

Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee



Scrutiny Review

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.

Final Report

December 2005

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Foreword



*Cllr Nic Hodges
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I am pleased to present the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee's 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. This review was requested by the Committee in a direct response to one of seven recommendations made by the then Audit Commission in Wales – now Wales Audit Office (WAO) following an improvement study undertaken in 2004 on regeneration in the Vale of Glamorgan. A copy of the final report on the regeneration study is attached at Appendix 1.

The Council's approach to community regeneration is encapsulated within two of its Corporate Plan priorities

- "To achieve a quality environment through promotion and the use of sustainable practices and by making the best use of current and future resources."
- "Encouraging the development of a diversified and sustainable community and working in partnership with others to promote regeneration and economic development."

The review considered best practice and how benefits derived from sustainable regeneration can positively impact on the community. It was encouraging to find when undertaking the review the progress that the officers within the Vale of Glamorgan Council have made against the seven recommendations suggested by WAO.

I would like to thank the officers involved for providing their full help and professional knowledge throughout the review. My colleagues on the Economy and Environment Committee must be noted for the effective way in which they carried out their questions and discussions with officers and external parties at the beginning of the review. These discussions proved to be an effective introduction to questioning expert witnesses for the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

I hope that Members and the public will agree that the recommendations of this Scrutiny Committee should ensure that maximum benefit is made of the limited funding opportunities available for Community regeneration.

Executive Summary

The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to examine the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in the areas of Building Services, Visible Services, Economic Development and Leisure and Planning and Transportation within the Vale of Glamorgan. Its task is to actively promote improvement by testing the effectiveness of this work and recommending ways in which greater benefit may be obtained for the community as a whole.

The review considered the Council's current management and organisational arrangements for staff involved in community regeneration, and whether they were appropriate to ensure that maximum benefit could be obtained from the limited monies and funding opportunities available for expenditure on regeneration activities across the Vale. A number of recommendations have been made to the Executive in response to the findings of the review.

Recommendation 1

In order to make certain that the basic principles of project management are followed including the involvement of relevant officers from within the organisation as well as other public and voluntary bodies with community participation at the project initiation stage of any community regeneration activity it is recommended that: All officers involved in community regeneration activities must be trained in and use the principles of Prince 2 project management. Where an officer is to regularly lead community regeneration activities it is suggested that they are trained to a minimum of foundation level, and wherever possible trained to practitioner level.

Recommendation 2

The Head of Economic Development and Leisure to establish a small steering group of internal officers with external input to develop an action plan to establish area priorities based on the proven needs of those communities.

Recommendation 3

That from the action plan developed by the steering group the Directorate of Environment and Economic Regeneration develop a range of priority "off the shelf" projects which the Council can implement should funding become available.

Recommendation 4

That prior to project initiation for any regeneration initiative under Prince 2 guidelines the following considerations be made:

- i) Is the project sustainable?***
- ii) Can the money be spent on time?***
- iii) Does it compete with other Vale initiatives?***
- iv) Will it help us to achieve our overall strategy?***
- v) Does it meet clear community demand and need?***
- vi) Will it be financially beneficial? (The grant monies must not cost more in administration costs than the monies received)***

vii) Do we have a clear exit strategy for the regeneration project?

Should the response to any of the above consideration be negative then the viability of the initiative is questionable.

Recommendation 5

The Council establish a contingency fund of £50,000 to be held centrally in the Chief Executive's Department in order develop feasibility, planning and design studies for appropriate community regeneration activities and projects. The Improvement and Development Team within the Department will be responsible for ensuring the viability of the initiative.

Recommendation 6

The next revision of the Vale of Glamorgan's Community Strategy should consider the following key themes:

- **A Winning Wales**
- **WAVE – Wales a Vibrant Economy**
- **Supporting People in Wales**
- **People, Places and Future Prosperity – The Wales Spatial Plan**
- **Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004 - 2007**

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee

The Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to examine the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in the areas of Building Services, Visible Services, Economic Development and Leisure and Planning and Transportation within the Vale of Glamorgan. Its task is to actively promote improvement by testing the effectiveness of this work and recommending ways in which greater benefit may be obtained for the community as a whole.

