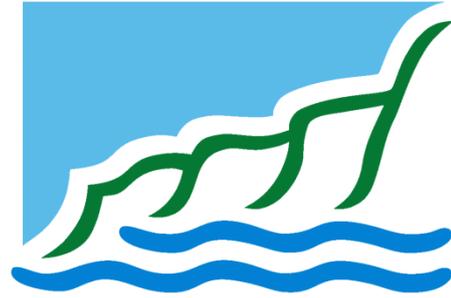


VALE of GLAMORGAN



BRO MORGANNWG

**SCRUTINY
ANNUAL REPORT**

2013/14

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Foreword

As the Chairman of the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group, and the Council's appointed Scrutiny Champion I am delighted to present the 2013/14 Scrutiny Committees' Annual Report. It provides an account of the progress made in the past year, including some of the key pieces of work undertaken along with areas under consideration for the next year.

I believe that this year has been a busy and effective one for Scrutiny and it is important to share with all Members and the wider community some of the issues that we have examined over the past twelve months.

Can I begin by thanking the Members of the Scrutiny Committees for their commitment and contributions to our work and also the officers who have supported us so effectively.

One of the major areas of work this year included undertaking a review of Traffic Management, the aim of which was to highlight areas where traffic congestion is an issue and also to promote healthier and more sustainable forms of transport. Further details of the findings are contained within this report.

2013/14 also saw the Committees grapple with some of the major issues affecting our communities and I would hope you will agree with me that we have tried to make a real difference to the formal decision-making process. By producing this report we hope to give you a flavour of the level of work undertaken and an understanding of the role played by the Scrutiny Committees.

I have always stressed the importance for Scrutiny Committees to maintain an open and critical mind, to provide criticism in a constructive way and to offer genuine praise where appropriate.

In looking forward Scrutiny Committees will continue to endeavour to be a "critical friend" in the delivery of the Council's priorities in the face of facing continued resource constraints and continue to monitor and evaluate service performance.

Councillor Mark Wilson
Chairman - Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group
and Chairman - Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources)

Introduction

Each year the Council produces an Annual Scrutiny Report. The document gives a retrospective insight into the work undertaken by each of the Council's five Scrutiny Committees.

The Annual Report details examples of Council policies, functions and activities that have been scrutinised over the past year and what may be looked at during the coming year. Members of the public wishing to put forward any suggestions for any of the Scrutiny Committees to consider can do so. The form for this can be found at the back of this report or alternatively at the following link

[\[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx\]](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx)

What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny is vital to the work of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and its partners. It offers reassurance to local people, helps to develop policy, improves the performance of the Council and holds the Executive to account for its decisions.

Scrutiny acts as a “critical friend”, standing back from the day to day decision-making to look at and review outcomes for local residents.

The core components for effective Scrutiny are:



Most of the decisions in the Council are taken by a small group of (7) Councillors known as the **Cabinet** (also referred to as the Executive). Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet are known as Non-Executive Members. It is these Non-Executive Members that have opportunity to sit on a Scrutiny Committee.

Scrutiny Committees can make recommendations and scrutinise the policies, decisions and performance of the Cabinet. The Cabinet, in turn, consults with, and responds to, Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

How does a Scrutiny Committee undertake its role?

- By examining key decisions and actions taken by the Cabinet and other partner organisations to make sure that they are being taken in the best interests of residents;
- By evaluating the Cabinet's spending and budget plans to ensure that resources are used in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way;
- By inviting Cabinet Members and our partners to publicly declare their commitments to improving local people's lives and monitoring their achievements;
- By asking questions of decision-makers;
- By making comments and formal recommendations to key decision-makers including the Cabinet and other statutory bodies such as Health and the Police;
- By scrutinising the Council's and partners' policies, strategy, service delivery and performance;
- By investigating and championing issues of poor performance or concern to local people; and
- By engaging and involving residents to make sure that local people have a say in the decisions that affect them.

The five Scrutiny Committees within the Vale of Glamorgan are:

- ❖ **Corporate Resources**
- ❖ **Economy and Environment**
- ❖ **Housing and Public Protection**
- ❖ **Lifelong Learning**
- ❖ **Social Care and Health**

Agendas, reports and minutes of these meetings can be found on the Council's website at the following link;

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/minutes,_agendas_and_reports.aspx

Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen Group

The Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group continues to act as an important “sounding board” in terms of emerging scrutiny initiatives, developments and legislation.

During the year, the Group was kept informed of progress in respect of the Council’s involvement in the Wales Audit Office (WAO) Scrutiny Improvement Study. However, the final WAO Study report was only issued on 29th May 2014 and, consequently, consideration of, and reaction to, the report will form an important part of the Group’s work during 2014/15 and subsequently..

The Group is also an important element in developing the Council’s approach to Task and Finish activities.

At its most recent meeting, an initial summary report was received following the Member Scrutiny Satisfaction Survey referred to earlier in this Annual Report. Acknowledging the feeling amongst those Members who responded that more work can be done with regard to public participation and engagement in the Scrutiny process, the Group has endorsed for future introduction a draft Protocol for Public Speaking at Scrutiny Committees.

Scrutiny Committee (Corporate Resources)

Chair:

Councillor M. Wilson



Members:

Councillor Mrs. P. Drake (Vice Chair)

Councillor K.J. Geary

Councillor H.C. Hamilton

Councillor K. Hatton

Councillor H.J.W. James

Councillor P. King

Councillor R.A. Penrose

Councillor G. Roberts

Councillor A.C. Williams

Looking back over the past year.....

Some key aspects considered by the Committee were:

► Delivering Disability Facilities Grants

Members of the Committee have placed a great deal of importance in scrutinising the amount of time it has taken the Council to deliver Disability Facility Grants (DFG). The purpose of these grants is to enable people with a disability to make changes to their homes so that they have better freedom of movement into and around their homes, and to give access to essential facilities within their home.

