

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 22 October 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Item which the Chair has decided is urgent (Part I) (If yes, why)	Not applicable
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (15.14 of the Constitution) (If yes, why)	Not applicable
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Strengthening Communities: Reshaping our work with the Voluntary Sector – Future of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee
Portfolio Holder:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Strategic Leadership Team:	Director of Corporate Resources
Lead Officer:	Director of Corporate Resources

1.0 What is this report about?

- 1.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council has a longstanding history of working with the Third Sector and is keen for this to continue but recognises that in recent years engagement with the sector through the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC) has become limited. As part of the Council's response to the Panel Performance Assessment which recommended reviewing partnership arrangements, and in light of the partnership statement contained in Vale 2030, a proposed approach has been developed and is outlined in the report which sets out several ways in which future engagement can be strengthened.
- 1.2 As the Council continues to review its ways of working, especially in collaboration with wider partnerships and committee arrangements to support the delivery of Vale 2030, it has explored alternative ways to engage with the Third Sector, building on existing mechanisms and developing new approaches.

- 1.3 As part of this work, in July 2025, the Council paused meetings of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee whilst discussions took place about the need and purpose of the committee and whether alternative arrangements outside a formal committee meeting would be more appropriate to support greater engagement between the Council and the sector.
- 1.4 In response to these discussions and engagement undertaken by Glamorgan Voluntary Services, this report proposes that the Council adopts a new and more collaborative approach to working with the Third Sector.
- 1.5 It is proposed that these new arrangements replace the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and the Constitution be amended to reflect the changes.

2.0 What is the Recommendation?

	Recommendation – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	T H A T Cabinet cease meetings of the existing Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and trial the ways outlined within Section 4.15 of the report.	To allow new and improved collaborative ways of working with Third Sector representatives moving forward to maximise value for all stakeholders involved.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

- 3.1 Vale 2030 details a strong commitment to working with a range of partners including the Third Sector and recognises the value of partnership working. A partnership statement is included within Vale 2030, structured around the Council's four values and emphasises that across the Council there is a commitment to work with partners including the Third Sector.
- 3.2 The statement recognises the diverse range of partners the Council works with and that much of our work is reliant on effective partnership working. It recognises that there are a range of voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises as well our public sector partners, Town and Community Councils and the private sector. As our arrangements for partnership working and engagement evolve then it is important that we review the mechanisms in place and their effectiveness. This is reflective of the Council's response to the Panel Performance Assessment's recommendation relating to reviewing partnership working arrangements.
- 3.3 The Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC) is a Committee which consists of 8 Elected Members, alongside 7 Voluntary Sector representatives and 1 representative as nominated by the Community Liaison Committee from Town and Community Councils. Meetings of the Committee are scheduled for 2-4 times a year, with agendas hosted on the Council's website. Meetings have been paused since June 2025 following a decision by Cabinet.

- 3.4 Prior to the pause attendance at this Committee has been varied, potentially limiting the effectiveness of the existing arrangements, with agendas largely consisting of update reports and presentations where comments are made and noted.
- 3.5 The Committee's Terms of Reference is outlined within Section 14.16 (r) of the Council's Constitution; and includes areas such as:
- (1) To refer, as appropriate, reports and recommendations to the Council's Cabinet and the Executives of Voluntary Sector organisations.
 - (2) To appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair from amongst the eight Members of the Council and an Honorary Vice-Chair from amongst the seven representatives from the Voluntary Sector.
 - (3) To advise the Council of the needs, views and concerns of the Voluntary Sector.
 - (4) To report on the work of those organisations grant funded by the Council, either in full or in part.
 - (5) To act as a consultative forum where the Voluntary Sector and the Council may, in partnership, put forward policy proposals for discussion and decision.
 - (6) To facilitate and promote joint working between the Council and the Voluntary Sector.
 - (7) In accordance with the statutory provisions, only Members of the Council will have voting rights. However, where there is no consensus, this will be reported in the minutes and placed before the Cabinet prior to a decision being taken.
 - (8) To review the Compact and associated Annual Work Plan and to monitor and report on progress made towards achieving the actions contained within the Compact and the Plan.
 - (9) To consider reports of the Cabinet and other Committees of the Council which have a bearing and impact on the Voluntary Sector.
- 3.6 At the May 2026 Annual Committee meeting, it was agreed that the 8 Elected Member representatives would be:
- Councillor Rhiannon Birch (Chair)
Councillor Ian Buckley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Lis Burnett
Councillor Amelia Collins
Councillor Robert Fisher
Councillor Jayne Norman
Councillor Joanna Protheroe
Councillor Nicholas Wood
- 3.7 In relation to the 7 Voluntary Sector Representative seats on the Committee, most recently 2 had been taken up by a representative from Glamorgan Voluntary Services, and Cardiff and Vale Action for Mental Health, an organisation which has subsequently closed. Therefore only 1 seat for representatives for the Voluntary Sector is occupied and the other