The review considered the Council's current management and organisational arrangements for staff involved in community regeneration, and whether they are appropriate to ensure that maximum benefit could be obtained from the limited monies and funding opportunities available for expenditure on regeneration activities across the Vale.

1.2 Community regeneration

There is no national definition of regeneration therefore in addressing community regeneration we have followed the Wales Audit Office terminology for the purpose of this review: "The upgrading of an area, taking a balanced approach to improving the well-being of communities through social, physical and economic improvements."

The aim of regeneration in general is to enable communities that have suffered from economic, social and environmental decline to thrive again. A major factor in effecting change in areas of regeneration need is the local capacity to bring together the skills, knowledge, assets, services and spending of individuals, voluntary groups, businesses and the voluntary sector.

The complexity of the issues involved in regeneration means that no single standard approach to delivering a successful strategy exists; rather each area needs to be considered dependant on local need and priority and responded to accordingly.

Local Authorities play a key role in the delivery of the regeneration agenda in terms of forging key partnerships, identifying priorities, obtaining key sources of funding and engaging local communities.

1.3 The Improvement Study

The study undertaken by the then Audit Commission in Wales, now Wales Audit Office, considered the approach to regeneration by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and delivered a baseline assessment. A baseline assessment of regeneration was carried out in all 22 Councils in Wales and fed into a national report entitled "Regeneration – A simpler approach for Wales" which was published in August 2005.

The Council received a final report of the study in February 2005. In order to address recommendation KR3 – the title of this review, the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee requested this review should be undertaken by an independent officer from the Improvement Development Team as part of the Scrutiny Committee's work programme. The results of the study and the progress against recommendations to date were reported to the Economy and Environment Committee on 6th September 2005.

1.4 Terms of Reference

The review of community regeneration forms part of the 2005/06 planned work programme of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee. Review scope and timescales were agreed by this Committee earlier this year. In line with the agreed work programme the review commenced during September and was completed in December 2005. Officers from the Improvement Development Team, Democratic Services and the Economic Development and Leisure Division provided support to the review process.

Appendix 2 of the report contains the completed scrutiny review scoping document and outlines the objectives and purpose of carrying out the review including the desired outcomes.

1.5 Methodology

The review was carried out in line with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny methodology. Comprehensive guidance is provided with regards to the overview and scrutiny function in the Vale of Glamorgan including:

- Identifying issues for scrutiny review
- Scoping the review
- Collecting and collating evidence
- Final report

The main focus of the review was to consider existing activity towards community regeneration, recent initiatives and supplementary guidance instigated by the Directorate, identify any gaps in current provision and make recommendations to address these gaps.

2. Current Situation

High levels of deprivation exist throughout Wales. Numerous Welsh authorities have indices of deprivation, notably limiting long-term illness, which are amongst the worst in the UK, high levels of migration of the younger population, long-term unemployment issues and dependency on welfare benefits particularly in the South Wales valleys.

Most local authorities in Wales have either separately or in partnership with local stakeholders produced regeneration plans, programmes and strategies. There is no guidance that promotes a common structure for these initiatives. This is probably a direct reflection of the complexity of the issues surrounding regeneration. The initiatives are mainly orientated around the funding that is available and tend to reflect initiatives emerging from Wales or Europe.

2.1 Regeneration - The Context in Wales

Wales has received funding for regeneration activity from the UK Government since the 1950's and more recently from the European Union (Objectives within ESF and ERDF Structural Funds being the best known sources) through programmes including LEADER, URBAN, INTERREG and EQUAL. European Union policy frameworks on, for example SMEs and on sustainable development have also been influential in Welsh regeneration efforts. Since their inception some national (UK) funds have been channelled through government offices and quangos such as the Welsh Office, the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh Rural Development Board and included the Local Regeneration Fund.

Following devolution and the advent of the Welsh Assembly, a significant proportion of national (UK) funds have been dispersed through Welsh Assembly Government budgets and have appeared in programmes such as Communities First into which earlier regeneration schemes including People in Communities and the Sustainable Communities Programme were subsumed.