Aware of significant delays in providing the grants and in order to tackle the underperformance, the Committee received a number of reports which detailed the following areas of concern:

- Lengthy intervals in carrying out an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment;
- OT 1st contact to OT recommendation received by DFG team;
- Referral to DFG team to Approval of Grant and
- Approval of Grant to certified date.

Outcomes

In tackling these issues, the Committee were informed that improvements so far include the refinement of the assessment process and to the way that DFGs were awarded, these have resulted in improved service responsiveness and a reduction in waiting times. Local performance indicators have been established in order to closely monitor delivery times and procedures have been created to ensure that additional/unforeseen works are regularly monitored. In addition the service is improving in the way that it reacts to customer suggestions and additional staff resources have been put in place through the recruitment of an additional Occupational Therapist. The Committee has expressed its appreciation of the efforts of the staff and is continuing to monitor this progress.

► **Performance and Budget Monitoring**

The Scrutiny Committee regularly monitors Performance and Budget information and the Committee has a specific duty to consider Treasury Management.

In looking at Performance and the Budget during this period the Scrutiny Committee has:

- Questioned the Cabinet about Budget proposals.
- Monitored and challenged overall corporate performance against agreed targets.
- Monitored and challenged performance progress against agreed actions in relation to Sickness absence.
- Monitored the performance and progress in implementing the Council's Improvement Plan.
- Received updates regarding the Council's Treasury Management in accessing loans and its commercial dealing into the investment market

► **Update on work relating to the Welfare Reform agenda**

During 2012/13 the Committee had undertaken a review into the impact following implementation of the Governments Welfare Reform agenda.

In November 2013 the Scrutiny Committee considered a further report detailing recent changes to the welfare system and also updating of the work undertaken by the Council to mitigate the effect of the Reforms by providing assistance to those individuals affected related to the following matters:

The Scrutiny Committee were kept abreast of the latest changes that included;

- Introduction of the Personal Independence Payment
- Introduction of the Benefit Cap
- Introduction of the Universal Credit (UC)
- Changes to Pension Credit

► **Implementation of the Living Wage**

At its meeting held during December 2013, the Committee reviewed the implications and discussed the pros and cons for the Council if it chose to introduce the Living Wage. Members noted the moral issues and the positive benefits of introducing the Living Wage but were mindful of the significant budgetary challenges being faced and saw the timing of any change as a critical consideration.

After taking into account a wide range of issues the Committee made a recommendation to Cabinet that the Council seeks a way of raising a campaign for the improvement of the minimum wage across the UK and for the UK/Welsh Government to include in future Revenue Support Grant settlements appropriate funding to ensure that the Minimum wage could be adopted.

► Other Aspects

During the year the Scrutiny Committee also:

- Examined the impact of Sickness absence levels;
- Reviewed Service Improvement Plans;
- Looked at the Council's Sustainable Development plans;
- Considered Regulatory Service collaboration plans and
- Assessed improvements to the way the Council undertakes Customer Care

Looking ahead.....

Moving forward, the Committee will continue to closely monitor the performance of Vale of Glamorgan Council services, closure of the Council's financial accounts for 2013/14, the Council's medium term financial plan, the level of staff sickness and the turnover of staff within the Council and undertake scrutiny of proposals for greater regional working with Cardiff and Bridgend Council's in relation to Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing and the planned merging of the CCTV operations with Bridgend Council.

The Committee will also over the next 12 months continue to closely monitor the situation particularly in respect of grants for children and to ensure that the Cabinet's and Council's commitment to make progress in working towards achieving the all Wales average for all DFG's from first point of contact to completion.

Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment)

Chair:

Councillor Mrs A.J. Moore



Members:

Councillor E. Hacker (Vice Chair)
Councillor P.J. Clarke
Councillor G.A. Cox
Councillor Ms. C.L. Curtis
Councillor Mrs P. Drake
Councillor H.J.W. James
Councillor P. King
Councillor A.G. Powell
Councillor S.T. William
Councillor Mrs. M.K. Owen

Looking back over the past year.....

The committee's main focus for the last twelve months has included:

► **Review of Road Traffic Management**

A key part of the Committee's work involved a Task and Finish Group review into Traffic Management within the Vale of Glamorgan. The objective of the review was to examine how the road network was managed, to highlight areas of traffic congestion in the Vale and to look at ways to promote modal shift so that local residents can better appreciate the benefits of using more sustainable and healthier forms of transport.

Members of the Group consisted of Councillors Anne Moore, Eric Hacker, Pamela Drake, Philip Clarke, Christopher Williams and Mary Kelly Owen. The Group was supported by officers from within the Council.

In reviewing the road network, the Group was able to highlight specific areas that were adversely affected by traffic congestion. This naturally concentrated to the south eastern area of the Vale, towards Cardiff and centring around, Barry Island, Cardiff Road from Barry through Dinas Powys, Penarth, 5 Mile Lane, Bonvilston A48, Culverhouse Cross and the St.Athan Enterprise Zone. Following Cabinet approval, the Council will review and formulate improvements to the road layouts in order to alleviate traffic congestion issues in these areas.

Outcomes

Following the in-depth and informative study the Group came up with 18 recommendations and 28 individual actions. All of the Group's recommendations were approved by Cabinet and the Committee looks forward to these being progressed.