6 remain vacant.

- 3.8 It is also important to reflect that there are a multitude of reasons for the vacant seats; but it is important to consider that these individuals are most often volunteers and may not have a detailed understanding of Constitutional meeting formalities or want to be broadcast publicly as part of a meeting. They may also be very knowledgeable in their area of voluntary activity, but the participating in the formality of a Committee considering Third Sector wide issues may not be an attractive proposition.
- 3.9 In the spirit of the Council's work to improve the effectiveness of all of its committee arrangements, there is a drive to reduce the number of information only/briefing type items considered by committees. Below are details of attendance and the types of items considered by VSJLC prior to it being paused in June 2025.

Date	Number of Agenda Items	Number of Council Attendees (Committee Members)	Number of Third Sector Attendees	Number of Town and Community Council Attendees
29/04/2025	2	4	2	0
27/01/2025	3	5	2	1
14/10/2024	4	6	1	1
15/04/2024	2	4	1	1
29/01/2024	5	4	2	1

- 3.10 When the decision was taken to pause the Committee, it was recognised that there are other arrangements where the Council works with Third Sector representatives, including:
- 3.10.1 The Chief Executive of Glamorgan Voluntary Services being a member of the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board.
 - 3.10.2 The Chief Executive of Glamorgan Voluntary Services being a member of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board.
 - 3.10.3 Monthly meetings between the Chief Executive of GVS and the Director of Corporate Resources and the Operational Manager Strategy and Insight.
 - 3.10.4 The Section 16 Forum which is a statutory forum duty contained in Part Two of the Social Services & Wellbeing Act. This Forum has recently been renamed the Vale Community Partnership.
- 3.11 Meetings of the committee were scheduled for June and October 2026, but these have been cancelled to allow work to continue regarding proposals for alternative arrangements. The next scheduled meeting is 3rd February 2027.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

- 4.1 Vale 2030 places a strong emphasis upon the need to work in partnership to meet its aspirations of “Strong Communities with a Bright Future”. The partnership statement within Vale 2030, outlines a number of commitments and the points below are pertinent to the proposal for an alternative way of working including;
- 4.1.1 Providing opportunities for you to be involved in the decision-making process at different stages and for your voice to be heard in what we do and the way we do it
 - 4.1.2 Providing a range of opportunities for you to be represented on different committees and forums
 - 4.1.3 Be responsive to your ideas and concerns, with easy and clear contact points in our departments and;
 - 4.1.4 Forging new relationships and ways of working.
- 4.2 It should also be noted that there have been changes at Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS), whereby a new Chief Executive came into post in March 2026, providing an opportune moment to review strategic ways of working with both sectors.
- 4.3 The Panel Performance Assessment undertaken in November 2024 also recognised the importance of effective partnership working and influenced the commitments in Vale 2030 and our Reshaping programme. A key strand of our Reshaping programme is Strengthening Communities, whereby we seek to change the way we work with our residents and communities to be more responsive to local needs and to tackle issues together in a new and more engaging way. There is a significant emphasis within Reshaping on the value of collaboration and developing our insights into local needs and the third sector are a key partner in this work.
- 4.4 As referenced above there are several issues with regard to the VSJLC as a mechanism for effective engagement between the Council and the Third Sector. These include attendance at meetings, agenda items either being information reports or often references from other committees, engagement in discussions at meetings, and third sector representation. This has been fed back on a consistent basis historically by members of the Committee and Third Sector representatives.
- 4.5 The proposed approach reflects the principles of the Council's wider Reshaping Scrutiny work and the Cabinet forward programme and allows discussions to focus upon strategic issues impacting upon the sector in a more dynamic way. The approach also ensures that there are effective mechanisms for the voice of the sector to continue to be heard.
- 4.6 It should be noted that since the committee has been paused there have been no requests for a committee meeting or any potential agenda items raised by Members of the Council or Glamorgan Voluntary Services. There have been no queries about the committee to the Democratic Services team or the Strategy and Insight team although there have been queries from one Elected Member to the Director of Corporate Resources regarding engagement with the voluntary sector.