Since 2000, the Welsh Assembly Government has been reviewing and revising the approach to regeneration. It has produced a range of new strategies and programmes covering a variety of regeneration themes and has attempted to reorganise the delivery of regeneration through changes to governance arrangements.

The Communities First programme has emerged as the first long term funding approach to regeneration and the Spatial Plan as the first regional rather than local approach to spatial issues. Wales has continued to benefit – as it did in the 1990's – from significant European funds. The EU Structural Funds with three renewed objectives are set to continue until 2006, contributing up to £1.3 billion EU funds across Wales which is match funded. The current programme of European Structural Fund Objective 1 ends in 2005 and this will have profound implications for west Wales and the Valleys. The Vale of Glamorgan is not

deemed to be an Objective 1 area. The advent of EU enlargement means that the medium term prognosis is for a decline in funds for regeneration and this is causing anxiety about meeting regeneration funding needs in the medium to long-term future.

The following is a list of key dates of funding commencement and major events and regeneration activities in Wales from 1995 to 2004.

Year	Activity
1995	National Lottery funding commences Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO)
1996	Local Government reorganisation Second Severn Road Bridge crossing opens
1997	WO agrees grant package worth more than £87m for major factory planned by LG Electronics on 100 hectare site in Newport Yes for Wales campaign launched Government White Paper, A Voice for Wales, published Referendum narrowly supports creation of Welsh Assembly
1998	Government of Wales Act passed Future Skills Wales report released People in Communities Programme launched Development Board for Rural Wales merges with WDA WO launches Pathways to Prosperity EU announces proposals for widespread reform of EU structural funds Better Health, Better Wales Strategic Framework
1999	ESF Objectives 1-3 refocused Redevelopment of Cardiff Bay Millennium Stadium opens Wind up of Welsh Capital Challenge and Local Authority Rural Scheme (LARS) grants National Assembly for Wales (NAfW) established
2000	Better Wales Strategic Plan launched by Assembly Sustainable Development Scheme (WAG to be guided by sustainability principles) LGA empowers authorities to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area Communities First programme set up Welsh Housing Quality Standard adopted The Capital Region, economic strategy for south-east Wales released Penarth Central Renewal Areas established
2001	Improving Health in Wales Plan and Strategic Framework released by WAG ELWa formed incorporating 4 regionally based Welsh TECs Transport Framework for Wales published Better Homes for People in Wales sets out role of housing in regeneration Farming for the Future Strategy launched by WAG Inequalities in Health Fund set up
2002	WDA Agri-Food Strategy adopted WDA e-Communities programme launched to narrow digital divide in

2002 cont.	<p>poorest communities</p> <p>Well-being in Wales programme launched</p> <p>A Winning Wales launched</p> <p>European Research and Advisory Panel (ERAP) established</p> <p>Skills and Employment Action Plan published</p> <p>Entrepreneurship Action Plan launched</p> <p>Assembly's Community Regeneration report released</p> <p>Assembly's Rural Development Plan 2002 – 2006</p> <p>Rural Community Action programme launched, nine rural regeneration partnerships approved</p>
2003	<p>Draft e-Learning consultation</p> <p>Better Wales revision of strategic plan for Wales launched</p> <p>WAG Social Enterprise Action Plan</p> <p>National Housing Strategy for Wales published</p> <p>Urban village created at Llandarcy south Wales</p>
2004	<p>WAG Social Justice Plan published</p> <p>Wales Spatial Plan launched and revised in December 2004</p> <p>WDA e-Communities project scrapped due to lack of match funding</p> <p>Wales Millennium Centre opens at Cardiff Bay</p> <p>Regeneration Partnership for Heads of Valleys launched</p> <p>WAG 3 year spending plan includes funds for Communities First and coastal area regeneration</p> <p>Regeneration not Stagnation: A Manifesto for Wales launched by WLGA</p>
2005	<p>WAO Regeneration – A simpler approach for Wales published</p> <p>WAG Making the Connections and associated action plan Delivering the Connections published.</p> <p>WDA, WTB and ELWa proposal to be brought under direct control of WAG</p> <p>PRF introduced</p>

