

Vale of Glamorgan Council



**Social Partnership Duty Annual
Report 2024-25**

Report Summary

This annual report details the work undertaken in partnership between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and trade unions in relation to the county's corporate well-being objectives set under the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), highlighting compliance with the Social Partnership Duty between the period April 2024 - March 2025.

The Social Partnership Duty is a legal obligation introduced by the [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act 2023](#). The Act places a statutory requirement on Local Authorities in Wales to work in social partnership with recognised trade unions (or other staff representatives) when setting well-being objectives under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and making strategic decisions aimed at achieving those objectives.

This annual report details how the Council works with trade union partners through a social partnership approach, valuing the social value principles, consulting with trade unions to ensure feedback is captured at a formative stage and considered throughout the development process when:

- developing our well-being objectives as part of the Council's Corporate Plan, Vale 2030
- considering strategic decisions impacting our workforce as we work to achieve these objectives

This report will provide an overview of our ways of working to ensure our partners are well informed to increase **participation**, ensure meaningful collaboration and deliver **mutual gains**. This report has been discussed with and agreed by our trade union representatives.

Our Approach at the Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale of Glamorgan Council works **collaboratively** with our trade unions to ensure decision making that impacts upon our greatest assets, our staff, is **equally beneficial** based upon strong relationships and insight built through mutual **respect** and **trust**. With this in mind, the Council actively engages with trade union partners to ensure their **voices** are heard on a regular basis through **participation** in the Joint Consultative Forum (JCF), the Change Forum and the Terms and Conditions Forum, with the latter two meetings convening monthly. In addition, each directorate holds regular consultative meeting with our trade unions on matters of interest to each directorate along with trade union support and attendance at b-monthly health and safety meetings. These Forums are in addition to the range of meetings and conversations that regularly take place between the council and trade unions and that are the cornerstone of our joint working.

The Joint Consultative Forum enables collaboration between elected members, Council officers and employee representatives. Whilst the JCF covers organisational wide issues,

each Council Directorate (with the exception of Corporate Resources which given its remit, reports directly to the JCF) also has their own Directorate Consultative Forum to ensure engagement at all levels of decision making. In addition to these Forums, the Change Forum provides an opportunity to engage on topics including budgets, corporate plans, strategic planning, new strategies, restructures and service transformation. The Terms and Conditions Forum brings colleagues and employee representatives together with a specific focus on shaping policy and procedures and considering contract changes.

This way of collaborative working is underpinned by the Council's Partnership Statement included within the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan as '[Our Commitment to those working with us](#)' reflecting our values of being **open, together, ambitious and proud** in how we work with others.

The Council also has a number of mechanisms to effectively engage with staff including different networks, management development sessions and learning cafes. Information about this work is provided later in this report.

Development and Consultation on New Corporate Well-being Objectives

During 2024/25 the Vale of Glamorgan Council's new Corporate Plan has been developed with the previous 2020 – 2025 Corporate Plan's four well-being objectives being replaced by five new well-being objectives.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Plan for [2020-2025](#) set four well-being objectives to deliver our vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future:

1. To work with and for our communities
2. To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
3. To support people at home and in their community
4. To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's new Corporate Plan for 2025 – 2030, called [Vale 2030](#), published in April 2025 includes five new well-being objectives to deliver our vision for the five-year period:

1. Creating great places to live, work and visit
2. Respecting and celebrating the environment
3. Giving everyone a good start in life
4. Supporting and protecting those who need us
5. Being the best Council we can be

As part of the development and finalisation of the new well-being objectives colleagues worked with trade union partners to gather their insights throughout the process to

ensure the voice of staff and union representatives was heard and reflected. The below section sets out evidence of the Council's engagement and consultation with its recognised trade unions whilst setting these well-being objectives and making strategic decisions aimed at achieving them.

