

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 2nd December, 2024.

The Council agenda is available [here](#).

The meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor Elliot Penn (Mayor); Councillors Anne Asbrey, Julie Aviet, Gareth Ball, Rhiannon Birch, Bronwen Brooks, Gillian Bruce, Ian Buckley, Lis Burnett, Samantha Campbell, George Carroll, Christine Cave, Charles Champion, Janice Charles, Millie Collins, Marianne Cowpe, Pamela Drake, Vincent Driscoll, Anthony Ernest, Christopher Franks, Wendy Gilligan, Russell Godfrey, Emma Goodjohn, Ewan Goodjohn, Stephen Haines, Sally Hanks, William Hennessy, Nic Hodges, Mark Hooper, Catherine Iannucci-Williams, Gwyn John, Dr. Ian Johnson, Susan Lloyd-Selby, Belinda Loveluck-Edwards, Julie Lynch-Wilson, Kevin Mahoney, Naomi Marshallsea, Michael Morgan, Jayne Norman, Helen Payne, Sandra Perkes, Ian Perry, Joanna Protheroe, Ruba Sivagnanam, Carys Stallard, Neil Thomas, Rhys Thomas, Steffan Wiliam, Margaret Wilkinson, Edward Williams, Mark Wilson and Nicholas Wood.

609 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Mayor read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

610 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors H.C. Hamilton and R. Fisher.

611 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interests were declared by members.

612 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 24th September, 2024 be approved as a correct record, subject to it being noted that the Leader in respect of the supplementary question at question 11 of Members' questions clarified that the only word that had been a direct quote was “embrace” which had been accepted by Councillor Carroll.

613 ANNOUNCEMENTS –

The Mayor informed Council that it had been a busy few weeks since the last meeting and he had attended many events, and although not listing all events he informed Council that he had attended Armistice Day events within the Vale and he wished to congratulate the Vale of Glamorgan Healthy Living Team, who had received a commendation at the Cardiff and Vale Parents Federation Awards in the Statutory Services category.

The Mayor also took the opportunity to remind Members to conduct themselves with courtesy and respect to each other in line with the Council's Code of Conduct.

The Chief Executive also welcomed James Langridge-Thomas, the new Head of Democratic Services, who had recently joined the Council.

614 PUBLIC QUESTIONS –

The following questions were submitted in accordance with the protocol agreed by Council on 5th May, 2010.

(i) **Question from Mr. J. Pulman**

Whilst we, The Barry and Vale Greens Group, must condemn the attacks by Hamas on October 7th, it has become clear that the Israel State and the IDF are conducting a war of genocide against the Palestinians with over 40,000 plus dead. We are aware that the UK is still arming Israel and that, as Zarah Sultana has pointed out, parts of the F16 fighter bombers are manufactured in the UK. It is these weapons which kill indiscriminately. We are also aware that many of our Local Authorities pension funds have investments in many of the arms industries. Waltham Forest Council has confirmed it will withdraw pension investments from firms linked to arms sales, while some Councils within Wales are putting forward motions to divest from the arms industry. Can the Vale of Glamorgan County Council assure its employees, and the County's residents, that their Wales Pension Fund investments are not complicit in arms sales to Israel, and if they are, will the Vale of Glamorgan County Council follow the example of others and demand that these investments stop?

Reply from the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is part of the Cardiff and Vale Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Fund which is administered by Cardiff Council. This is one of the 8 LGPS funds in Wales. These 8 funds also pool funds as part of the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP).

The Pension Scheme investments are supported and monitored by a Pensions Committee and Pensions Board and audited on an annual basis via both internal and external auditors.

As part of the LGPS funding principles, investments are not made in organisations that manufacture controversial weapons.

The following is an extract from the exclusions definitions:

Controversial Weapons

This involvement area provides an assessment of whether companies are involved in the manufacturing of controversial weapons or components or services thereof. Controversial weapons have a disproportionate and indiscriminate impact on civilian populations, sometimes even years after a conflict has ended. Certain controversial weapons are illegal, as their production and use are prohibited by international treaties and bans. In various countries there is legislation in place regarding investments in controversial weapons.

(ii) **Question from Mr. R. Curtis**

Saltwater marsh is one of the rarest habitats in the UK. The Old Harbour's saltwater marsh supports wintering red listed species such as Curlew and Whimbrel. It also supports other waders and seabirds such as Shelduck, Grey Heron, Little Egret, Knot and Redshank. Will the Vale of Glamorgan Council declare this area a Local Nature Reserve which can then contribute to the Welsh Government's aim of protecting 30% of Wales for nature by 2030?

Reply from the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Any site which is proposed as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) should have sufficient wildlife value to warrant designation. It is noted that there are approximately 20 species identified under section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which are of conservation concern noted located in the vicinity of the old Harbour. Most of these are estuarine birds or birds of prey though there are a few butterflies and moths. The Bay also represents one of the only opportunities for Seagrass planting in the Vale, which is known for prodigious carbon capture. Accordingly, the Council's Local Nature Partnership has already been in discussions with the Seagrass Project about such opportunities as part of the Coastal Development project.

However, in designating any LNR, the relevant guidance is clear that a Council should have clear aims and objectives, clear how it is going to be managed and monitored, what engagement will be undertaken with the public, opportunities for education and what the associated costs are. Given the above, designation of a LNR will have significant costs, but there will be opportunities to apply for external funds to support this through the support of the Local Nature Partnership. However, the Council has not received any information yet from Welsh Government on the future of the Local Nature Partnership beyond March 2025 and it would be through this partnership that any work to declare future LNRs would have to be pursued due to ongoing costs. Once the future of the Local Nature Partnership has been clarified, the Council will then be able to consider the future designations of LNRs.

615 TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICE OF MOTION [SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS J. PROTHEROE AND C. STALLARD] –

The below Notice of Motion, moved by Councillor Joanna Protheroe and seconded by Councillor Stallard at the meeting, was debated.

Debate not Hate

This Council notes with concern the Local Government Association's "Debate not Hate" survey (August 2024), which found that:

- Over 70% of Councillors experience abuse, threats, and harassment as part of their role.
- While debate and disagreement are essential to a healthy democracy, abuse and intimidation which goes beyond acceptable discourse and pose a serious threat. It is crucial that we engage respectfully and disagree constructively.