- 4.7 Following the pausing of the Committee there have been several discussions about VSJLC and alternative arrangements. There is a commitment to have strong relationships across the sector and with Glamorgan Voluntary Services recognising their role as the local Voluntary Sector Council and to ensure that effective mechanisms are in place. It is clear from discussions undertaken with the sector, officers and with Elected Members that effective mechanisms need to be in place to ensure good working relationships between the Council and the sector.
- 4.8 It is important that any alternative arrangements to the VSJLC strengthen engagement and support a strong relationship between the Council and the sector and are comparable with other arrangements within the Council, for example work with Town and Community Councils.
- 4.9 In July 2026, a proposal was agreed by Cabinet and discussed with the Community Liaison Committee to review the current arrangements. This report included a timetable to review ways of working and a forum meeting in October to explore the best way forward.
- 4.10 The proposals outlined in this report are in keeping with those arrangements and together the changes would strengthen opportunities for co-production, joint working, discussion and insight into our local communities. The approach to working with the Third Sector will be co-produced alongside Glamorgan Voluntary Services as part of their convening role.
- 4.11 Following discussions between officers, the existing Committee Chair and also with the new Chief Executive of Glamorgan Voluntary Services it is proposed that new arrangements are put in place and, if intended outcomes are achieved, the Committee would cease to exist.
- 4.12 This proposal recognises that if the VSJLC ceased to exist in its current guise there is a need to ensure that there are appropriate channels for regular dialogue and for issues to be raised and discussed. The following would be an alternative way of working that would ensure issues could be raised and that the sector would have opportunities and means to engage with the Council. The proposals have been designed to ensure that the relevant terms of reference of the VSJLC are considered as part of developing future arrangements, alongside those arrangements which have grown and matured between the Council, GVS and the sector in recent years.
- 4.13 One of the key pieces of feedback that came through the engagement GVS undertook was that their members want something to happen because of their discussions with the Council irrespective of the medium(s) used. It is also important to the sector that there are robust mechanisms for issues to be raised and for the voice of the sector to be heard in local decision-making processes. The current Committee arrangements mean that only Council Members are able to vote within the Committee, and this creates a potential barrier and imbalance that a less formal approach could resolve.
- 4.14 The following proposed way forward has been developed in partnership with the Chief Executive of GVS and reflects the views expressed by the members of GVS and are in line with changes to other Council Committees. It is considered that this combination of arrangements would facilitate better dialogue and opportunity for engagement and could

replace the Committee and be utilised pragmatically by all stakeholders as they are not likely to be constrained by constitution processes.

- 4.15 This driving ethos of the proposals outlined below are framed by the Local Government Association's good practice guidance that "A culture that values participation by small VCFSE organisations is created through the quality of relationships between voluntary organisations ... Council Officers and Elected Councillors. These relationships will be both formal and informal and need to have consistency and transparency. These relationships also need to be part of a continuous dialogue, not just one off or occasional, which requires resources to maintain as well as start."

