan; and prioritisation of Traffic Management Schemes, as a means of increasing its knowledge base. The need to develop a regional strategy and to work with partners in both the private and public sectors had already been fully accepted by the Sub-Committee and a representative from the South East Wales Transport Alliance was to be invited to a subsequent meeting in order to inform the consideration of transportation issues within South East Wales.

Both the above Sub-Committees recognised the need to put forward to Cabinet realistic and achievable proposals which would be supported by the community. The correlation between Dealing with the Challenge of Traffic, Town Centre Improvement and Regeneration and the Health and Wellbeing of an Ageing Population has also been fully recognised. Consideration would be given, therefore, to the feasibility of bringing together within one strategy document proposals for improvement which would impact upon all three.

Site Visit

Members of the Committee undertook a tour of Dyffryn Gardens prior to the Committee meeting held in the marquee within the grounds. A site visit would be held to inspect the House during the Summer / early Autumn of 2005.

Requests for Call-In

The Committee had received five requests for call-in in respect of the following matters:

- Proposed Sale of Old Place, Castle Street, Llantwit Major to consider the principles relating to Cabinet - holding informal meetings from which non-Executive Members will be excluded; receiving additional information over and above the officer's report which non-Executive (including local Ward) Members would be excluded from sharing; and deliberating on matters in private prior to any decision being formally made.
- Development Works in Barry: Car Parking Issues - called-in to allow further consideration to be given to the resultant potential impact on local residents of those persons currently utilising the multi-storey car park parking in nearby residential streets to evade parking charges.
- Housing, Building Services and Community Safety Sub-Committee of Cabinet - Membership - Cabinet Minute C1677 had been called-in in order that consideration could be given to the anomalous position whereby a representative from the Independent Group had not been invited to attend meetings of the above Sub-Committee but had been invited to attend another Sub-Committee established by the Cabinet.
- Development of Block B, Alps Depot, Wenvoe - call-in in order to explore why it had been necessary to amend the original design after construction had begun, thus necessitating

remedial work to rectify the error, in order to ensure that such additional expense did not occur in future.

- St. Donats Arts Centre Board of Management - Membership: call-in to investigate why Councillor John Readman was no longer the Council representative given that he had served on the Board for the past six years with total commitment when other Council representatives had refused a seat.

Requests for consideration

The Committee had received six requests for consideration:

- Change of Street Naming Policy - further consideration requested of the Cabinet decision to amend the implementation process in respect of the Policy.
- The Planning System and Promotion of Recycling/Composting - to allow consideration of means of ensuring that developers supplied a compost bin to every newly built house with a garden within the Vale of Glamorgan, together with any other ways in which the Council could increase recycling facilities through planning legislation
- Building Site Monitoring - to allow consideration of issues relating to building site monitoring and an exploration of the practices that this Council and other authorities undertook to ensure that sites were run effectively
- Jenner Park: Barry Town Football Club - consideration of the issues relating to the current dispute between the Council and Barry Town Football Club.
- Sponsorship of Street Furniture - to investigate whether it would be possible to set up a scheme in which the public or local businesses could sponsor street furniture/equipment such as benches or children's play equipment in return for a brass plaque in order to help save money and encourage community ownership.
- ACiW Improvement Study: Sustainable Development - to allow further consideration of the Council's response to the recommendations contained in the Improvement Study.

References from Cabinet

A number of references were referred from the Cabinet to Scrutiny in 2004/05, in particular, matters pertaining to the progressing of the VOG UDP; procedures for the progression and approval of Site Development Briefs; the establishment of a Leisure Membership Scheme; and the Initial Revenue and Capital Budget proposals.

References from Scrutiny Committee to Cabinet

The Committee referred ten matters to Cabinet during the Municipal Year 2004/05.

- Quarterly Performance Monitoring reports: April - September 2004 - Cabinet was requested to consider making available the necessary funding to enable the continuation of the post of Environmental Education Officer at Cosmeston Lakes Country Park.
- Community Centres User Satisfaction Survey - Cabinet was requested to give consideration to making available additional funds to allow the external appearance of the Community Centres to be improved more quickly.