The promotion of modal shift and raising awareness of active forms of travel were seen as vital components in tackling traffic congestion and also in encouraging people to cycle and walk more in order to live healthier and more sustainable lives. Improvements to a number of Cycle/Walk ways within the Vale will be progressed as a result of Cabinet

approval and funding is being provided to electrify the railway line that will result in a modern and more reliable service

► **Local Development Plan Deposit Draft Plan 2011-2026**

At its meeting in October 2013, the committee received a presentation regarding the Local Development Plan (LDP) Deposit Draft Plan. The plan has been devised as a framework to guide the sustainable use of land and to ensure the environmental protection of the Vale of Glamorgan out to the year 2026.

In assessing the Council's proposals, the Scrutiny Committee was able to ensure that the Draft Deposit Plan had undergone proper public consultation, gave enough consideration to the adequate provision of traffic issues, and whether arrangements in considering alternative sites were properly in place. Following in depth discussion of the LDP the Committee was happy to support the Council's plans.

► **Economic development and supporting Business**

The Committee continued its work to improve the economic development of the Vale of Glamorgan and to increase the support offered to businesses and for business opportunities.

- **Engagement with the Business Community**

The committee was provided with a report concerning the issues raised following evidence-gathering meetings held with local business and stakeholders. The meetings gave businesses the chance to share their views and comments and to make suggestions of the impact of current economic circumstances. The Council considered it essential to gather evidence from various bodies in order to assist the Council to consider ways to mitigate the effects of the economic downturn. An improved format is to be devised for the next engagement event set for autumn 2014.

- **Barry Regeneration**

Members were provided with updates of the proposals to regenerate Barry Island including the renovation of the eastern shelter and promenade. In September the Committee also considered the Council's Stage 1 bid (entitled *Barry: A Centre of Growth and Opportunity*) for funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Programme to support the continuation of regeneration activities in Barry. In light of the decision by Welsh Government not to approve the Stage 1 bid the Committee received two further reports. In February following a request for consideration the Committee was provided with a report outlining progress being made in respect of the various initiatives identified in the Stage 1 bid. In April the Committee also received a report outlining future regeneration partnership working arrangements in Barry following the close of the Welsh Government's Barry Regeneration Area Programme at the end of March.

- **Vale of Glamorgan Town Centre Framework**

The document sets out a vision for each centre and identifies strategic objectives with a range of actions that contribute to improving the economic outlook for our main town centres. The Framework is intended to guide the future of the following five town centres in the Vale of Glamorgan:

Holton Road, Barry
High Street and Broad Street, Barry
Cowbridge
Llantwit Major
Penarth.

▶ **Vibrant and Viable Places**

As stated previously on page 12 the Council was not successful in a Stage 1 bid to secure funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Programme. The committee following a request for consideration was however keen to evaluate the prospects of moving forward proposals that were set out to improve Barry as an area for regeneration in the bid entitled "Barry – A Centre of Growth and Opportunity". Having therefore, been advised of the proposals and the regeneration projects planned by the Council it was eager to monitor the progress of these. A further review and options appraisal report was considered in April 2014 regarding future partnership working in Barry and progress reports will continue to be included in the Committees work programme schedule for presentation to Committee when available.

▶ **Sports Development**

An Annual Report regarding the work and achievements of the Council's Sports Development Unit during 2012/13 was considered by the Committee. Members were advised of the good work and positive achievements undertaken within the Vale of Glamorgan and the Committee was keen to ensure that this work continued into 2014/15. The Committee will continue to receive a report in respect of Sports Development on an annual basis.

▶ **Parkwood Leisure contract with the Vale of Glamorgan Council**

Following a request for consideration by an Elected Member on the Committee for an update since the agreement between the Council and Parkwood which had commenced on 1st August, 2012, the Committee met with the Operational Manager for Leisure and Tourism along with representatives from Parkwood Leisure who advised of the many positive developments that had taken place since the agreement. The Committee noted the good partnership working with Parkwood and that the contract guaranteed that all facilities were to be open for a minimum of 10 years. Members also noted the 95% customer approval rating but were mindful as to how this information was obtained. The GP referral scheme had proven successful and had impacted upon visitor numbers.

Following the debate, the Committee agreed to receive reports on the performance of the Leisure Management contract on an annual basis.

► Examples of Other Aspects considered by the Committee during the year

- Closure of Barry Bike Centre;
- Service Improvement Plans;
- Penarth Learning Community – delivery of community benefit;
- Energy and Climate change (Commons Select Committee second report – a Severn Bay Barrage);
- Vehicle telemetry;
- Energy buy-in and
- Fees and charges.

Looking ahead.....

During 2014/15, the Scrutiny Committee will continue to focus considerable time to the economic development of the Vale of Glamorgan. This will include consideration of work being undertaken to identify possible regeneration partnerships. Engagement with the business community regarding the support provided by the Council will be further progressed as well as the performance of Cardiff Airport and the Council's plans for the regeneration of Barry.

The Committee is to receive annual reports concerning sports development and the performance of the Parkwood Leisure's contract. It will also continue to monitor and review the Council's budget and service performance.

At the time of writing this report the Committee had received requests by Members of the Council to consider matters on the following subjects:

- Loss of sand from the Vale's beaches as a result of extreme weather events during the winter of 2013/14.
- Proposed Changes to Waste Collection and Recycling in the Vale of Glamorgan
- The Vale of Glamorgan's one year environmental protection trial with XFOR

These requests will be considered by the Committee in due course.

Scrutiny Committee (Housing and Public Protection)

Chair:

Councillor J. Bird



Members:

Councillor Mrs.M.R. Wilkinson (Vice Chair)
Councillor R.J. Bertin
Councillor Ms.C.L. Curtis
Councillor J. Drysdale
Councillor Mrs.V.M. Hartrey
Councillor Mrs.A.J. Moore
Councillor Ms.R.F. Probert
Councillor R.P. Thomas
Councillor E. Williams

plus 4 representatives from the Tenant Working Group/Panel.