2.2 Regeneration - The Context in the Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale is a predominantly rural area with a long attractive coastline. The main settlements are Barry, Penarth, Llantwit Major, Dinas Powys and Cowbridge. The County Borough had a population of 119,292 at the time of the 2001 census. The population is not expected to grow over the period to 2011, but the number of households is expected to increase from 48,750 in 2001 to 52,200 in 2011 due to the decreasing size of households. The main characteristics of population change up to 2011 are an expected decrease in the number of children under 15 and an increase in the number of people of pensionable age. 1.8% of the population come from black and minority ethnic communities.

45% of the local workforce work outside the county causing congestion, and this represents a major challenge to the transportation infrastructure in the Vale and surrounding areas. The unemployment rate is 2.4%, which is below the Welsh average (2.6%), but this masks pockets of high unemployment in the Barry area. Compared with the rest of South-East Wales, the Vale has a lower proportion of manufacturing jobs and a higher proportion of jobs in distribution, hotels and catering. The manufacturing jobs are, however, in relatively high value sectors,

particularly aircraft maintenance and chemicals production. Farming is also still an important local industry. Over half of the workforce is working in organisations employing less than fifty people. Previously the Vale has benefited from substantial amounts of inward investment – 13% of all inward investment into Wales between 1983 and 2001. The Vale also benefits from Objective 2 Transitional and Objective 3 Funding, but is not an Objective 1 area.

Health indicators suggest that the Vale generally compares well with the rest of Wales. In terms of education, pupil attainment is one of the highest in Wales but the fabric of school buildings is a big issue for the council. The Vale has one of the lowest crime rates in Wales, but the fear of crime is still an issue in certain areas.

The Welsh housing conditions survey in 1997-1998 shows that the Vale compares favourably with the rest of Wales in that it has the seventh lowest housing unfitness rate (7.2%), of the twenty-two local authorities in Wales. In terms of deprivation, the index of multiple deprivation (2000) showed that two wards in Barry were on the top fifth of the most deprived wards in Wales. A further three wards attract objective two and three funding as outlined above. The five wards being Cadoc, Castleland, Gibbonstown, Buttrills and Court. There are two areas which are designated as community first areas being Thompson Street and a small area of Gibbonsdown

2.3 Regeneration Activity within the Vale of Glamorgan

The main regeneration priorities for action are outlined in the Community Strategy and the Council’s Corporate Plan. The Community Strategy 2003 – 2013 describes the Vale as “... Comparatively wealthy and many of its residents enjoy a high standard of living in a good quality environment. However, there are areas within the Vale that suffer from significant economic, environmental and social difficulties such as high unemployment, sub-standard housing, low educational achievement, poor health and high levels of crime. Our vision is to target those areas for improvement while seeking to conserve and enhance the best features of the Vale so as to raise the quality of life for all those who live in the area or visit it for work or recreation.

The Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009 lists the economic regeneration priorities, and is supported by service plans for implementation. As with the rest of Wales many of the priorities and achievements to date have been driven by the availability of funding. The priorities in the Corporate Plan are supported by a number of other strategies, project plans and policy statements including those listed below by department responsibility:

Department	Activity
Economic Development	Building a Brighter Barry – The regeneration of the Greater Barry Area
Economic Development	Creative Rural Communities – The Vale of Glamorgan rural regeneration partnership
Chief Executives	Community Regeneration Action Plan – Focusing on the 5 most deprived wards in the Vale

Planning and Transportation	Unitary Development Plan 1996 - 2011 and supplementary planning guidance documents
Private Housing	Housing Renewal Strategy
Community Services	Homelessness Strategy 2004 – 2009 and Homelessness prevention plan
Private Housing	Penarth Central Renewal Strategy 2004 - 2007
Community Safety	Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy
Vale of Glamorgan Partnership	Health and Well-being Strategy
Major Projects Unit	Penarth Heights redevelopment
Chief Executives	Objective 2 Transitional Local Action Plan
Post 16 Education and Training	Communities First Action Plans

The list is far from exhaustive and attempts to illustrate the Council's response to the funding opportunities; strategies and policy statements outlined in paragraph 2.1 "Regeneration - the Context in Wales". The Council's approach to regeneration is more than tackling just the economic and environmental issues. The social implications of regeneration, adding the "community" element have become increasingly more important to all officers involved in regeneration activities. The variety of departments taking responsibility for the activities listed in the table above demonstrate that regeneration is a whole authority issue and does not necessarily need to be branded by a name in order to be addressed.