- Visible Services: Proposed Fees and Charges for 2005/06 - Cabinet was requested to consider the suggestion that officers should be granted discretion in respect of the facilities fee for filming rather than the flat rates proposed being adopted.
- Dyffryn Gardens: Proposed Charges for Admission and Facilities - Cabinet was requested to consider amending the proposals as contained in the report, having regard to the recommendations as detailed by the Committee in the aforementioned minute.
- Traffic Sub-Committee - Cabinet was requested to make available the necessary funding to effect real and sustainable changes to public transport in the Vale in order to meet the key target contained in the Corporate Plan 2005/09 of increasing the percentage of people satisfied with local bus services from 28.1% in 2004 to 50% in 2007.
- The Planning System and the promotion of recycling/composting - Cabinet was requested to consider incorporating appropriate guidance and extracts from the Background Paper on Planning Obligations within the text of all future planning briefs and development plans.
- Building Site Monitoring - Cabinet was requested to either require developers to subscribe to the Considerate Constructors Schemes, or to draw up a policy document requiring all prospective developers to inform neighbours of all the cogent facts and contact names and to consider the establishment of a working or liaison group between developers and residents.
- Procedures for the production and reporting of Supplementary Planning Guidance - Cabinet was requested to amend paragraph 4 of the procedure to include consultation with the Committee and to consider that, where to do so would not cause unreasonable delay, pre-Cabinet scrutiny take place.
- Sponsorship of street furniture/equipment - Cabinet was requested to endorse the principle of pre-Cabinet scrutiny on the specifics of the sponsorship of the Vale of Glamorgan entry signs and of roundabouts.
- ACiW Improvement Study: Sustainable Development - Cabinet was requested to
 - reinstate the post of Corporate Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21 Officer
 - urge all Departments to attain Green Dragon Environmental Management Standard Level 1
 - allocate specific responsibility and Local Agenda 21 responsibilities to a named Cabinet Member.

Forward Work Programme 2005/06

Each Scrutiny Committee is requested to identify a work programme having regard to:

- Annual budget process;
- Quarterly performance monitoring reports;
- Service Plans;
- Risk assessment profiles;
- Emerging strategies from the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy;
- Cabinet Forward Work Programme.

Proposed content

- (i) Dealing with the Challenge of Traffic - the continuation of work undertaken during 2004/05, largely in respect of improving public transport and thereby reducing the volume of traffic on the roads, with the aim of producing recommendations to Cabinet on the way forward.
- (ii) Town Centre Improvement and Regeneration - the continuation of work undertaken during 2004/05 with the aim of producing recommendations to Cabinet.
- (iii) Health and Wellbeing of an Ageing Population - the continuation of work commenced in March, 2005 relating to those aspects which fell within the remit of the Committee relating to "health and wellbeing", namely Crime and Disorder; mobility; community involvement and social interaction; and personal fitness, with a view to putting forward proposals to Cabinet on the development of an holistic approach and a corporate strategy.
- (iv) Dyffryn House and Gardens - the continuation of this work programme item from 2004/05 when Committee had referred to an in-depth investigation in respect of the ongoing expenditure relating to projects at the house and gardens.
- (v) Bio-diversity - concentrating in particular on the work being undertaken by this Council, focussing on specific examples; comparing the work of this Council with others; making recommendations to Cabinet as to ways in which the service could improve/develop (having regard to the resources available).

It is considered that the above items will be progressed throughout the forthcoming municipal year, with items (i) and (ii) above receiving the most lengthy consideration. Committee is, therefore, requested to consider the re-appointment of the Town Centre and Traffic Sub-Committees.

- (vi) Improvement Reviews: Waste Collection Services; and Highway Maintenance – the continuation of work currently undertaken by a Sub-Committee. Given that the aim is to conclude these desk-top improvement reviews during June, 2005 the Committee may consider it feasible to undertake the remaining work at its two scheduled meetings in May and June, 2005, and thereby obviate the need for the existing Sub-Committee to be re-appointed.
- (vii) Making the Best of Planning Gain in the Vale of Glamorgan – review by the Improvement Development Team.

Scope: A review of making the best of "Planning Gain" in the Vale of Glamorgan to provide a more effective response to land use planning issues across the Council.