Mr. G. Amos
Mr.B. Fisher
Mrs. A. Evans
Mr. A. Raybould

Also:

1 representative, in a co-opted non-voting observer capacity, of each of the following:

- Shelter Cymru
- Vale Housing and Homelessness Forum

Looking back over the past year.....

During 2013/14, the Committee reviewed a number of social and housing concerns, ranging from, Community Safety, the level of empty homes, underage sale of alcohol, antisocial behaviour and Law Enforcement.

► **Under-Age Sales of Alcohol in the Vale of Glamorgan**

The Scrutiny Committee received a report that highlighted the work of Trading Standards in partnership with the Police in attempting to restrict the availability of alcohol to under-18s across all Wards of the Vale of Glamorgan.

It was noted that the continued high profile presence of both Trading Standards and South Wales Police during 2012/13, had resulted in 160 test purchasing visits being conducted, with a percentage failure rate of 3.7%. This compared favourably to 14% failure rate observed in 2011/12. The Committee clearly understood that enforcement was expensive as it is largely an out of office hour's activity. It requires a large and constantly changing group of under-age volunteers and it often requires Police presence and requires test-purchasing money.

In querying the impact of online purchasing of alcohol by under-aged individuals, which was becoming more prevalent, the Committee requested that monitoring of this could be addressed by including on-line purchases within future planning operations. The Committee were reassured by the increased activity to curb the sale of alcohol and expressed the view that local Elected Members be informed of those establishments selling alcohol to under-aged persons on conclusion of court proceedings. It was requested that such information be provided on a ward by ward basis.

► **Empty Homes Strategy**

Since, February 2013, the Scrutiny Committee has received reports monitoring the Council's performance against the Empty Home Strategy action plan. In recognising the impact that the level of empty homes is having on our communities the Committee has been keen to:

- raise the awareness of the availability of interest-free loans
- increase public awareness on the impact of empty homes
- develop closer partnership working between the Council and the private sector to support the Council's homelessness prevention strategies.

The Committee has also recognised the need for the Welsh Government to take a more active role in supporting Local Authorities to tackle this issue and was pleased to see that shared staffing arrangements with Cardiff City Council had begun which meant that additional resources were being provided to tackle the issue.

► **Effects of the Welfare Reform Act on the Homes4U allocation policy**

The Committee was asked to consider the effects of the Welfare Reform Act on the Council's Homes 4U policy and to assess if the system was working. A report received in October 2013 outlined that in many cases the rent arrears of tenants had gone up and that a sizeable portion of tenants had slipped into arrears. It was noted that the level of homelessness within the Vale of Glamorgan had not increased and that the main effect of the reform had been in a reduction in the number of people requesting three-bedroom properties.

In considering the current, and future, actions aimed at supporting existing tenants the Committee recommended that the information be sent to all Elected Members of the Council. The Committee raised concern regarding the level of customer contact offered to clients and this will be reviewed by the Housing and Building Services Division. Continual monitoring of rental arrears, homeless presentations and allocations in the context of welfare reform changes to track any significant patterns in these areas, will take place.

► **Also during the year the Committee:**

- continued to monitor the Housing Improvement Programme;
- reviewed the performance of the Safer Vale Partnership;
- received an update on Emergency Planning arrangements;
- examined proposals regarding collaboration with Cardiff of Regulatory Services;
- assessed progress of the Safer Vale Partnership;
- was consulted on the Council's draft anti-social behaviour policy and
- evaluated the Health and Safety and Food Law enforcement plans.

Looking ahead.....

The Committee's work during the next year will include:

- looking at how the Council builds upon current engagement arrangements with its tenants,
- reviewing plans around Local Housing provision,
- assessing the Council's policies in supporting victims of domestic abuse to remain at home (if deemed safe to do so),
- monitoring of the progress around implementation of the Homelessness prevention strategy,
- looking at the implementation of the Supporting People Operational Plan,
- maintaining the improvements in delivering DFG performance,
- understanding of the Housing Bill and the effects on homelessness and affordable housing,
- the work of the Council's Youth Offending Service.

Scrutiny Committee (Lifelong Learning)

Chair:

Councillor N. Hodges



Members:

Councillor Ms R. Birch (Vice Chair)
Councillor Mrs M.E.J. Birch
Councillor Ms K. Edmunds
Councillor H.C. Hamilton
Councillor T.H. Jarvie
Councillor F.T. Johnson
Councillor A. Parker
Councillor R.A. Penrose
Councillor E. Williams

Also invited to attend as co-opted members:

Mr. P. Burke (Roman Catholic Church).
Father E. Counsell (Church in Wales).
Dr. C. Brown (Parent Governor - Secondary Sector).
Mr. L. Kellaway (Parent Governor - Primary Sector).

Also invited to attend as non-voting observers:

Mr. G. Beaudette (Primary).
Mr. D. Treharne (Welsh Medium Education).
Ms. T. Young (Secondary)

Looking back over the past year.....

Various school performance reports were presented during the year, which included performance data and the post-inspection Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training) action plan following the inspection of the Council's education services for children and young people. The Committee continued to pay close attention to attainment levels and received a number of school inspection reports.

► **Improve Educational Attainment**

Commencing April 2013, the establishment of Individual School Progress meetings, each consisting of three members of the Scrutiny Committee has been a major development in the work conducted by this Committee.

Taking a more direct approach, the establishment of individual school progress meetings are intended to enable a school to demonstrate through the democratic process its ambitions, capacity and commitment to rapid and sustained progress and to identify any barriers the school may face which could be resolved by action of the Council. The first meeting of its type took place at Llantwit Major Comprehensive School in April 2013 and a report was presented to the Scrutiny Committee on 24th June 2013. The Panel, not content with the rate of improvement following the exam results for 2013, revisited the school in January 2014.