3. Findings

The Vale is a low funded Council and one that receives very little assisted area status monies. It is only partly eligible for Objective 2 Transitional Funding until 2006. Its own limited capital resources are stretched by a variety of competing service needs. Whilst inadequate funding and overly complicated grant procedures are major issues for all those involved in the regeneration process, it is fair to say that Vale of Glamorgan Council suffers greatly from external short term funding structures that work against the development and delivery of long term goals.

Whilst interviewing officers involved with regeneration there were differing views expressed about the management of community regeneration and where co-ordination and responsibility of the role should sit. An overall consensus was achieved following a group discussion whereby it was acknowledged that one of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's most successful regeneration activities from the perspective of community involvement is the Creative Rural Communities. It was agreed that community regeneration is a cross cutting issue and that all officers involved in regeneration projects needed to involve other relevant officers from within the organisation as well as other public and voluntary bodies with community participation. This involvement needs to be identified at the project initiation stage of any community regeneration activity.

The organisational arrangements therefore do not need to be addressed or altered to maximise the use of the Council's limited resources. The very fact that

funding opportunities are extremely limited would make organisational changes not add significant value. However, it is important to recognise that Prince 2 project management skills need to be employed in all regeneration activities.

Recommendation 1

In order to make certain that the basic principles of project management are followed including the involvement of relevant officers from within the organisation as well as other public and voluntary bodies with community participation at the project initiation stage of any community regeneration activity it is recommended that: All officers involved in community regeneration activities must be trained in and use the principles of Prince 2 project management. Where an officer is to regularly lead community regeneration activities it is suggested that they are trained to a minimum of foundation level, and wherever possible trained to practitioner level.

It was considered that since the baseline assessment undertaken by the ACiW in early 2004 that the Vale of Glamorgan had made considerable progress in community regeneration that supported recommendation 1 above. In a number of areas good and notable practice was recognised.

3.2 Good and Notable Practice within the Vale of Glamorgan

All departments within the Council may be commended on the improvements that have been undertaken with regard to community consultation and involvement. The majority of projects undertaken by the Council now take into account the views of the local people whose communities will be affected. Projects include the refurbishment of the Town Hall in Barry, which was widely publicised encouraging views. Residents were actively encouraged to participate in the design of the adjacent park in the hope that local people will take a degree of ownership of the green space.

Council departments are tending to work in co-operation, utilising the knowledge and skills of colleagues in other service areas in partnership activities. The following regeneration activities, although not an exhaustive list, are noted as good practice with the Council.

Creative Rural Communities

The Vale of Glamorgan Council established the rural regeneration partnership, now branded Creative Rural Communities during the summer of 2003. The partnership achieved Rural Community Action status from the WAG, which gave access to £2 Million Rural Development Article 33 funding together with core funding to employ 4 members of staff and to provide premises and equipment in Cowbridge. It is a clear example of resource provision to undertake the task. To date grant monies of approximately £500 thousand have been approved for staff and the office who will be involved in capacity building in the rural community. The partnership combines the established expertise of the statutory, private and voluntary sectors along with key players from the rural Vale.

Creative Rural Communities seeks to engage and build the capacity of rural communities and groups working closely with other Vale of Glamorgan Partnerships such as the Crime and Disorder Partnership and the Young People's Partnership in order to deliver joined up service to community regeneration.

It is the first regeneration initiative to be undertaken in the rural Vale of Glamorgan and to date has increased the active participation of a wide range of individuals in regeneration, enhanced the understanding of issues and development needs in the area. Four rural regeneration officers serve the partnership working within the Economic Development Unit based in community locations throughout the rural Vale allowing day-to-day contact with community groups and individuals. Over £2.9 million of project funding has been drawn into the rural Vale as a result of this initiative, including grant monies of 1.83m. Full details of the projects to date can be seen at Appendix 3.