Timescale: June - August, 2005.

- (viii) Regeneration and Project Management - in response to a recommendation from a recent Audit Commission in Wales report, the Improvement and Development Team would be undertaking a review.

Scope: A review of whether the existing management and organisational arrangements for those staff involved in community regeneration are appropriate to maximise the use of its limited resources.

Timescale: September - November, 2005.

- (ix) Rural and Urban Car Parking throughout the Vale of Glamorgan – a review by the Improvement and Development Team.

Scope: A review of the management and operation of rural and urban car parking throughout the Vale of Glamorgan.

Timescale: January - March, 2006.

Scrutiny Committee Lifelong Learning

Membership

Councillor C.P. Franks (Chairman); Councillor Ms. M.E. Alexander (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Mrs. M.E.J. Birch, Ms. R.M. Birch, P. Church, Mrs. C.V.L. Clay, J. Clifford, S.C. Egan, E. Hacker, Mrs. V.M. Hartrey, F.T. Johnson, Mrs. M. Kelly Owen, C.L. Osborne, A.G. Powell, Mrs. S.I. Sharpe, B.I. Shaw and W.C. Vaughan.

The Scrutiny Committee also, under legislation, were afforded the opportunity to include in its membership co-opted members and the following organisations representatives were appointed with voting rights in relation to education functions:-

Roman Catholic Church
Church in Wales
Parent Governor - Primary Sector
Parent Governor - Secondary Sector
Representative from other faiths or denominations.

Each Scrutiny Committee shall also be entitled to recommend to Council the appointment of a number of people/organisations as non-voting co-optees and again the Scrutiny Committee Lifelong Learning recommended to Council the following representative appointments:-

Primary Sector
Secondary Sector
Special Educational Needs Sector
a Headteacher.

Forward Work Programme

The key areas identified for the work programme included the following elements:-

- Quarterly Performance Monitoring
- Early Years Provision
- Budget
- Special Educational Needs
- School Investment Strategy
- Workforce remodelling
- Healthy eating

In addition, the Committee requested that the following be considered:-

- Healthy schools
- Elwa funding priorities

Good progress has been made on the issues.

Meetings

During the period, 10 scheduled meetings were held, of which 8 were held at outside venues, mainly schools throughout the area.

Site Visits

In addition, site visits were made to St. Joseph's Junior and Infant School and Ysgol Erw'r Delyn.

Call-Ins

No call-ins of Cabinet decisions were made by any member of the Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning).

Requests for consideration

One request for consideration was made by a member of the Committee relating to the Schools Investment Strategy.

References from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received and noted three references from the Cabinet relating to:-

- School Inspection Reports
- Home to School Transport
- School Performance

References to Cabinet by the Scrutiny Committee

Arising from consideration of the Strategic Planning for the Provision of Early Years, Committee asked Cabinet to address the provision of full-time places for 3/5 year olds where there is clear need.

Having considered the request, Cabinet resolved that no action be taken at this time, and that the matters be dealt with as part of the budget process.

Presentations

During the period, Committee received presentations on:-

- Service Plans
- Service Overview
- School Performance
- Vale of Glamorgan Network of Healthy Schools
- Workforce remodelling.

Work undertaken during the year

During the year the Chairman and Vice Chairman were involved in the Estyn Inspection process the results of which were reported to Committee. Members were advised that the actions detailed in the Action Plan would be the subject of regular reports to the Committee to ensure that progress was being made.

As part of the budget setting process the Committee considered and supported proposals to simplify the current formula. The Committee invited representatives of the School Budget Forum to explain their views thus fulfilling an important role in establishing the transparency of the budget setting process.

Continual monitoring of service performance on a quarterly basis also allowed the Committee the opportunity to agree service performance targets and receive explanations for those service targets not achieved.

The Committee continued to take a direct interest in the Capital Investment Strategy proposals for Schools and confirmed its support for the need to address the school buildings requirements within the Vale of Glamorgan to achieve the Welsh Assembly Government target of "all schools fit for purpose by 2010". The strategy will also be included in the Committees work programme for 2005/2006 and be regularly monitored.

An initiative undertaken by the Committee has been to regularly invite the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning to attend the Committee and present an update on current educational matters, followed by a question and answer session.