4.15.1 Establishment of a new twice yearly Third Sector Round Table between the Council and the Sector – it is proposed that a Round Table arrangement is established and that an initial meeting in November/December 2026 would enable the arrangements to be co-designed and co-produced with the Sector. The provisional outline would be that meetings are held twice a year with an agenda that has been created by the sector in collaboration with the Council. There would be standing membership from the Council at an officer and Elected Member level (e.g. Executive Leader, one other Cabinet Member and the Chief Executive) and standing membership from the sector of the equivalent number including Chief Executive of GVS. This would enable continuity within discussion and for good working relationships to be developed. Other Council Officers, Members and voluntary sector organisations would be invited to attend depending on the items to be discussed. The Round Table would provide a mechanism to discuss opportunities, priorities and any areas of concern across the sector. If necessary, follow on meetings with senior officers and individual Cabinet Members could be arranged or issues could be brought together into a report for Cabinet or Scrutiny if needed. GVS are convening a Third Sector Leaders Forum which would help shape the work of the Round Table. Following the initial meeting a terms of reference would be drafted to articulate the working arrangements for the Round Table and the commitment from participants and guiding principles. Minutes of these meetings would be published on the Council website (as part of a wider quarterly Cabinet update about outside bodies) and shared with the sector.

4.15.2 Briefings to all Elected Members – these are on a frequent basis throughout the year and provide an informal setting for Members and stakeholders to discuss pertinent issues. The briefings have been introduced as part of the Reshaping work and improved approach to communicating to Members and supporting their wider development. This releases agendas in meetings and enables a more focused consideration of issues and opportunities for Members to ask questions whilst still allowing time for Members to understand and consider key topics relating to the work of the Council. As a minimum one would be scheduled on the GVS Annual Impact Report to ensure it is discussed in a timely way and also with a wider number of Members. Other briefings could be arranged on topics, as necessary. The GVS Annual Impact report 24/25 was the subject of a Member briefing held on 9th February, and 17 Members attended and there was good discussion on a range of related issues. Recordings of sessions are also held centrally can be viewed by

Members on a self-service basis.

- 4.15.3 **Scrutiny** - there are opportunities for the sector to engage with the Task and Finish work of the four Scrutiny committees and to share information and views as expert witnesses on behalf of the sector. Work will be undertaken to explore further how these channels can be strengthened as the Council matures in the implementation of its Reshaping Scrutiny arrangements. In addition, there is also the scope for a request to be made to scrutiny committees to consider a report on a particular issue relevant to their terms of reference as well as the opportunity to be an expert witness or to request to speak at a committee meeting. This would enable the issue to be discussed by Members familiar with the subject matters and to understand the issues in the context of other work. It would also ensure that the involvement of the Third Sector in committee activity was mainstreamed rather than dealt with as a single issue in a separate setting. This would support greater understanding of the issues within a particular context, for example, around health and social care. The Committee Forward Work Programmes will be shared with GVS to help identify opportunities for GVS to be involved in Committee work. This may include representing the sector holistically or identifying potential organisations they are aware of which may add value, particularly within investigative (task and finish) scrutiny work.
- 4.15.4 **Strategic Partnerships** - GVS are a member of the Public Services Board and Regional Partnership Board, and this provides other mechanisms to discuss the role of the sector, as well as opportunities and concerns with other partners including the University Health Board and the Police for example. These partnership arrangements and others could be utilised more to consider opportunities for the sector as well as their impact and concerns, again as part of more focused discussions. Discussions are already taking place with the Chief Executive of GVS to ensure this happens with an agenda item included on the September PSB meeting.
- 4.15.5 **Monthly Meetings between the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive of GVS with the Director of Corporate Resources and Operational Manager Strategy and Insight** - these meetings are longstanding and valuable and will continue to take place every month to discuss joint working, challenges and updates from the two organisations. Importantly, these meetings ensure that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) is regularly monitored and that there is good engagement between the two organisations. Meetings are an opportunity to discuss the work of GVS and the Council but also wider issues effecting the sector and involvement in more formal partnership working including the Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board. These meetings do not preclude the need for other meetings to be organised on an ad hoc basis as necessary and indeed support the effective arrangement of the same.
- 4.15.6 **Other mechanisms** - the Vale Community Partnership (formerly the Section 16 Forum) would continue providing a mechanism for discussion and joint working within the social care sector. Across the Council there are many other examples of existing mechanisms and strong relationships with the sector, for example, with