Barry Regeneration Technical Officer Team

The two officers working in the Urban Regeneration Section of the Economic Development Unit within the Council established the Barry Regeneration Technical Officers Team in July 2005. It consists of representatives from relevant service areas within the Vale Council, the WDA Area Development Manager and is chaired by the Director of Environmental and Economic Regeneration, vice-chaired by the Head of Economic Development and Leisure.

The purpose of the team is to provide information and guidance to the Barry Regeneration Partnership Board, to develop and co-ordinate the delivery of the Vision and Strategic Framework for the Regeneration of Barry (2005 – 2020), consider opportunities integration with other regeneration initiatives in the Vale and to develop new projects capable of achieving measurable results appropriate to the Vision and Strategic Framework for the Regeneration of Barry (2005 – 2020).

The main objectives for the group are to identify appropriate opportunities for funding support and investment, to establish task and finish project teams needed to obtain inputs, test views, endorse and/or deliver regeneration initiatives and to operate corporately with flexibility and act with speed and discretion to ensure demanding timescales are met and that the Vision and Strategic Framework for the Regeneration of Barry (2005 – 2020) has the greatest legitimacy. The terms of reference, including the relationship chart of the Barry Regeneration Partnership Board are attached at appendix 4.

Penarth Central Renewal Area

The Housing Group Repair Scheme lead by the Private Sector Housing Division of the Council is acting as the main tool for Community Regeneration within the Penarth Central Renewal Area. The scheme commenced in 2000 and also seeks to enhance the environment, the provision of community facilities, and the local economy through the development of community led projects.

It is a partnership project involving most departments within the Vale of Glamorgan Council, individual residents, the Health Alliance, Care and Repair and the police.

The scheme has the strategic aim of making comprehensive and sustainable improvements to the housing, socio-economic and environmental conditions within the Penarth Central Renewal Area. In 2005/6, £2.2m was allocated to fund the projects. It is planned that this level of funding will continue up to the end of the initiative in 2010. Full details of the scheme can be found at appendix 5.

Community Regeneration Action Plan

Four Planning for Real Events were held in four of the five most deprived wards in the Vale between March 2002 and October 2002. An officer-working group was established in December 2002 to implement some of the ideas for improvement that had been made by members of the community collected in these events.

The officer-working group led by the Chief Executive's Department developed a community regeneration action plan to address the improvements. Many improvements have been made in the five wards in conjunction with Communities First activities. These are as a direct result of the Planning for Real events and action plan, and of the added focus and awareness by officers of the problems and needs of these areas. Examples include:

- Various clean-up campaigns
- ASBOs issued for graffiti offences and graffiti clearance
- Joint evening patrols with Community Support Officers
- NoF funding bid to develop pocket parks
- Second round of alley-gating
- Safer routes to schools projects
- Improved bus stops, signage and timetable information
- Buses re-routed as part of contract negotiation

A copy of the Community Regeneration Action Plan showing progress is attached at appendix 6.

Conclusions from notable practice

The regeneration activities above have led to sustainable community regeneration which has been welcomed by both the professionals and residents involved. They are examples of making the maximum use of limited monies available.

3.3 Identifying areas of weakness of community regeneration in the Vale of Glamorgan

During interviews with officers involved in regeneration a number of issues or gaps were identified. These form areas of weakness in relation to the capacity of

the Council to progress sustainable community regeneration initiatives. Wherever possible recommendations have been made to address these issues.

A concern expressed by a number of officers was that whilst accepting that community regeneration issues tended to follow trends directed by European Funding and areas of deprivation, there are gaps in major areas which are not covered by Creative Rural Communities or the Greater Barry Area. During a group discussion officers agreed that the “community” part of regeneration needs to be better co-ordinated and that a holistic approach is required with the role of the voluntary sector being particularly important. It was considered that the Council should look at regeneration on an area basis, developing area issues and priorities focused clearly on need.