This Council further notes the Jo Cox Civility Commission's "No Place in Politics: tackling abuse and intimidation" recognition that:

- Intimidation: language or actions designed to hinder, manipulate, or discourage participation in public debate, or to cause fear or distress, potentially leading someone to withdraw from public life; and
- that all elected representatives, particularly those in leadership roles, should model respectful behaviour.

This Council recognises that:

- Residents of the Vale of Glamorgan rightly expect high standards of conduct from their elected representatives – whether in how we directly support them, or in the way we interact with each other in meetings, on social media and within this Chamber.

This Council therefore resolves that:

1. Members of this Council should role model respectful political discourse and foster civility and regard in all interactions with one another and with members of the public; and
2. The Council undertakes a review of Appendix 2 Protocol 'Standards of Conduct expected by Members under Section 19 of the Council's Constitution and the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure for dealing with low level allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Protocol – Standard of conduct expected by members under Appendix 3 to Section 19 of the Constitution, to align with this Motion.

Councillor Joanna Protheroe introduced the Motion and explained that local Councillors were at the heart of local democracy, and that it was right and proper they received challenge and scrutiny. However, bullying and harassment should not

be part of public life, and rejected the normalising of behaviours that fuel toxic debate, which was a threat to local democracy.

Councillor Dr. Johnson stated that he supported the principles of civility in political discussion, but that it was important for debate to be robust, to challenge those in power, and that free speech was not speech free of consequences, and that Politicians had structures in place to support this including the Public Services Ombudsmen for Wales, Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee. He reminded Members of the Local Dispute Resolution process, which was reviewed in 2018, and the responsibility of Group Leaders in managing behaviour of Members of their political Groups (a new requirement of Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021). There had been numerous complaints made which did not reach the independent investigation threshold due to the previous High Court ruling of Members being expected to have a "thick skin". He raised concerns around the possibility of the rules being used to stop Councillors complaining about others, impacting upon free speech. He also questioned the proposed amendments to the Constitution, which was largely process driven, and it needed to be clear what changes Councillors wished to see and that good faith was required on all sides of the Chamber.

Councillor Carroll stated that he supported the sentiment within the Motion to make debates better and agreed that nobody wanted to see abuse or intimidation within politics. However, he shared concerns surrounding the proposed review and what this would entail, such as who would carry out the review and how this would operate procedurally. He also questioned the appropriateness of these matters being dealt with at ballot box rather than standards process, as the nature of debate was often subjective. Additionally, he said criminal law was possibly a more appropriate process for threats and intimidation.

Councillor William suggested it should be a cross-party review, and that things to consider should include Members entitlement to vote if a discussion was concluded and they had missed half of this discussion due to arriving late or choosing not to listen or engage with discussion. He also suggested a sanction for uncivil actions, such as not listening to another Member who was participating in another language such as Welsh, as he felt this showed a lack of respect to the Councillor and wider linguistic community. Councillor Mahoney interjected with the Mayor reminding all of the need to participate in debate in a fair manner.

Councillor Burnett clarified that experiences within the Chamber were that there were often unacceptable throwaway comments which were not recorded and would not be picked up by the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure. She stated that Council needed to ensure that there were no barriers to participation within the Chamber. She also stated that the Motion did not set out details of the review which would need to be set out by the Monitoring Officer and that a review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure was appropriate as by design it was potentially adversarial between Members.

Councillor Brooks stated that all Members had seen a rise in abuse, which was happening to politicians at all levels of Government and was not conducive to political life and said that clear structured debate was healthy but there was a need

to come together to deal with the rise of abuse. She also said that as a Council, Members needed to set standards as a Council and encourage people to be as inclusive as possible and to debate.

Councillor Perry shared that he had been a Councillor for some time, and that there were currently 24 vacant seats across Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan, with people leaving due to frustration with the abuse they received. He indicated that he was on the receiving end of many complaints, and these could often be vexatious. He also shared some of his own experiences of abuse and intimidation as a Councillor, including being accosted in the street and people getting out of the car to say something unpleasant, sharing the impact that this had had upon him including being unable to sleep.

Councillor Stallard said that Members needed to show respect to one another. She stated that Politicians did not attract respect, particularly on social media, and the most important thing they could do was to speak nicely to one another, which would hopefully improve the public's attitude towards democracy.

Councillor Haines indicated that he was concerned about the effect on free speech, and that anything done that risked that could have a longer term impact. He stated he was happy to robustly debate in Chamber with all Members and felt that if debate was limited due to Members feeling unable to debate or say something for fear of being reported to the Standards Committee, they in his view "were no longer Councillors but sheep".

Following a request from a Member for a recorded vote the vote took place as follows:

Members	For	Against	Abstain
Anne Asbrey	✓		
Julie Aviet	✓		
Gareth Ball	✓		
Rhiannon Birch	✓		
Bronwen Brooks	✓		
Gillian Bruce		✓	
Ian Buckley	✓		
Lis Burnett	✓		
Samantha Campbell	✓		
George Carroll		✓	

Christine Cave		✓	
Charles Champion		✓	
Janice Charles		✓	
Millie Collins	✓		
Marianne Cowpe	✓		
Pamela Drake	✓		
Vince Driscoll		✓	
Anthony Ernest		✓	
Christopher Franks	✓		
Wendy Gilligan	✓		
Russell Godfrey		✓	
Emma Goodjohn	✓		
Ewan Goodjohn	✓		
Stephen Haines		✓	
Sally Hanks	✓		
William Hennessy		✓	
Nic Hodges	✓		
Mark Hooper	✓		
Catherine Iannucci-Williams	✓		
Gwyn John	✓		
Dr. Ian Johnson	✓		
Susan Lloyd-Selby	✓		
Belinda Loveluck-Edwards	✓		
Julie Lynch-Wilson	✓		
Kevin Mahoney		✓	

Naomi Marshallsea	√		
Michael Morgan	√		
Jayne Norman	√		
Helen Payne	√		
Elliott Penn	√		
Sandra Perkes	√		
Ian Perry			
Joanna Protheroe	√		
Ruba Sivagnanam	√		
Carys Stallard	√		
Neil Thomas	√		
Rhys Thomas		√	
Steffan Wiliam	√		
Margaret Wilkinson	√		
Eddie Williams	√		
Mark Wilson	√		
Nicholas Wood		√	
TOTAL	38	13	

RESOLVED – T H A T the Motion be carried:

Reason for decision

Following discussions at the meeting and a recorded vote.