To ensure trade union partners were actively involved in shaping the new well-being objectives from early on in the process, colleagues were included as part of the consultation on developing draft versions of the new Corporate Plan. This is shown through engaging with the Change Forum and JCF to reflect the views of attendees in early 2024 and again in 2025. Discussions featured questions on how the Plan would take into consideration space for staff personal development and working from home, considerations to these elements were included within the final version of the Plan. Questions were also raised around having greater transparency on the Council's budget which was highlighted as being important to members of staff. More information on the budget and financial plans from Welsh Government were shared with staff through a variety of methods including the Chief Executive's all staff End of Week Messages. Effort was also taken to connect the Corporate Plan consultation and the Budget Setting consultation to highlight synergies and raise the profile of the two consultation opportunities. Trade Union colleagues helpfully reflected on their experiences of the issues being faced by communities in the Vale, welcoming the focus of the Plan on tackling poverty and inequalities and indicating that this chimed from their experiences.

Following initial discussions with the Change Forum, as part of the formal consultation there was a discussion at the JCF in [December 2024](#) highlighting how the draft Corporate Plan had been developed to date, its contents including the five new draft corporate well-being objectives, and an overview of the planned consultation on the draft to engage with communities, partners and staff. Attendees were encouraged to ask any questions directly in the meeting or to follow up with relevant officers afterwards, Trade Union partners were encouraged to take part in the consultation themselves and to encourage others to do so.

Following the formal consultation on the new Corporate Plan and its corporate well-being objectives there was further discussion at the Change Forum in January 2025 when updates that had been made to the Plan following consultation were fed back to the Forum. The Forum was also updated on the findings of the [Panel Performance Assessment](#) which showed the Vale to be a 'good and thoughtful Council'. An update on the final sign off process of the Plan was provided at the Change Forum in February 2025 to keep members informed ahead of its publication in April 2025.

Wider Strategic Consultation to Achieve Existing Corporate Well-being Objectives

In addition to working closely with trade union partners to develop and finalise the new Corporate Plan and corporate well-being objectives for 2025 - 2030, throughout the year the Council also sought their feedback on a range of strategic decisions to help us achieve our well-being objectives for 2024/25. An overview of this engagement has been provided below aligned by objective; however, it should be noted that work often complements more than one objective in practice.

Well-being Objective One: To work with and for our communities

Insight from trade union partners has helped the Council to support several elements linked to staff well-being and inclusivity within the Council's Culture Book, the Council's alternative to an employee handbook. An example is the feedback and support for the development of several staff networks including GLAM - the Council's LGBTQ+ staff network, Diverse – the Council's global majority staff network, and the establishment of Abl - the Council's disability staff network. This work to support and encourage our diverse workforce by partners is aligned to the Council's commitments and recognition as a Disability Confident Employer and Stonewall Diversity Champion Employer. Linked to this work trade union partners have been engaged to help shape the development of the draft Culture Plan and have highlighted work to increase awareness across the workforce of neurodivergence.

Well-being Objective Two: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

Throughout the year the Council and trade unions have collaborated to share updates and shape improvements to a number of key policies and legislative developments. This has ensured that when introduced to the workplace and staff they are effectively delivered and embedded seamlessly and with clarity, providing an enriching, supportive working environment. One key aspect has been the strategic review of recruitment and retention and the Council's recruitment application process. To support commitments linked to employment and improving local opportunities for a diverse range of backgrounds and skills work has been undertaken to explore new, different and appropriate means of encouraging potential staff to apply for jobs within the Council, including the adoption of CVs, support for overseas workers and advertising the benefits of working for the organisation. Partners have discussed how to help advertise the flexibility and staff benefits to potential new recruits and work has taken place to collectively promote employee benefits, application of the real living wage and market

forces supplements to current staff including raising awareness of long-term service awards. In July, Cabinet approved that the Council apply for formal accreditation to become a Real Living Wage employer which will include work with its suppliers to enable them to become Real Living Wages employers.

In addition, our trade unions have provided significant support and guidance to our vision of developing a safety culture, through regular attendance at Health and Safety meetings and through the Terms and Conditions Forum to revise our Health and Safety policies and working practices, providing safe inclusive work spaces for all our staff to enjoy. This has included the adoption of Hybrid Working practices and revision of policies including Lone Worker and Alcohol and Drugs.