Recommendation 2

The Head of Economic Development and Leisure to establish a small steering group of internal officers with external input to develop an action plan to establish area priorities based on the proven needs of those communities.

As previously noted the Vale is a low funded and hence low spending Council and one that receives very little assisted area status monies. The result of lack of funding is that consequently, the Council has to react, with little notice, to pockets of money that become available, usually towards the end of the financial year primarily from the WDA.

This causes a number of problems in relation to achieving quality, sustainable regeneration projects. Officers undertake feasibility studies within limited timescales with no budget set aside to undertake the study. This situation does not assist good forward planning and project management.

Recommendation 5

The Council establish a contingency fund of £50,000 to be held centrally in the Chief Executive’s Department in order develop feasibility, planning and design studies for appropriate community regeneration activities and projects. The Improvement and Development Team within the Department will be responsible for ensuring the viability of the initiative.

Recommendation 3

That from the action plan developed by the steering group the Directorate of Environment and Economic Regeneration develop a range of priority “off the shelf” projects which the Council can implement should funding become available.

Most of the officers interviewed expressed concern that the Vale of Glamorgan Council suffers greatly from extreme short term funding structures. These work against the development and delivery of long term goals and a number commented that on occasion the grant funding costs more to attract in officer time and administrative fees than we actually receive.

Recommendation 4

That prior to project initiation for any regeneration initiative under Prince 2 guidelines the following considerations be made:

- viii) Is the project sustainable?***
- ix) Can the money be spent on time?***
- x) Does it compete with other Vale initiatives?***
- xi) Will it help us to achieve our overall strategy?***
- xii) Does it meet clear community demand and need?***
- xiii) Will it be financially beneficial? (The grant monies must not cost more in administration costs than the monies received)***
- xiv) Do we have a clear exit strategy for the regeneration project?***

Should the response to any of the above consideration be negative then the viability of the initiative is questionable.

Finally it was noted that the Community Strategy is the overarching document for regeneration in the Vale. Regeneration in Wales is linked to a number of key themes emerging from the Assembly, including:

- A Winning Wales
- WAVE – Wales a Vibrant Economy
- Supporting People in Wales
- People, Places and Future Prosperity – The Wales Spatial Plan
- Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004 -2007

As the Community Strategy was first developed in 2003 it does not necessarily take into account these documents. It is important that new and existing initiatives at both the national and local level are co-ordinated to ensure the greatest amount of benefit is achieved. This can be done when the strategy is next reviewed.

Recommendation 6.

The next revision of the Vale of Glamorgan's Community Strategy should consider the following key themes:

- ***A Winning Wales***
- ***WAVE – Wales a Vibrant Economy***
- ***Supporting People in Wales***
- ***People, Places and Future Prosperity – The Wales Spatial Plan***
- ***Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004 - 2007***

4.0 Notable practice in Wales

Low spending levels and the lack of Objective 1 Funding (which is the highest level of EU support available in Wales), limited the authorities with which comparisons could be made. Added to that the complexity of issues surrounding community regeneration and unique localised issues of each area good practice

and strategic innovation are not easily transferable. However, the authorities closest to the Vale of Glamorgan with regard to external funding issues are Monmouthshire and Powys. Good practice from each of these areas was explored with suggestions to duplicate the initiatives where they were felt transferable.

4.1 Monmouthshire

Economic development is identified as one of the six priority areas of Monmouthshire's Community Strategy. The Council has developed a strategy for economic development and community regeneration called Fresh Directions. It has a vision statement drawn directly from the Community Strategy from which eight objectives have been developed.

- To reduce the level of out migration to work
- To have an adequate supply of land premises available to meet local needs
- To support businesses to start up and grow in the County
- To revitalise our towns
- To rejuvenate our rural economy
- To increase tourism
- To encourage community development
- To assist in the raising of the skill level of the workforce

The objectives were further developed into an action programme split into three parts

1. A different agenda for each of the four towns
2. An agenda for rural Monmouthshire
3. County wide themes

The strategy is area based and contrasts with the absence of a local area dimension to the Community Strategy in the Vale. The Monmouthshire strategy is 30 pages in length and has not been included as an appendix. The Strategy may be viewed by interested parties at: www.monmouthshire.gov.uk. Consideration should be given at **Recommendation 2** to developing a similar approach in the Vale.