616 TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICE OF MOTION [SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS G.D.D. CARROLL AND J.E. CHARLES] –

The below Notice of Motion, moved by Councillor Carroll and seconded by Councillor Charles at the meeting, was debated.

Long Term Financial Sustainability

The Vale of Glamorgan Council:

1. Notes Audit Wales' assessment that the Authority lacks a long-term plan to support its long-term financial sustainability;
2. Recognises the Labour Administration's lamentable record managing the Authority's budgets;
3. Condemns the Authority's failure to deliver value for money for residents of the Vale of Glamorgan;
4. Calls on the Labour Administration to re-evaluate its priorities and ensure the provision of core services is its main focus.

Councillor Carroll introduced the Motion and stated that the Authority's budgets had an impact upon residents, often through Council Tax increases or levying fees and charges for Services provided, Years of increases he said had had an impact upon household budgets during the cost of living crisis, whilst also cutting services, which often did not operate to standards expected by residents, and wasting in areas such as the Oracle implementation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives.

Councillor Dr. Johnson submitted a proposed Amendment to the Motion, seconded by Councillor Hooper, adding as below:

5. Notes that the Labour Party is in charge of UK Government, Welsh Government, and Vale of Glamorgan Council, and is therefore responsible for funding decisions at all levels of Government, and further notes the impact of changes in employees' National Insurance contributions, which will increase costs for Council services such as care homes.

Councillor Dr. Johnson said that the amendment was needed to consider the network which impacted the budget, including the UK Government's role in distributing funds. He said that after 14 years of a Conservative Government, the lack of longer-term plans was understandable due to the single year grant received from Welsh Government on an annual basis. He stated that the financial situation affected all services and the ability to plan, including towards the environment, was a result of Conservative mismanagement in Westminster and Welsh Labour in the Senedd. Councillor Dr. Johnson advised that they had been briefed earlier in the day surrounding the upcoming budget pressures, including National Insurance contributions.

Councillor Perry agreed that single year grant settlements, had led to issues in the same way as budgeting annually, and that the problems came from Westminster and the Senedd. Furthermore he said that Members needed to find common ground and come together to lobby Westminster around single year funding to improve areas such as active travel and responding to the climate emergency.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby said that the Motion stated priorities should be re-evaluated but the Council had set 7th lowest Council Tax in Wales, in trying to minimise pressure on residents following austerity, she was proud that 70% of the budget was spent on schools and Social Services, and the Council should also be proud of this

as it prioritised children, young people and the most vulnerable residents in the Vale, whilst also looking at ways to make efficiencies and savings .

Councillor Burnett said that things needed to be considered in the round, with the Audit Wales Review relating to the 2023-24 financial year, with 17 of 22 comparable audits being published on their website, which displayed a very similar or often worse picture than the Vale. This was not a surprise as the budget had been set during high inflation years of between 4.3% and 13.5% alongside the Truss Mini-Budget. She also agreed with wider Members surrounding single year funding, and shared that from next spring, Welsh Government would be providing multi-year funding. She also shared that there had been approximately £67.5m cuts to budget as a result of austerity under the last UK Government but had been relatively protected in comparison to England. The last resident survey, "Let's talk about life in the Vale" identified priorities such as access to care and homes, and whilst verges could irritate, problems in those areas were much worse. Councillor Burnett also shared that sustainable finances required sustainable politics, and referring to the year 2019, the Council nearly failed to set a legal budget under the Conservative Administration.

Councillor Wilson disagreed with the Motion's suggestion of inflation busting Council Tax rises as this was not factually correct, as CPI was over 10% during 2022/23 and Council Tax was below this during these years. He also shared that not all changes were finance driven, and some such as bin collection changes, were due to climate emergency, as the Council wanted to encourage more residents to recycle. He stated that charging for garden waste collections had also provided income to reduce wider Council Tax increases, and that the Council's priority was about protecting the most vulnerable, and were proud of how these areas operated and were funded.

Councillor Aviet stated that bins not being emptied was due to people putting more household waste in public bins which was the reason for them overflowing, not due to the effort of workers. She also stated that potholes needed reporting and encouraged constituents to report such matters in order that the work could be scheduled to get done.

Councillor Brooks reminded Members that the audit was undertaken during a period of high inflation and acknowledged the challenges of short-term funding settlements. She then highlighted that the audit report also identified that the Council had a good understanding of its financial pressures and had a track record in addressing these and had identified key risks and appropriate mitigations.

Councillor Charles shared that she felt it was not good enough in terms of value for money and there was no control of expenditure, and that the Council had its head in the sand around wasting tax payers' money, and queried what plans the Council had in place to address this.

Councillor Sivagnanam said that 14 years of Conservative austerity had created a cost of living crisis for residents in the Vale and felt the 0.05% of the budget spent on equality and diversity, which enabled the Council to speak to the most vulnerable, was good value for money.

Councillor Hooper indicated that this was a systemic problem, and that Members needed to consider the impact upon people, with an increasing amount, particularly those who were vulnerable, saying costs were high. He shared that Care Homes and Domiciliary Care providers were being hit by a National Insurance rise would cause problems and that he felt the Barnett Formula was no longer fit for purpose and needed to focus on addressing systemic issues. He also supported Councillor Sivagnanam's point surrounding the need to respect equality, diversity and inclusion.

Councillor Haines shared that in his view the potholes were not a problem it was that roads needed resurfacing. He also reminded Members that the Council was funded from Welsh Government and received the second lowest settlement in Wales, with every resident receiving £245 less than Welsh average.

Councillor John stated that the Council did not have the level of budget to provide current services to the levels the public expect, but that the Council was working hard to do the best they could in the circumstances. He also shared that the Council was below the Welsh average in Council Tax in comparison to neighbouring Authorities such as Bridgend, and that services could be delivered optimally if Members were supportive of a substantial Council Tax increase, but this had been contained to try and protect residents.