Subsequent school performance visits to St.Cyres, Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive schools also took place during January, February and March 2014 respectively and all the schools are to be revisited following the August 2014 exam results. As a result of these panels a lessons learned and best practice report has been produced and at the time of writing this report was considered by the Committee in June. It will include several recommendations and areas for improvements for schools within the Vale for the Cabinet to consider. These will be shared with the Central South Consortium (Joint Education Service). Details of the Joint Education Service can be found using the following website link; <http://www.cscjes.org.uk/Home.aspx>

In recognising the value that individual school progress meetings have brought, the remit of these will be expanded to include Primary Schools while also still being focused on Secondary Schools. It is also hoped that Panels can also visit high-achieving schools and / or receive presentations by Head teachers at future meetings so that best practice can be identified and shared among all schools in the Vale and latterly with the Joint Education Service

Also related to raising educational standards, during the year the Scrutiny Committee:

- examined strategies aimed at improving Pupil attainment at– key stage 3 and key stage 4 (Year 9 and Year 11)
- was provided with an overview of the Catch up - literacy and numeracy intervention programme
- reviewed the School Support Programme
- challenged the Council to improve pupil attendance rates, recognising the link between attendance and achievement.

► **School Re-organisation**

Over the course of the year the Committee has considered various plans around School reorganisations. These being:

1. Proposals for Welsh Medium Primary Schooling in Barry

The Committee considered proposals around the provision of Welsh Language Primary schooling in Barry with the expansion of the Ysgol Gwaun Y Nant and Oakfield Primary school in order to meet parental demand for Welsh Medium primary schooling within Barry. The Committee initially sought reassurance that the decision to spend such a considerable sum of money had been made with sufficient information that fully justified the decision. Following further updates, the Committee was able to provide its support to the plans for the expansion.

2. Co-education secondary school in Barry – Consultation

The Committee was able to look at the early stage developments the results of an initial consultation exercise concerning a Council study into the possible amalgamation of Barry and Bryn Hafren Comprehensive Schools. The Committee welcomed the undertaking of a consultation exercise and a further report will be presented during the next Municipal Year informing Members of the results of the outcomes of a feasibility study.

3. Llantwit Learning Community

As part of the consultation process the Committee examined plans for the construction of a new 420 place English Medium primary school for Llantwit Major from the amalgamation of Eagleswell and Llanilltud Fawr primary schools. In welcoming the proposals the Committee received reassurance that the design and the size of the new school was sufficient to meet the projected growth of the local population and catchment area for the future years.

► Pupil Wellbeing and School Counselling Service

The Committee requested a report which advised of the progress in relation to the development of the School Based Counselling Service in the Vale of Glamorgan.

As part of the Committee's evaluation, it considered the findings from a comprehensive independent service review undertaken by Barnado's Cymru. This review highlighted the good work and positive direction that the service was heading in, but also noted further improvements including the length of waiting lists and the availability of counselling rooms. These are areas that are being explored with schools and the service provider. Welsh Government feedback on service provision in the Vale of Glamorgan was also good and the Welsh Government had provided a good evaluation of the cost and quality of the service and commented that the Vale performed well in most indicators. The Committee will continue to monitor and receive reports annually.

At its meeting held on 9th September, the Committee assessed and subsequently endorsed the Pupil Wellbeing Strategy. The Strategy sets out how the Council would achieve its vision to ensure that children and young people were happy, healthy and safe in their learning settings. The Strategy is important as it would guide, support and direct work of the Wellbeing steering group that aimed to coordinate the planning and commissioning of services to ensure resources from all agencies were used in the most effective way, responded to current legislation, was coherent and worked well in partnership with others in order to continually improve wellbeing in education in the Vale of Glamorgan.

► Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) provision in the Vale of Glamorgan

At its meeting held during May 2013, the Committee received a progress report regarding the developments with young people identified as NEET in both the Vale of Glamorgan and at a national level. The Committee was informed of the improvements in the level of 16 to 18 year old young people that were considered as NEET but in contrast also noted the increase in 19 to 24 year olds that required support.

The Committee recognised the importance of close working arrangements between schools and Youth Services and also the importance of early engagement with young people in years 8 and 9, particularly those with behavioural concerns. The Committee will continue to monitor progress in improving the level of young people not in education, employment or training and also the development of opportunities for our young people.

► **Central South Consortium – Joint Education Service**

Local authorities across Wales have established consortium arrangements for the delivery of education services. The Central South Consortium comprises Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils.

Regular update reports on progress in relation to the establishment of the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service (JES) were received by the Committee and the Committee regularly monitored the work of the JES and examined suggestions for Joint Scrutiny arrangements.

Other Aspects considered

Consultation had been undertaken with young people to help inform the Vale of Glamorgan Youth Forum of the Council's decision-making process with a view to annual elections being held to elect a Youth Mayor and Youth Cabinet to represent the views of an elected body of young people in the Vale. The Youth Cabinet has recently been established and is being progressed. The Scrutiny Committee has also itself recommended that young people should be represented on the Committee and this is currently being pursued.

During the year the Scrutiny Committee also considered:

- Looked after Children (LAC) education;
- School admission arrangements;
- Regular progress reports on schools throughout the Vale of Glamorgan Council and
- A report on the support offered to help schools improve.

Looking ahead.....

Moving forward, the Committee will continue to closely monitor and scrutinise the performance of schools in an effort to achieve the high standards expected by parents within the Vale of Glamorgan and the Committee will undertake close inspection of the work carried out by the Joint Education Service to deliver school improvements.

Continual evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy programme will be a key priority and the Committee will assess the progress being made in meeting Special Educational Needs.