4.2 Powys

Whilst producing the Powys County's Community Strategy the Council established 15 Local Community Forums. These are area-based forums and are open to anyone wishing to join. The forums include representatives from Town and Community Councils, a wide range of voluntary and community groups, and individuals. They provide a means for local people to work with statutory agencies, to influence ideas and develop projects. The job of the forums is to gather and present views of the residents using the five theme headings of the Community Strategy.

To help local communities to decide what happens in their area, the Council and Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations help the local community forums to produce local action plans.

The Council acknowledges that there is no extra funding linked to the Community Strategy or the forums but that the process requires the local authority to pay particular attention to emerging community needs and aspirations and to the actions plans which are now emerging at a local level. In the long run it is hoped that Welsh Assembly Government allocations will also reflect the Community Strategy.

Whilst community or local area based forums are difficult to establish and resource consuming to administer, the benefits can be excellent. The Vale of Glamorgan may wish to consider establishing a similar network in order to deliver community regeneration activities and to drive the Welsh Assembly Government initiative 'Making the Connections'.

5.0 Conclusions

The Improvement Study by the ACiW was noted as somewhat disappointing as, because of the large workload of the ACiW, the study was not in-depth. Whilst the recommendations from that Study have been considered and acted upon appropriately it is not felt that it is necessary to restructure the Council in order to improve the management of community regeneration. Mindful of the recommendations 2, 3 and 4 a corporate relationship chart would be helpful to clarify the Directorate with responsibility for providing strategic direction and co-ordination of community regeneration functions in the Vale.

As the ACiW report acknowledged, funding streams are often short-term and could have limited impact. Better use of available resources is needed through:

- A more strategic approach
- A more focussed approach, based on individual areas
- A more participative approach, including the knowledge and views of local people
- A more co-ordinated approach, using the skills available across the Council
- A more planned approach, with key officers trained in Prince 2 methodology

6.0 Recommendations

The review noted the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

In order to make certain that the basic principles of project management are followed including the involvement of relevant officers from within the organisation as well as other public and voluntary bodies with community participation at the project initiation stage of any community regeneration activity it is recommended that: All officers involved in community regeneration activities must be trained in and use the principles of Prince 2 project management. Where an officer is to regularly lead community

regeneration activities it is suggested that they are trained to a minimum of foundation level, and wherever possible trained to practitioner level.

Recommendation 2

The Head of Economic Development and Leisure to establish a small steering group of internal officers with external input to develop an action plan to establish area priorities based on the proven needs of those communities.

Recommendation 3

That from the action plan developed by the steering group the Directorate of Environment and Economic Regeneration develop a range of priority “off the shelf” projects which the Council can implement should funding become available.

Recommendation 4

That prior to project initiation for any regeneration initiative under Prince 2 guidelines the following considerations be made:

- xv) Is the project sustainable?*
- xvi) Can the money be spent on time?*
- xvii) Does it compete with other Vale initiatives?*
- xviii) Will it help us to achieve our overall strategy?*
- xix) Does it meet clear community demand and need?*
- xx) Will it be financially beneficial? (The grant monies must not cost more in administration costs than the monies received)*
- xxi) Do we have a clear exit strategy for the regeneration project?*

Should the response to any of the above consideration be negative then the viability of the initiative is questionable.

Recommendation 5

The Council establish a contingency fund of £50,000 to be held centrally in the Chief Executive’s Department in order develop feasibility, planning and design studies for appropriate community regeneration activities and projects. The Improvement and Development Team within the Department will be responsible for ensuring the viability of the initiative.

Recommendation 6

The next revision of the Vale of Glamorgan’s Community Strategy should consider the following key themes:

- A Winning Wales*
- WAVE – Wales a Vibrant Economy*
- Supporting People in Wales*
- People, Places and Future Prosperity – The Wales Spatial Plan*

- ***Sustainable Development Action Plan 2004 - 2007***