Councillors Carroll and Charles confirmed their acceptance of Councillor Dr. Johnson's Amendment to their Motion which then became the substantive Motion. Following a request for a recorded vote, a recorded vote on the Motion took place as follows:

Members	For	Against	Abstain
Anne Asbrey	√		
Julie Aviet		√	
Gareth Ball		√	
Rhiannon Birch		√	
Bronwen Brooks		√	
Gillian Bruce	√		
Ian Buckley		√	
Lis Burnett		√	
Samantha Campbell	√		
George Carroll	√		
Christine Cave	√		

Charles Champion	✓		
Janice Charles	✓		
Millie Collins	✓		
Marianne Cowpe	✓		
Pamela Drake		✓	
Vince Driscoll	✓		
Anthony Ernest	✓		
Christopher Franks	✓		
Wendy Gilligan		✓	
Russell Godfrey	✓		
Emma Goodjohn		✓	
Ewan Goodjohn		✓	
Stephen Haines	✓		
Sally Hanks		✓	
William Hennessy	✓		
Nic Hodges	✓		
Mark Hooper	✓		
Catherine Iannucci-Williams		✓	
Gwyn John		✓	
Dr. Ian Johnson	✓		
Susan Lloyd-Selby		✓	
Belinda Loveluck-Edwards		✓	
Julie Lynch-Wilson		✓	
Kevin Mahoney	✓		
Naomi Marshallsea		✓	

Michael Morgan		✓	
Jayne Norman		✓	
Helen Payne		✓	
Elliot Penn		✓	
Sandra Perkes		✓	
Ian Perry			
Joanna Protheroe		✓	
Ruba Sivagnanam		✓	
Carys Stallard		✓	
Neil Thomas		✓	
Rhys Thomas	✓f		
Steffan Wiliam	✓		
Margaret Wilkinson		✓	
Eddie Williams		✓	
Mark Wilson		✓	
Nicholas Wood	✓		
TOTAL	22	29	

RESOLVED – T H A T the Motion be lost.

Reason for decision

Following discussions at the meeting and a recorded vote.

617 GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (REF) –

The report sought Council's endorsement of the Governance and Audit Committee's Annual Report, which was referred from the Governance and Audit Committee on 21st October, 2024. The Leader presented the report and shared how the Committee had functioned in the last year and allowed the Council to work within CIPFA guidelines and felt that the new make-up of increased Independent Members added an increased depth to the Committee's work.

Following the Leader's proposal that the report be endorsed, which was seconded by Councillor Brooks, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the final Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24 be endorsed.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the requirement for consideration by Full Council.

618 AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (REF) –

The Leader suggested that the reference from Governance and Audit Committee (Agenda Item 9) be noted, with fuller discussion to take place when considering the final Audited Statement of Accounts (Agenda Item 10), so that the items were taken together.

RESOLVED – T H A T the reference be noted.

Reason for decision

In recognition of the separate report on the same subject being also on the agenda for the meeting.

619 AUDITED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24 (DCR) –

The Leader, in presenting the report, advised that the Audit of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement was now complete. The key headlines from the Statement of Accounts at Appendix A to the report were broadly the same as had been set out in the report to Governance and Audit Committee although there had been an amendment to the Useable Reserves included to reflect the provision of £750k relating to a legal settlement. Appendix B to the report detailed the final Governance Statement. There had been no significant changes from the draft Annual Governance statement that had been received other than the auditor had requested some additional information which was included in respect of the performance audit work that had been undertaken in the year.

Councillor Hooper advised he was a member of Governance and Audit Committee and had contributed to the debate there and raised four points, which he said may not be able to be dealt with in this forum which included,

- City Deal Consolidation and the lateness of accounts;
- Provision for legal settlement of approximately £750,000;
- Overpayment to Senior Officers;
- Liability for Rent in Homes.

He also stated support for the report, as he believed an unqualified audit was testament to the skills and professionalism of the Finance team.

The Leader in response advised that the Cardiff Capital Region Section 151 Officer was due to attend a Governance and Audit Committee with regard to further discussion around the Cardiff Capital Regions accounts. She also shared that Group Leaders had been fully briefed on the situation surrounding senior officer overpayments and the legal settlement were confidential matters which could not be discussed in an open forum but in a private session.

Councillor Hooper said that such topics were of public interest, he understood the importance of confidentiality, but asked that further detail be provided in an open manner for residents, having regard to the overpayment with there being no provisions for senior officers to pay money back, and the legal settlement, as he did not want the public perception to be that they were hiding things.

The Chief Executive clarified that the statement regarding there being no provision for senior officers to pay back monies was factually incorrect, and that there was provision in contracts (since 2008) for overpayments to be re-paid, which had been referred to in the briefing note that had been circulated to Group Leaders.

Councillor Carroll also raised concerns surrounding overpayments, and said he would welcome an opportunity for all Councillors to scrutinise the situation. Councillor Burnett responded that Group Leaders had been briefed accordingly and offered to recirculate the information that had been provided.

Councillor Perry questioned as to why the contract's clause was not enacted to recuperate money, and that he had not received this information as an Independent Member. The Chief Executive agreed to share information that had been provided to Group Leaders to Independent Members although advising that Members needed to be careful surrounding any disclosure of information in public where individuals were involved.

The Council, having unanimously approved the Statement of Accounts,

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Final Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement at Appendix A and B to the report respectively, be approved.

(2) T H A T delegate authority be granted to the S151 Officer in liaison with the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee to make any final adjustments to the Final Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement as necessary.

(3) T H A T the response to the Audit Wales Audit Enquiries at Appendix C to the report be noted.

(4) T H A T the Audit Wales ISA260 and management actions agreed by the Vale of Glamorgan be noted.

(5) T H A T the Letter of Representation attached at Appendix E to the report be approved.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Council is the body responsible for the final approval of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.

(2) The Audit of the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement is complete.

(3) Audit Wales has written to both offices and those charged with governance with a set of queries to provide assurance on fraud, legal and related parties.

(4) The ISA260 is for noting and any adjustment required have been made in the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement being put forward for approval.

(5) To enable the submission of the Letter of Representation ahead of the sign off of the Accounts by the Auditor General.

620 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES GAMBLING ACT 2005 – 2025-2028 (REF) –

Councillor Sivagnanam, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services, presented the reference advising that there had been no changes to the policy proposed following the consultation and asked the Council for its approval.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the proposed Statement of Licensing Principles for 2025-2028 be approved.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the reference and discussions at the meeting.