Citizens Advice, Regeneration and through different funding streams. The Partnership Statement and Vale 2030 provide a framework for the relationship but there is a wide variety of engagement activity, joint working and support arrangements with the sector. The Reshaping Programme also provides opportunities for further work with the sector. In addition to the mechanisms already described there will continue to be the option to bring stakeholders together to discuss specific subjects and projects, helping to further build relationships and develop greater insights and understanding of the work of the sector and new and emerging opportunities as well as what some barriers might be.

- 4.16 GVS have sought the views of their members on the VSJLC through both a survey and as part of a series of engagement events with the sector. The results of the engagement indicated a lack of awareness about the committee, how it worked and the outcomes derived. Some felt that a formal mechanism for dialogue between the sector and Elected Members is important for accountability, transparency and continuity. Views were expressed that formal mechanisms provide legitimacy and safeguard the voluntary sector voice but there were concerns about capacity to participate in the committee with the current arrangements and a need for flexibility. The emerging issue was that the value is less about the existence of a structure, and more about how well it functions, how representative it is, and how visible its impact is. Respondents value stable, recognised engagement routes that are not overly reliant on individual relationships or goodwill and that clear routes from discussion to action are critical.
- 4.17 Research undertaken into arrangements in other Local Authorities indicates that a formal committee of the nature of VSJLC is not standard practice as a method of engagement between a Council and the third sector, with many having similar arrangements in place as outlined in the proposals above.
- 4.18 The proposals outlined above reflect arrangements already in place as well as suggesting additional arrangements that could further embed working with the sector across a range of issues, reflecting the maturity of the relationships. These proposals have been discussed with and are supported by the Chief Executive of GVS. The proposals include some clear points of connection but also recognise that there is a need to utilise a variety of mechanisms to ensure engagement with the sector at an officer and an Elected Member level. It is also recognised that there is a need for flexibility within the arrangements to support new approaches and to ensure that the sector has a variety of routes to connect with the Council. Work will continue to promote the Partnership Statement and ensure that across the Council the sector is valued and engaged. There are examples across all parts of the Council of good engagement and work with the sector this will continue.
- 4.19 The new arrangements once agreed would also be reflected in a variation to the Service Level Agreement between the Council and GVS to provide clarity and certainty.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

- 5.1 A range of evidence has been used to inform this report, including the views of the sector following engagement undertaken by GVS through a survey and at a series of engagement

events. The desire is for engagement mechanisms that focus on shared priorities and themes, enable the voluntary sector to raise issues proactively and result in visible actions, feedback, or influence on decision-making.

- 5.2 A review of the workings of the committee prior to the pause as well as other arrangements in place and opportunities for engagement with the sector has also been reviewed.
- 5.3 The Council has also explored and sought to understand how other Welsh Local Authorities engage with the sector, and a desktop research exercise indicates that a formal committee of the nature of VSJLC is not standard practice as a method of engagement between a Council and the voluntary sector.
- 5.4 New Local's research into community power presents a range of practical considerations in working with communities on a macro and micro scale, emphasising the need to ensure an "optimal alignment between communities and institution so they can co-create a preferred future." This is aligned to Audit Wales's highlighting of the need to support and encourage volunteering, and in turn the sector, to create self-reliant communities.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

- 6.1 If approved, the report will be shared with members of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and work will progress to hold the first meeting of the Round Table in late 2026 and a second meeting in early 2027.
- 6.2 Arrangements will also be put in place to ensure work is progressed in line with the other proposals outlined in this report.
- 6.3 Changes would be communicated to all stakeholders ahead of the initial meeting and monitored via regular review between the Council and Glamorgan Voluntary Services.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

- 7.1 A key part of the Vale 2030 is the partnership statement, of which the voluntary sector are a key partner, detailing how the Council will work with others to support residents in meeting their outcomes and the aspiration of building "Strong Communities with a Bright Future".