The Council has also worked with trade union partners on the development of the Recruitment and Retention Strategy ensuring a range of views are gathered to inform its development.

The actions under this well-being objectives are supported by work across Directorates, particularly Learning and Skills. Within the Learning and Skills Directorate Consultative Forum engagement with trade union partners this year has included discussions on the development of a Sexism and Sexual harassment toolkit, safeguarding, school holiday dates, menopause, maternity support and teaching peace.

Well-being Objective Three: To support people at home and in their community

This well-being objective includes commitments to ensure people have the necessary advice, care and support when they need it. Enabling the Council and trade union partners to remain up to date on emerging best practice and recommendations in relation to social services supports the Council's actions and shaped discussions during this period based on the emerging work of [the Association of Directors of Social Services \(ADSS\) Cymru](#). The ADSS represent the collective view of all local authority social services departments across Wales and influence legislation, policies and practices in the sector. Following recommendations to share the annual report with all JCFs in Wales information was shared on the [ADSS Cymru study](#) as part of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan to explore recruitment and carer progression for staff from global majority backgrounds in social care. Findings from the report aim to eliminate racism within the social care workforce based on the lived experiences of global majority staff in the sector and data analysis.

Many of the actions under this well-being objective are linked to work within the Social Services Directorate. Within the Social Services Directorate Consultative Forum trade union partners have been engaged on a range of topics including vacancies, Your Space office moves, social work progression and PPE.

Well-being Objective Four: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

Environment and Housing Directorate work aligns very closely to many actions under this well-being objective and as a result several topics have been discussed with trade union partners with the Visible Services and Housing Trade Union Consultative Forum. Together partners have discussed impacts and agreements of market forces on waste driver staff, team restructures in building services management alongside budgeting and impacts on savings targets. The Joint Consultative Forum have also received updates on the work being progressed under the Project Zero programme.

Staff Engagement

The Council is committed to staff engagement, recognising its crucial role in fostering a positive work culture and driving organisational success. In addition to the work detailed above with trade unions, the Council has implemented several initiatives including conducting staff surveys every two years to measure engagement and a staff engagement group. Significant work is also undertaken to support the Council's diversity networks, with GLAM and Diverse becoming more established and Abl being supported to develop. These groups provide support, discuss issues affecting specific groups, and raise awareness and help feedback and inform people policies and processes as well as having direct links to SLT. In 2024, the Council became one of the top 100 employers in the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index as well as achieving Silver Trailblazer status from Race Equality Matters. The Council runs a management development programme twice each year with all colleagues with line management responsibility being invited to attend. The focus of the programme over this period has been on the development of the Corporate Plan and Reshaping Programme. Trade union colleagues have an open invitation to attend these sessions and do so regularly.

[The Learning Cafe](#) is a unique staff development approach that promotes collaboration, breaks down barriers, and fosters ongoing learning and provides opportunities for Q&A on key matters including the development of the new Corporate Plan.

Next Steps

The Council will continue to work in a collaborative partnership with trade union representatives at regular meetings and forums to ensure the best outcomes for our workforce, recognising the challenges of the current climate and the aspirations and vision of the organisation. Partners will continue to develop strong working relationships aligned to the commitments within the Council's Partnership Statement, to achieve the actions outlined in Vale 2030 and the goals of the Well-being Future Generations (Wales) Act. This includes developing connections with Merthyr Council through quarterly

partnership meetings with the newly appointed employment and trade union representative Social Partnership Champions.

The Council's corporate well-being objectives will be reviewed annually and published as part of the Council's Annual Statement each April.

Work will be undertaken to develop further understanding and awareness of the Social Partnership Duty across the organisation and with trade union colleagues and to consider how we can continue to improve how we work together and engage on important issues including budget setting and a new People Strategy.

Agreement Status:

This annual report has been agreed with trade union partners at the Joint Consultative Forum meeting held on 12th January 2026.