621 SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES (SRS) – AMENDMENT TO JOINT WORKING AGREEMENT (REF) –

Councillor Sivagnanam, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services, presented the reference and asked for Council to approve the Joint Working Agreement to include the special procedures regime, which would allow new licenses required for services to be presented to Licensing Committee.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the proposed change to the Joint Working Agreement under a Deed of Variation between the partner Councils for the provision of Regulatory Services be approved.

Reason for decision

To ensure that appropriate approvals were sought in relation to the proposed change to the Joint Working Agreement through the addition of the Public Health Wales Act 2017 to the list of functions delegated to the Joint Committee and contained in Part 1 to Schedule 1 of the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Working Agreement to be agreed by all three partner Councils.

622 FINAL DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN ANNUAL SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023/24 (REF) –

The Leader, in presenting the reference, shared how the report had been developed based upon feedback from Cabinet, Scrutiny and the Governance and Audit Committee. She referred to the need to look at a plain language version being a longer-term consideration as this needed to be understandable to residents but also to fulfil legislative requirements. The Leader indicated that the assessment had been moderated based upon feedback, but that the Council had still had a good year. The Leader moved the recommendation that the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Annual Self Assessment be approved contained as contained within the reference which was seconded by Councillor Brooks.

Councillor Hooper shared that he felt that the report was an improvement based upon previous years, with an increased sense of contrition and honesty. He also said it was important to improve accessibility. He referenced the “good” grading and sought clarification of how this could be progressed.

The Leader said it was a statutory requirement, and they would continue to learn, including feedback from the Peer Panel Assessment and the Corporate Plan. She agreed that there was an issue surrounding the need to have an open conversation with residents and was not sure how this would be achieved but would continue to try. The Leader further commented that the good rating was based upon reflection upon performance against what was set out in the Annual Delivery Plan, and advised this would be a discussion for the next self-assessment to consider the Council benchmarks, increased data and feedback.

Councillor Carroll said that it would be bizarre for him to endorse the “good” assessment based upon previous comments in the meeting but welcomed the changes in format of the report to improve accessibility. He also welcomed the changes to the format of reports which was noted and agenda planning which would be considered by Democratic Services.

Following a request a recorded vote on the recommendations with item took place as follows:

Members	For	Against	Abstain
Anne Asbrey		√	
Julie Aviet	√		
Gareth Ball	√		
Rhiannon Birch	√		
Bronwen Brooks	√		
Gillian Bruce		√	
Ian Buckley	√		
Lis Burnett	√		
Samantha Campbell	√		
George Carroll		√	
Christine Cave		√	
Charles Champion		√	
Janice Charles		√	
Millie Collins		√	
Marianne Cowpe		√	
Pamela Drake	√		
Vince Driscoll		√	
Anthony Ernest		√	
Christopher Franks		√	
Wendy Gilligan	√		
Russell Godfrey		√	
Emma Goodjohn	√		
Ewan Goodjohn	√		
Stephen Haines		√	

Sally Hanks	✓		
William Hennessy		✓	
Nic Hodges		✓	
Mark Hooper		✓	
Catherine Iannucci-Williams	✓		
Gwyn John	✓		
Dr. Ian Johnson		✓	
Susan Lloyd-Selby	✓		
Belinda Loveluck-Edwards	✓		
Julie Lynch-Wilson	✓		
Kevin Mahoney		✓	
Naomi Marshallsea	✓		
Michael Morgan	✓		
Jayne Norman	✓		
Helen Payne	✓		
Elliot Penn	✓		
Sandra Perkes	✓		
Ian Perry		✓	
Joanna Protheroe	✓		
Ruba Sivagnanam	✓		
Carys Stallard	✓		
Neil Thomas	✓		
Rhys Thomas		✓	
Steffan Wiliam		✓	
Margaret Wilkinson	✓		

Eddie Williams	√		
Mark Wilson	√		
Nicholas Wood		√	
TOTAL	30	22	

The recommendation being carried it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the Final Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self Assessment Report 2023/24 as considered by Cabinet on 7th November, 2024 (Minute No. C166 refers) be approved.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

623 TREASURY MID YEAR MANAGEMENT REPORT 2024/25 (REF) –

The Leader, in presenting the reference that had been sent to Members that day following the decisions of Cabinet on 28th November, outlined the mid-year (April – September) report, highlighting that this information had also been provided to the Governance and Audit Committee. The report considered an economic update which looked at the factors that drove the UK economy during the period under review and an analysis of interest rate forecast for the period December 2024 to March 2027. There were no policy changes to the Treasury Management Strategy as a 30th September, 2024. The report emphasised that new loans were borrowed on a shorter term basis as interest rates were forecast to fall, creating a temporary breach of the maturity structure of borrowing, but that the Council had considered this to be prudent in this situation. The Leader further advised that borrowing was supporting the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and that external debt had increased.

The Council unanimously

RESOLVED – T H A T the Treasury Management Mid-Year Report for the period 1st April to 30th September, 2024 be approved and the use of the urgent decision procedure be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting and the Cabinet's use of the urgent decision procedure to enable the matter to be considered at this Full Council meeting.

624 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2030 (REF) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure (Cabinet Minute No. C131, 10th October, 2024 (as set out in Section 15.14.2(ii) of the Council's Constitution) be noted.

Reason for decision

The reporting of the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure is a requirement of the Council's Constitution.

625 FINAL VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023/24 (REF) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure (Cabinet Minute No. C134, 10th October, 2024 (as set out in Section 15.14.2(ii) of the Council's Constitution) be noted.

Reason for decision

The reporting of the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure is a requirement of the Council's Constitution.

626 CO-ORDINATED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS SCHEME 2027-28 (REF) –

RESOLVED – T H A T the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure (Cabinet Minute No. C168, 7th November, 2024 (as set out in Section 15.14.2(ii) of the Council's Constitution) be noted.

Reason for decision

The reporting of the use of the Urgent Decision Procedure is a requirement of the Council's Constitution.