However the Committee has also raised its concern to the Cabinet that it as a Scrutiny Committee should have greater involvement in policy matters prior to decisions being made by the Cabinet. The Audit Commission in Wales has also noted this in its report on Democratic Renewal where it advises that pre Cabinet Scrutiny should be undertaken and protocols drawn up.

Examples of Achievements during the Municipal Year

In addition to the above, the Committee also noted with concern the gaps between current Library performance and the required standards and as a consequence made representations for additional resources to support the service.

The issue was referred to the Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources) who subsequently referred the recommendations to the Council's Budget Working Group.

The Committee raised its concern about the New Opportunities Fund proposals and the perception by some applicants that the process had not been as transparent as it should. All NOF bids have now been submitted and the outcomes awaited.

School Attendance matters – The Committee requested a change of emphasis in the School Attendance Matters booklet and the changes were introduced as a result prior to the publication of the document.

As a direct result of a request to consider Healthy Eating in schools the Committee requested that the Secondary Headteachers be requested to review the content of school vending machines with a view to improving health standards.

Future Work Programme 2005 / 2006

The Committee will continue to monitor the following as part of its work programme for 2005 /2006: -

- Quarterly Service Performance Monitoring
- Service plans
- Monthly Revenue and Capital Monitoring
- Update Estyn Inspection Reports
- Workforce Remodelling update
- Healthy Eating in schools update.

In addition, the following suggested matters from Members will also form part of the work programme which the Committee itself will address :-

- School Investment Strategy
- Youth Provision
- Co Education – Barry
- Special Educational Needs

And running alongside the Committee an officer from the Improvement and Development Team will undertake the following reviews as requested by Members :-

Looked After Children

A review to evaluate how the Council contributes to improved life chances for looked after children.

Review to be undertaken from June to August 2005.

Youth Provision

A review of how effectively the council addresses young people issues through the positive engagement of the Vale Council's Youth Service and its partner organisations.

Review to be undertaken from September to December.

Additionally, and in light of reports that will be reported to the Committee relating to the provision of nursery education, the Improvement and Development Team may be requested to undertake further research as appropriate.

HOW LOCAL PEOPLE CAN BECOME INVOLVED IN SCRUTINY

Attend meetings

All Scrutiny meetings are generally held in public except where matters of an exempt or confidential nature are under consideration. (Access to Information Rules) Agendas for meetings are available at the Civic Offices and Council offices and facilities i.e. Libraries within the Vale of Glamorgan, 3 days prior to the meeting.

Witnesses

Scrutiny Committees can call a range of individuals to e.g. explain matters within their remit or discuss matters of local concern. They can be members of the public, representatives from local organisations, officers of the Authority etc.

Co-opted Members

On occasions some people can be approached and asked to play an active role as part of Scrutiny Committees.

Themed Meetings

Throughout the year Scrutiny Committees have been held at various venues around the Vale of Glamorgan. However in the future Scrutiny Committees may wish to consider continuing this practice but also include on agendas, specific items pursuant to the area where the meeting will take place.

AREAS THAT HAVE WORKED WELL DURING THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

There has been over the last year :-

- Improved co-ordination and focus for the Councils Scrutiny function
- Improved co - ordination and management of Scrutiny's involvement in the budget consultation process.
- Further development in the scrutiny role in Council's Performance Management framework
- Reviewing and monitoring the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plans and Service Plans of the Authority / Departments
- Consultative and agreed proposals for example Procedures for Development Briefs for the Vale of Glamorgan
- Agreed protocols to be addressed in relation to Ward member consultation on issues / activities in their areas.

CONCLUSION

Since the introduction of Scrutiny in the Vale of Glamorgan, Members have been keen to ensure that their Committee's recommendations take into account examples of best practice elsewhere

and a great deal of effort has been put in to speaking to people and calling in expert witnesses to benefit from their expertise in many areas.

Member Development Scrutiny training to date has stressed the need for each Committee to be focused in its approach to identifying issues for its work programme and to concentrate on a few strategic matters. It is expected that increasing Pre Cabinet Scrutiny work will be undertaken in the next year, given the recommendations made by the ACiW.