In recognition of the link between high attendance and pupil attainment, regular school attendance reports will be provided and the Committee will also consider examples of good practice within schools. The ongoing monitoring of service provision offered to children and young people who are not in education, employment or training will continue.

The safeguarding arrangements for children within our schools will be an important element as will the Council's ability to meet the wellbeing needs of children and young people and particular attention will be made to the Anti-Bullying policies within schools.

At the time of writing this report the Committee was due to consider a Review of the Library and Information Service in the Vale of Glamorgan and receive representations from Trade Unions and the public which can be found using the following web link;
http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/agendas/scrutiny_II/2014/14-05-19.aspx

The Committee has also received to date two requests for consideration which will be reported on over the forthcoming weeks:

- The 21st Century Schools Programme in Barry
- Use of the Pupil Deprivation Grant by schools in the Vale of Glamorgan

Scrutiny Committee (Social Care and Health)

Chair:

Councillor R. Traherne



Members:

Councillor Mrs M.E.J. Birch (Vice Chair)

Councillor R.J. Bertin

Councillor Ms. R. Birch

Councillor Ms K.E. Edmunds

Councillor E. Hacker

Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson

Councillor Ms. R.F. Probert

Councillor J.W. Thomas

Councillor S.T. Wiliam

Looking back over the past year.....

Social Care and Health is a vital concern for the public and never more so than today with increasing demand, reduced budgets and ongoing reform of the care system.

The Committee has focused much of its time scrutinising new strategies aimed at the reconfiguration of care services in order to ensure that the Council continues to help the most vulnerable in our communities. The Committee also responded to reports in the national media by investigating the issues locally such as Fostering Services and Dementia Care. This year the Social Care and Health Committee has scrutinised many issues which impact upon child welfare.

Some of the Committee's key activities and achievements included:

► **Safeguarding**

The Committee has kept a close eye on issues regarding Child Protection. Members have keenly assessed related performance information and reviewed developments for Looked after Children and the Committee has reviewed the Council's Action Plan for Services to Children and Young People.

Understanding the importance of family within Child Protection the Committee has been keen to assess and examine the Family Information Service and developments within the Families First Service. The Committee also received a presentation regarding the Families Achieving Change Together (FACT) Team, an initiative established to target early intervention and prevention services to support children, young people and families.

In view of the importance that the Committee attach to 'Safeguarding' it was felt that it was important that all Councillors were updated. A most successful and informative workshop was held, which was very well attended.

► **Fostering Services**

In view of the importance of this issue and the difficulties to date in increasing the number of people expressing an interest to foster, the Committee continued to examine the performance of the Fostering Service within the Vale of Glamorgan and oversaw the implementation of a new foster recruitment strategy.

The Committee received a report updating Members of the CSSIW Annual Inspection of the service. Inspectors had concluded that the Fostering Service:

- was effectively managed;
- was child-centred;
- had good systems for consultation;
- provided good support and guidance to foster carers;
- had good systems to inform placement making and matching;
- Also, a number of improvements made since 2012 were validated.

The Committee also evaluated the Council's own annual review into the Quality of Care, noting the progress made in improving the foster carer recruitment process. Importantly, the Fostering Service had successfully been able to improve the number of foster carer assessments completed and increased the number of approvals. The number of de-registrations and resignations of foster carers had fallen. However, there remained a considerable challenge in increasing the number of enquiries from prospective foster carers, which fell during 2012/13. Subsequently, the Committee was keen to provide its support to the implementation of the Foster Carer Recruitment Strategy for 2013/14.

► **Support Services for Carers**

Recognising the need to improve the level of support offered to carers within the Vale of Glamorgan, the Committee saw the importance of reviewing developments in the way support services for carers were provided.

A report received in January 2014 detailed the following developments:

- the increase in the number of carer assessments completed over the past year;
- agreements with third sector organisations to provide short breaks for carers;
- creation of a flexible fund for discretionary payments to carers to meet one-off needs;
- improving the range and level of information available for carers;
- an increase in the number of carers registered for a Carers' Emergency Card;
- an increase in the number of training opportunities to help carers (e.g. manual handling).

In understanding these improvements, the Council was able to demonstrate that progress was being made but the Committee were concerned with problems faced by the Council in engaging with 'hard to reach' carers, particularly 'young carers' who might still be in school.

The Committee will continue to monitor the situation and will receive a report identifying the problems in engaging with the 'hard to reach' groups.

► **NHS Wales - Changes to Hospital provision**

The views of the Committee were sought in relation the South Wales Programme public consultation, which outlined options for the future provision of a small number of hospital services – consultant-led maternity and neonatal care, inpatients children’s services and emergency medicine (A&E) within the South Wales area.

In assessing the NHS proposals the particular issues raised by individual Members of the Committee during discussions were:

- Concern about safety levels for midwifery if complications arose during labour and a patient needed to be transferred. It was felt that this may not lead to the best quality of care.
- How changes to neo-natal services would impact on people living in deprived areas.
- Concern about the capacity of the Ambulance Service to travel the required distances as performance levels were already below target.
- Reassurance required that no hospitals were to close.
- If it was considered acceptable for patients to travel further to access more specialist services if this led to better outcomes for patients.
- The consultation document assumed a great deal of knowledge about the issues, and it was felt that more details were required.
- Assurances were sought that, if there were fewer sites, then there would be proper staffing of services.
- More effort was required to attract and recruit consultants, e.g. through incentives or looking to the EU.

It was agreed that the Committee’s comments and concerns to the consultation would be taken into account when drafting the Council’s formal response.

► **Dementia 3 year plan 2014/15 to 2016/17**

The Committee looked at planned changes to the provision of dementia services across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. A 3 year plan had been devised by the Cardiff and Vale Health Board in order to help people with dementia. Members were informed that there was a need to improve the environment in which dementia sufferers lived and one way was to create ‘dementia supportive communities’, defined by the Alzheimer’s society as “one in which people with dementia are empowered to have high aspirations and feel confident, knowing they can contribute and participate in activities that are meaningful to them”.