627 QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO SECTION 4.19 OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION –

The following responses to Member questions as contained within the agenda were presented:

(i) Question from Councillor H.M. Payne

Could the Leader give an update on the Levelling Up and Long Term Plans for Towns' funding?

Reply from the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

I am pleased that the UK Government has committed to up to £20m over the next decade for Barry as part of the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme, which will be retained and reformed, as part of a new regeneration programme.

This reformed programme will bring together residents, business and community representatives to drive forward change, giving communities the space and resource to build their vision for renewal and target the root causes of deprivation. A revised prospectus for the programme will be published in the new year, confirming the associated timelines and a new set of strategic objectives. The Council will continue in its role as secretariat to the Barry Partnership and information will be published in due course on the new programme and the implications this may have for the Partnership and its plans.

I also welcome the announcement that the Round 3 Levelling Up Fund project was approved that will see £19.9m of UK Government funding invested in the Waterfront. The Council and its partners are in the process of submitting revised timelines and financial information to UK Government as part of the formal approval process and will be updating the Cabinet once the revisions are confirmed.

Supplemental

Councillor Payne queried how people's views were going to be represented in this work moving forward, to which the Leader stated that it was essential that the people of the town contributed towards this, and that the development of the new prospectus should allow more people to engage.

(ii) **Question from Councillor G. Bruce**

With a further 900 homes being built in the village, what provision is being made available for secondary education for pupils living in Rhoose?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language

The Council is mindful of potential development related to the Rhoose area that may arise in future especially through the Council's Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). Any likely pupil numbers generated from new housing developments is always considered and where there is insufficient capacity forecast to be available in local schools, a financial contribution will be sought from developers through a Section 106 agreement. This financial contribution will be used to provide additional educational accommodation where required. The Council has a good track record in this regard and one only needs to consider all the recent modern school buildings that have been provided across the Vale which has been supported by S106 funding.

Supplemental

Councillor Bruce asked if the Cabinet Member would consider including Llantwit Major and/or Witmore High to allow for ease of travel, to which the Cabinet Member responded that this would depend upon pupil numbers, and that the Education Department was a consultee during the planning process, which could lead to increased funding, but it was impossible to say at this point.

(iii) **Question from Councillor M.J. Hooper**

I attended a recent meeting of the Barry Waterfront Community Residents Association which has reconstituted itself, something which I think we can all agree is good news. I attended the meeting alongside fellow Waterfront Councillors.

Could the Leader please update Council on the latest news with regard to the developers finishing work on the site, and whether she and senior officers continue to meet the Consortium on a regular basis, as they committed to do so earlier in the year?

Reply from the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

I am aware of the meeting and was invited. Regrettably I could not attend as I was in mid Wales with the WLGA at the time. The Deputy Leader did nevertheless attend and fielded a number of questions.

In response, I and Senior officers continue to meet the Consortium on a regular basis, and this has proved a positive process for achieving progress on the outstanding works. A progress report has been submitted as recently as November 28th, which contains up-to-date timeframes for the outstanding items. This can be shared with local Members. We last met with the Consortium last week on 29th November. The meetings will continue until the development is completed. This is something I committed to and something I will remain committed to until we have all matters successfully concluded.

Supplemental

Councillor Hooper asked if Councillors could be sighted upon information provided with the Consortium, to which the Leader responded that this was a working document which would raise more questions than answers. The Leader said that it was a matter for the Consortium to engage but that she had also raised the issue with them and that she would ask the Consortium to consider putting out a bulletin.

(iv) **Question from Councillor N.B. Marshallsea**

This Council declared a nature emergency in July 2021 in a bid to protect biodiversity. How are Council allotment holders encouraged to use wildlife friendly practices?

Reply from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places

The LNP offers biodiversity starter packages and a biodiversity grants scheme that allotment holders can apply for. In the past the LNP have worked with allotment holders to install new planters, hedging, wildlife cameras etc. We encourage them to use peat-free compost and discourage use of herbicides / pesticides. The LNP actively help promote and deliver biodiversity improvement across the Vale and will continue to work with allotment holders and other community groups to develop gains and improvement for nature.

Supplemental

Councillor Marshallsea sought further information as to how plotholders were discouraged around the use of herbicides and pesticides, to which the Deputy Leader offered to provide further detail outside the meeting.

(v) Question from Councillor C.A. Cave

What action is the Council taking to ensure Colwinston Village Hall is properly maintained?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services

I am aware that our officers have been working with the Hall Committee, who it is acknowledged either deliver or facilitate a wide range of valued community focused activities at the Village Hall, to address issues with the Hall roof, and to investigate other potential improvements that will reduce operating costs as well as assisting in securing the long-term future of the Hall.

Unfortunately, works to address issues with a leaking roof, that were undertaken quickly, uncovered far more serious issues with the integrity of the roof structure itself, and it has been determined that the roof needs replacing.

The Committee, with support of Council officers, submitted a grant application to the Community Ownership Fund to replace the roof and undertake other improvements. This application progressed from stage 1 but is presently on hold following a review of Government grant schemes after the General Election. We are currently awaiting news if this grant fund will continue, to enable the stage 2 application to be submitted. Whilst we await this news, we are continuing to investigate other funding opportunities to address the roof situation at this centre as well as other similar roofing issues at various other Council owned Community Centres.

Supplemental

Councillor Cave asked if it was common practice by the Council to overinflate the cost of building work (by approximately 25% based upon the grant discussed) as the grant application was approximately £30,000 – £40,000 more than the roof cost, is it common practice to do this and if so why? The Cabinet Member agreed to seek further information for Councillor Cave but did not think this was the Council's practice.

(vi) **Question from Councillor Dr. I.J. Johnson**

In recent weeks there have been rumours that Aviva are planning to put the Barry Docks Incinerator site into administration. This site has been the subject of planning applications since 2008, costing many hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of officer time.

What is the current status of planning applications on the site and the anticipated next stages of the planning process?

Reply from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places

The Leader and Chief Executive have already written to Aviva and ABP to request an urgent update regarding the status of their site and their future plans. Responses are awaited and as soon as we have a response of any kind we will share it with local Members, as we did with the press release we put out recently and with the Aviva website update which confirms they are divesting from these plants.

Regarding the appeal against the refusal of planning permission, the Council is still awaiting a start date for the appeal from Planning and Environment Decisions Wales.