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

- 8.1 These proposals are seeking to ensure that the long-term ambition of the Council's approach to collaborating with the Third Sector are achieved, and that there are opportunities for integration, whilst also involving the sector in the Council's decision making. Reviewing these arrangements and introducing new arrangements seeks to prevent future challenges in how the Council works with Third Sector representatives.

Resources

9.0 Finance

- 9.1 The proposals outlined will be delivered within the existing base budget, meaning no further revenue funding is required. However, as workstreams potentially develop in the future, additional funding may be required dependent upon scope. This will be responded to on a case-by-case basis as and when the need arises.
- 9.2 The grant awarded to GVS is £105,493.20 for 2026/27 and this is the second year of a 3-year grant with an accompanying SLA. The grant to be awarded for 2027/28 and will be in line with the settlements for those years (excluding additional funding resulting from the transfer of any new responsibilities).
- 9.3 The existing terms of reference for VSJLC state 'To report on the work of those organisations grant funded by the Council, either in full or in part.' As with the VSJLC the proposed Round Table will provide the opportunity for discussion regarding funding and resources. Responsibility for monitoring the delivery of specific grants, contracts and Service Level Agreements issued by the Council will continue to be undertaken by Chief Officers and reported through existing reporting arrangements.

10.0 Workforce

- 10.1 There are no direct employment impacts because of these proposals.
- 10.2 As ways of working further develop, staff will need to understand and consider the impact upon their individual areas of responsibilities.

11.0 Legal and Equalities

- 11.1 **Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? If not, why?** An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed because this report outlines a programme of activities in working more effectively with the voluntary sector.
- 11.2 There are no direct legal implications because of this report, as this Committee does not discharge any formal legal functions. Any changes made to ways of working will need to be reflected in the Council's Constitution as appropriate.
- 11.3 Participation and engagement with the Third Sector will be considered in line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act, with reflection upon guidance to co-option arrangements considered from the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales, and other relevant legislation as appropriate.

12.0 **Key Contacts**

12.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Lead Officer: Tom Bowring Director of Corporate Resources tbowring@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Democratic Services Officer: Matt Swindell Cabinet and Committee Services Officer. mlswindell@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
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Appendix

Appendix A – Overview of Proposed Strategic Engagement with Vale of Glamorgan Council Elected Members

Background Documents

[VSJLC Report](#) Cabinet 17th July 2025

[Review of Ways of Working with Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan](#),
Community Liaison Committee, 2nd July 2026

[Panel Performance Assessment – Vale of Glamorgan Council](#)

[Member Development Programme](#) – Phase 4 Progress Report, Democratic Services Committee,
2nd March 2026

[Working with Local Infrastructure Organisations to engage smaller VCFSE organisations: Good practice guide](#), Local Government Association

[Toolkit: Partnership working with the voluntary and community sector](#), Local Government Association

[The state of strategic relationships between Councils and their local voluntary and community sector](#), Local Government Association

[Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self-Reliance](#), Audit Wales

[Exploring the Potential of Community-Centred Public Services](#), New Local

Appendix A

Overview of Proposed Strategic Engagement with Vale of Glamorgan Council Elected Members

Channel	Elected Member Representation	Frequency	Decision Making Ability
Third Sector Round Table	Leader and one other Cabinet Member as standing Members with other Elected Members invited depending on the agenda	Twice Yearly (Minimum)	Informal - able to channel via governance arrangements if needed.
Member Briefings	All Councillors	As required (Minimum Annually)	Informal – No direct channel to decision makers but able to raise awareness with a wide range of Elected Members.
Scrutiny	All Scrutiny Members	TBD in collaboration with Sector	Formal – Direct channel to influence policy with opportunity to inform recommendations based on views as per Scrutiny process.