The plan also outlined the need to improve the timeliness of diagnosing people with dementia and in particular the need to refocus services for younger adults under 65 years of age. The Committee was able to query the usefulness of Telecare and Assistive Technology to support people with dementia and this will be further explored in the next municipal year as part of a Task and Finish group review.

► **Social Services' Budget**

The Social Services' Directorate was faced with another exceedingly challenging year in regard to the management of its budget. Increasing demand for services, combined with diminishing resources, as in the Council generally, mean continual challenges for staff.

The Committee received detailed monthly analysis of capital and revenue expenditure, together with savings targets allowed Members to provide constructive challenge and support. The volatile nature of the 'Children's Placement budget' and 'Community Care Packages budget' has resulted in significant additional pressures and challenges. Nevertheless, a balanced budget was achieved.

Looking ahead.....

Moving forward, the Committee will continue to monitor the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and, in particular, their plans to remodel services for Older People. The Committee will review the integration of health and social care services, together with the increased reliance on community-based services. There will be a clear role for the Scrutiny Committee in monitoring the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 on the Vale of Glamorgan residents.

As previously touched upon, the Committee will also be undertaking a Task and Finish Group review into Assistive Technology and Dementia Care in an effort to look at ways to improve the quality of life for people suffering with dementia, and their families.

‘CALL-IN’ Scrutiny use of the Call-In System

One of the powers of scrutiny is that non-executive (scrutiny) members are able to “call-in” an executive decision made by the Cabinet, should they have concerns about that decision. If valid (meeting certain criteria laid out in the constitution) the relevant Scrutiny Committee will have the opportunity to discuss and evaluate the merits of the decision. It also provides an opportunity to ask the decision-makers to reconsider their decision - if Members think this is necessary.

During the year, Scrutiny Committees received 5 “call-ins”. Four of these met the criteria for further consideration while one call-in was rejected.

▶ **Grants to Community/Organisations- review of services offered to the Council by Valeways** – Formed in 1996, Valeways is a multi-partnership charity that supports teams of mixed ability volunteers to improve and maintain access to paths and walkways. Cabinet had recommended remodelling the funding arrangements of Valeways and awarded a final one-off grant payment while also offering support to Valeways so that it could establish a more sustainable business model. On 18th June 2013 the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) had an opportunity to discuss Cabinet’s decision and committee members, understanding the purpose of the funding, agreed to accept the Cabinet recommendations.

▶ **Coastal Car Parking Fees and Charges for 2014/15** – The Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment) was able to review Cabinet’s decision to increase charges for cars at coastal car parks to £2 for up to 1 hour. The Committee recommended that Cabinet consider the more equitable charge of £2 for up to 2 hours. Subsequently, Cabinet agreed with the Committee’s amendments and the policy revised.

▶ **Use of Bryneithin Site, Dinas Powys** – During December 2013, the Scrutiny Committee (Social Care and Health) reviewed the use of the former Bryneithin site and, in particular, why the creation of a ‘Centre of Excellence for dementia’ was not pursued. Following consideration, and in light of the impending ‘Dementia Strategy’, Members were content with Cabinet’s recommendations and its decision was upheld.

▶ **Vehicle Telemetry** – A decision had been made by Cabinet to fit all vehicles within Visible Services with a Telemetry tracking device. The purpose of this was to improve the efficient use of Council vehicles by, for example, reducing the level of fuel use. Following discussion by members of the Scrutiny Committee (Economy and Environment), it was agreed to endorse the Cabinet’s initial decision on the basis that it was important for the Council to reduce transport costs.

Member Overview and Scrutiny Satisfaction Survey

A Member Scrutiny Satisfaction Survey was undertaken, which provided Members with an opportunity to reflect on how well scrutiny has performed over the past year. It enabled them to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the scrutiny support function and comment on areas that have worked well, but also to identify areas for improvement.

The response rate to this year's questionnaire was 44%, with 24 Members and co-opted Members completing and returning their survey forms. In summary, Members felt that Scrutiny had the following areas of strengths and weakness;

Strengths

- ✓ - Responses of Cabinet to scrutiny committee recommendations
- ✓ - The value added by Scrutiny Committees to the decision-making process within the Council
- ✓ - The value added by Scrutiny Committees to performance management / service improvement
- ✓ - The evaluation of Council projects with a view to ensuring maximum effectiveness and impact
- ✓ - The support provided by Council officers

Weaknesses

Aspects that needed to be looked at included;

- ✗ - The level of media coverage / interest in the work of Scrutiny committees
- ✗ - The level of public involvement in the Scrutiny process

Further, Member Surveys will be sent out on an annual basis and the Council will closely monitor the views and opinions of the respondents, recognising that this is an important element in helping to improve how Scrutiny works within the Vale of Glamorgan.

How can I find out more about Scrutiny?

Should you wish to find out more about the work of Scrutiny, you can do so at www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk where you can look at the reports the Committees have considered, the minutes of the meetings and future work programme schedules for each of the five Scrutiny Committees.

Scrutiny meetings are open to the public (unless there are items of a confidential nature to be considered). Most meetings are also held in the Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry.

Please look at our website to see the dates, times and venues of forthcoming Scrutiny meetings

[\[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes, agendas and reports/minutes, agendas and reports.aspx\]](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/minutes,_agendas_and_reports.aspx).