Supplemental

Councillor Dr. Johnson sought further information surrounding what discussions were being undertaken with Welsh Government surrounding the technology and its usage given that other sites had been refused. The Deputy Leader advised that a meeting had been scheduled with ABP for 10th December and the issue can be explored then.

(vii) **Question from Councillor J. Protheroe**

Recent weather events in Spain have shown us just how fragile our food supply chains are with 25% of the UK's fruit and vegetable production currently under water. It is critical then that the public sector does what it can to support domestic production to build resilience by shortening supply chains and buying local. Can you tell me what the Vale is doing to ensure we have more locally grown food on our children's plates?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language

Food is recognised as one of the 13 critical infrastructures of the UK. In 2023 the Welsh Foundational Food economy was worth £9.3 billion, with the overall Food and Drink sector worth £24.6 billion to Wales.

The success of the future of the Welsh Food and Farming Sector is about producing food sustainably, looking after our climate and underpinning our rural communities, whilst overcoming the climate and nature emergencies that we are facing.

All sectors of the agricultural industry globally and within Wales are encountering significant challenges as a result of the extreme weather patterns we have seen in recent years. In Wales this has included exceptional periods of drought in 2022, to sustain periods of wet weather in 2023/2024.

The Welsh Government has an ambition to increase the volume of fruit and vegetables grown in Wales, the Horticulture sector currently only grows 6% of the volume of fruit and vegetables consumed within Wales.

Supported by Welsh Government, national momentum is growing behind the concept of working with growers, producers and farmers towards a sustainable horticulture industry. Efficient, short supply chains are critical to achieving success, which requires collaborative working with farm businesses, commercial partners, infrastructure and economic investment and necessary intervention to address existing market failure within this sector.

This work is already underway in the Vale of Glamorgan and earlier this year the Senior Food and Farming Officer worked with The Big Fresh Catering Company to support the introduction of the Vale of Glamorgan as a stakeholder to the Welsh Veg

In Schools Project (WVIS) and introduce support for and use of local growers clauses to associated fruit and vegetable tenders linked to public procurement within schools in the Vale.

Welsh Veg for Schools is just one example of an initiative within Wales seeking to intervene and facilitate positive change, which is gaining great momentum.

The Vale of Glamorgan is now considered a key stakeholder within this project, with both growers from within the Vale and The Big Fresh Catering Company involved in the project and up to 10 schools now receiving local / Welsh organic vegetables on a weekly basis (when in season) and forming part of the daily school menu. The Big Fresh Catering Company, Vale of Glamorgan Schools and their fantastic pupils have featured this Autumn in important TV and Radio coverage linked to the project.

Symon Dovey, Big Fresh Commercial Catering Manager, now holds a position on the WVIS Steering Group and both they and the Senior Food and Farming Officer will attend the WVIS Annual Review and Planning Meeting being held in December to plan for the 2025 growing season. An additional four Vale of Glamorgan growers have been introduced to the WVIS project and whilst the commercial decisions of growers are their own, it is hoped that some will come on board with the project for the 2025 growing season, strengthening the volume of vegetables from the local area going into the scheme and its participating schools.

This is an incredible success story and the Council is invested in providing time, resource and expertise to support this going forward into the next financial year and beyond.

Data on emissions reductions and nutrition linked to the project within the Vale will be gathered in due course, which will support the VOGC Project Zero.

As a note of caution, the success of projects such as WVIS relies currently on “bridging the gap” funds through Sustain, as well as other funding support. Longer term success of local supply chains within public procurement will require a wider commitment from public bodies to recognise the social value of local supply chains within tenders, rather than financial metrics alone. The new Procurement Bill coming in 2025, supports taking this broader approach.

INNOVATION

In support of the WVIS project through Food Vale (which VOGC supports), a financial grant has been given to a Vale grower joining the scheme in 2025 to heat their growing polytunnel using a natural TACP system, fuelled by biomass, to ensure that an increased volume of produce can be grown all year around whilst eliminating the use of fossil fuels and generating a natural peat free source of compost to support the on-growing production of produce in fertile soil.

ADDITIONAL WORKSTREAMS

The Senior Food and Farming Officer is currently producing an online directory of local food and drink producers which will sit within the Visit the Vale website, which aims to encourage short supply chains and the purchase of local produce by residents, visitors and within the Vale as well as increase a curiosity and knowledge about where and how food is produced within the county. This will be launched with a supporting campaign by the New Year.

Other work is ongoing in relation to the development of an Agri-Food Hub near Hensol and associated biodiversity enhancement.

Supplemental

Councillor Protheroe asked if the Council were looking to continue their relationship with this Partnership, which the Cabinet Member confirmed they would be continuing to do so.

(viii) Question from Councillor W.A. Hennessy

Will the Cabinet Member please update the Council on the provision in place to support children with learning disabilities in the Western Vale?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language

The Sustainable Communities Rolling programme recognises the need to expand our ALN provision further into the Western Vale and has included this in our long-term rolling programme, subject to consultation and funding of course. This provision is at an early stage as no land has been sought or located. However, the inclusion of this project in the early delivery programme is being led by the existing capacity challenges Ysgol y Deri and its satellite sites.

In July 2023, Derw Newydd (formerly known as Centre for Learning and Wellbeing) opened its doors learners, providing up to 60 places for suitable education for children and young people who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive such education in a mainstream school. Work is also ongoing for an

additional 150 places at Ysgol Llyn Derw, currently under development in Cosmeston.

In addition, over the last three years there has been an expansion and inclusion of Specialist Resource Bases (SRB) included within a number of schools, including those in the Western Vale. The inclusion of SRBs will continue with our school investment strategy, with all new school developments providing further ALN capacity across the education estate.

Supplemental

Councillor Hennessey asked for further information around what the Council was doing to make sure enough ALN assistants were recruited in primary schools in Rhoose and in other primary settings, to which the Cabinet Member responded this would need to be explored based upon individual school's budgets, but she would be happy to follow up with Councillor Hennessy if he would put his request in writing to her.

(ix) Question from Councillor A.M. Collins

Following the recent Budget announcement that Barry will indeed receive £20m through Long-Term Plan for Towns, can the relevant Cabinet Member confirm whether funding will be available for the 2024/25 financial year, or whether the delay in confirming the funding means that the start point will slip into the next financial year?

