

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 21<sup>ST</sup> JULY, 2022

REFERENCE FROM CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 13<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2022

“ DRAFT RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT’S CONSULTATION  
STATUTORY GUIDANCE AND DIRECTIONS MADE UNDER THE LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT ACT 2000, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE  
2011 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021  
(REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2022 was presented by the Operational  
Manager, Democratic Services, who outlined the following points:

- The proposed draft response was a technical but also a very diverse document, covering key areas such as the Council’s constitution and associated guide, as well as other wide-ranging areas as part of the consultation, due to this being a significant cornerstone piece of legislation. A number of provisions also covered and promoted diversity, involvement and participation within the local government family in Wales.
- Over the last 18 months, there had been a number of reports linked to this legislation that had gone through to Full Council, Cabinet etc. i.e. on family absence arrangements, and interim guidance on multi location meetings, as well as other consultations such as Corporate Joint Committees.
- Some of the work had already been in train in terms of the Act, with some of it having come into effect last year, from May 2021, but the majority taking effect from the 5th of May this year, which included the introduction of a new Model Constitution and guide, arrangement job sharing, assistance to the executive, and changes to petitions i.e. the provision of electronic petitions.
- Unfortunately, although the legislation was in place, there was a significant suite of statutory guidance still awaited from Welsh Government (WG).
- The deadline for the consultation response to be submitted to WG was 22nd July 2022.
- Work to progress the extensive and detailed provisions within the Act had been overseen by an officer working group with an associated action plan.
- Discussions were on going at an officer level relating to resourcing for the implementation as a result of the instruction of legislation and requirements of proposed statutory guidance.

Following the presentation of the report, the subsequent comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Dr Johnson, as both a Committee Member and as a Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, wanted to raise the following points:

- There were some very important issues being raised in the consultation about the sufficiency of resources for the Democratic services team. There was a clear need to ensure sufficient resources for the Democratic Services Team in order to address areas such as additional information, research and support services for all Elected Members in order to hold Cabinet and the Council to account and to discuss key issues in a more effective manner. This would help to address the current 'imbalance' between the support Council Officers currently gave to Cabinet members and that given to opposition and 'backbench' members as well as Independent Members of the Council.
- The need to emphasise, as part of this consultation, the importance of the Welsh language not being treated any differently or any less favourably than English i.e. the use of an interpreter at hybrid meetings and the importance of bilingual participation, in a majority English speaking area, which the Vale of Glamorgan was.
- Councillor Loveluck-Edwards stressed the importance of issues around committee meeting timings, training and development of members, etc. as part of the consultation, in order to help promote diversity and accessibility. It had been extremely beneficial to undertake the various induction training for new Councillors online and it was good to see that this was also being addressed as part of the consultation. It was also good to see the response on ethics and standards and the importance of new Members understanding their obligations. The Councillor asked what the timeline was on feedback from new Members regarding training and development, when the draft consultation needed to go back to WG on the 22<sup>nd</sup> July and be finalised by Autumn. The Operational Manager, Democratic Services, explained that the survey on training circulated would be looked at in the Autumn / Winter (which would help inform a training needs analysis for members), with other surveys planned such as timings of Committee meetings, to be undertaken in due course.
- The Operational Manager, Democratic Services, wished to add that the Council had provided thorough training to Members, (i.e., to ensure that key business such as quasi-judicial committees and Cabinet could commence as quickly as possible) but this needed to be balanced with not overwhelming new and existing Members straight away. The Vale had been one of the first Welsh Local Authorities to have its Committees resume following the recent local elections, as well as undertaking Member inductions and issuing new ICT equipment. He thanked the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer and her team for their support in delivering the member development programme activities to date, as well as the support provided at Committee meetings.

The Chair echoed the comments made by the Members above and agreed that the online training provided by the Vale of Glamorgan Council had been thorough and timely.

Having considered the reference and report and all the issues and implications contained therein, Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Cabinet be informed of the comments made by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Draft Response to Welsh Government's Consultation Statutory Guidance and Directions made under the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, namely:

- The need to ensure sufficient resources for the Democratic Services Team in order to address areas such as additional information, research and support services for all Elected Members in order to hold Cabinet and the Council to account and to discuss key issues in a more effective manner;
- The importance of ensuring that the Welsh language was not treated any differently or any less favourably than English i.e. the use of an interpreter at hybrid meetings and the importance of bilingual participation;
- The importance of reviewing the timings of meetings, work life balance, diversity, feedback, training and development for Members.

#### Reason for recommendation

In order for Cabinet to consider the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee prior to submission to Welsh Government.”