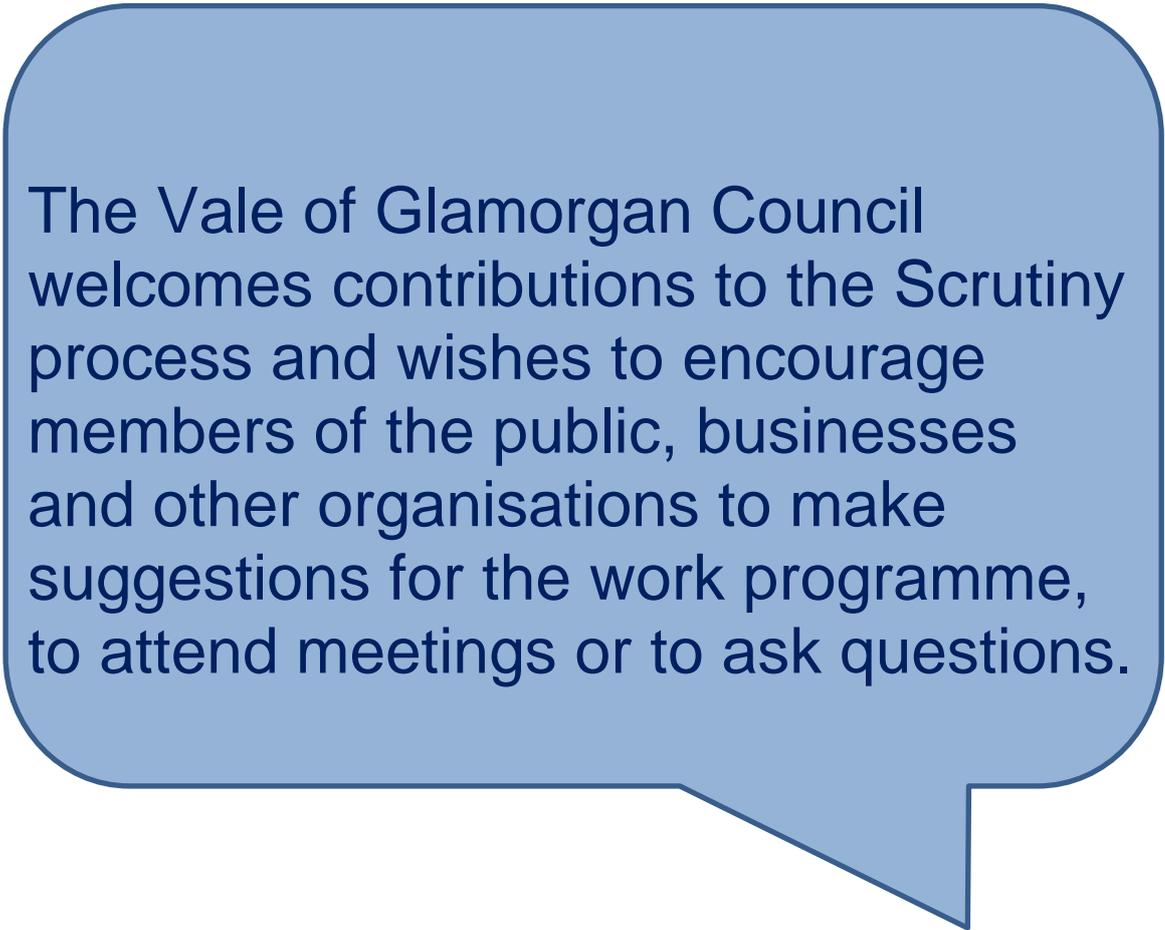
Alternatively you can contact Democratic and Scrutiny Services at the address below:

**Democratic and Scrutiny Services
Vale of Glamorgan Council
Civic Offices
Holton Road
Barry, CF63 4RU**

Tel no : (01446) 709413

Email: democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Website: www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



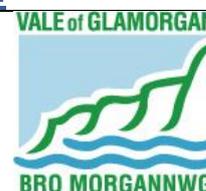
The Vale of Glamorgan Council welcomes contributions to the Scrutiny process and wishes to encourage members of the public, businesses and other organisations to make suggestions for the work programme, to attend meetings or to ask questions.

If you would like to make a suggestion you can:

- Complete the form below and return it to the stated address or,
- Alternatively, follow the link below

[\[http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx\]](http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/scrutiny/more_about_scrutiny.aspx)

SCRUTINY REVIEW TOPIC SUGGESTION FORM



BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM, PLEASE READ THE GUIDANCE NOTES ATTACHED

I WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER A REQUEST FOR THE FOLLOWING MATTER TO BE REVIEWED:

SUGGESTED TOPIC FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW:

REASONS FOR SUGGESTING THIS TOPIC *(continue on a separate sheet if necessary):*

PLEASE CONSIDER:

- Why should there be a review on this?
- How does it link to the Council's strategic objectives and priorities?
- What benefits to local people could result?

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE *(continue on a separate sheet if necessary):*

PLEASE CONSIDER:

- What evidence is there to support the above reasons?
- What are the facts?

DESIRED OUTCOME:

PLEASE CONSIDER:

- What would you wish to see happen as a result of any review?
- Why do you think the desired outcome is achievable?

This topic *(please tick appropriate box):*

Is my suggestion

Was suggested to me by a member of the public

Other (please specify)

NAME:	SIGNATURE:	DATE:
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ADDRESS:		
E-MAIL ADDRESS:		
DAY TELEPHONE NO:		
EVENING TELEPHONE NO:		
FAX NO:		
ORGANISATION <i>(if appropriate)</i> :		
Would you like to make a statement to the Scrutiny Committee in support of the request?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
	Corporate Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Economy and Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Housing and Public Protection	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Lifelong Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Social Care and Health	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please return the completed form to:
Democratic and Scrutiny Services Section,
The Vale of Glamorgan Council,
Civic Offices,
Holton Road,
BARRY,
CF63 4RU**