Reply from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places

The Council, acting in its role as the secretariat for the Barry Partnership will be receiving a new prospectus for the programme shortly. Revenue funding of up to £400,000 will be available to the Partnership, with capital funding being released in 2026/2027. Much of the early work of the Partnership requires revenue funding.

(x) Question from Councillor R.R. Thomas

How is the Council working with South Wales Police, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, local businesses and others to tackle shoplifting in Penarth?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services

The Council regularly liaises with the Police Neighbourhoods Team, to explore opportunities to support existing work taking place to address shoplifting.

The Police are currently operating a high visibility approach in the town centre area, engaging directly with shopkeepers and providing preventative advice but Council staff remain on hand to assist with any work relating to the concerns raised.

Penarth Town Centre is covered by CCTV and real time footage can be provided to Police staff on the ground, responding to issues. The high-quality CCTV images

also enable operators in the control centre to track 'persons of interest' and share information directly with Police.

Supplemental

Councillor Thomas queried if the Council would consider taking the lead or implementing a Business Crime Reduction Partnership or similar scheme to help end shoplifting in Penarth? The Cabinet Member advised that the Council was already working with the Police and businesses and was looking at all ways to address the issue.

(xi) **Question from Councillor C.M. Cowpe**

The Replacement LDP includes two major candidate sites within Dinas Powys Community Council, one of which is named 'North East Barry'.

While appreciating the geographical proximity of that site to Barry, and also to Wenvoe Community Council, it is important that there is no confusion that this is within Dinas Powys under current and future community boundaries that have recently been recommended by Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru.

How does the Vale Council plan to combat any confusion around this site as we go through the RLDP process and to ensure full participation in the consultation process across all three of these communities?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services

I am surprised that this is being asked as you have already asked the same question of officers and received an answer in detail from the Head of Sustainable Development. I could simply refer you to that answer, but I will also reiterate it here. The Preferred Strategy for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) refers to the site in question as 'Land at North East Barry', as this was the name provided by the site promoters when the site was originally submitted to the Council as a candidate site.

Whilst the site is within the ward boundary of Dinas Powys, it is considered, were it developed to be a functional extension to the settlement of Barry, as the site is contiguous with the Barry Town Council administrative boundary, which is formed by the A4231 Barry Docks Link Road. The site is some distance away from the defined settlement area of Dinas Powys and therefore any reference to Dinas Powys in the site name may cause confusion.

However, to provide further clarity for residents on the exact location of the site, it is proposed that the site be referred to as 'Land between the A4231 and Argae Lane, North East of Barry' in future references to the land.

Future consultations on the RLDP are open to all residents of the Vale and other interested parties and, as per the previous Preferred Strategy consultation, a series

of online and drop in consultation events will be held in the largest centres of population.

Supplemental

Councillor Cowpe asked for an explanation in the delay in holding a public meeting surrounding the usage of the site, to which the Cabinet Member explained that she was aware that a meeting was due to take place outside of the consultation.

(xii) Question from Councillor J.E. Charles

What steps is the Council taking to improve its handling of public money and reduce waste?

Reply from the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

The Council has comprehensive arrangements in place to ensure robust handling of public money.

There is an extensive approach to setting the budget annually which dovetails with the setting and delivery of the Council's objectives through its Corporate Plan. A Financial Strategy is approved at the start of the process which is open to scrutiny. There are workshops across the autumn informed by benchmarking and extensive financial and non-financial data to drive the budget discussions. This is followed up by a refresh of assumptions in November and financial proposals for consultation in the January with a final budget to Cabinet in late February/March, all subject to scrutiny and supported with numerous briefings.

The budget is thoroughly monitored and managed throughout the year through Directorate Management Teams and SLT and reported to Cabinet quarterly and also to Scrutiny in a timely manner.

The Council assesses its arrangements in a number of ways. It self-assesses against CIPFA Financial Management Code which is reported to Governance and Audit and Cabinet with a section of the assessment subject to independent review on a rolling basis.

The Council's overall system of internal control is reported through in the Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the annual Statement of Accounts. This provides a clean bill of health and is also signed off by Audit Wales.

Supplemental

Councillor Charles asked if the Leader would apologise for the Council's failure to manage public money prudently with regard to the overpayment of senior salaries, to which the Leader indicated her disappointed that her Group Leader had not shared a briefing surrounding the overpayments which made her statement factually incorrect, and indicated she would not apologise for following process and procedure.

(xiii) **Question from Councillor S.J. Haines**

A large area of Eastvale, St Athan, has had faulty streetlights for over a year. When will this situation be remedied?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services

There are several lighting faults around the Eastvale Estate, St Athan, following various utility installations and upgrades, but a large proportion of these faults involve cabling infrastructure that is in private ownership. To move this forward, the Council's Street Lighting Team has contacted the management group representing residents with a view to engaging National Grid on a 'without prejudice' basis, to trace the faults and determine ownership, so these issues can be rectified at the earliest opportunity. I have asked my Street Lighting Team to keep you advised on this matter as the work progresses.

Supplemental

Councillor Haines further queried from a Council Tax payer's perspective that being a third party's problem was not good enough. The Cabinet Member in response said that where there are areas of private ownership it was a matter for the owners although the Council would be happy to facilitate such discussions.

(xiv) **Question from Councillor G.D.D. Carroll**

Will the Cabinet Member please update the Council on proposed development at Model Farm in Rhoose?

Reply from the Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services

At the special Planning Committee held on 18th May, 2023, Members were informed that the applicants had submitted an appeal against the Council's failure to determine application 2019/00871/OUT within the appropriate time period. At the following Planning Committee meeting held on 25th May, 2023, Members resolved to approve two putative reasons for refusal and to appoint an external consultant to prepare the Council's defence to the non-determination appeal. Following the Planning Inspector's assessment of the submitted Environmental Statement, it was considered that further information was required, and the Appellant's agent has submitted additional information in response to this request. Since the appeal was lodged, PEDW has also confirmed that the Welsh Ministers have recovered the appeal and decided that it should be determined by themselves, rather than the Planning Inspector.

The appeal was formally started by PEDW on 11th November, 2024 and will be dealt with by way of a Public Inquiry. On 19th November, 2024, notification letters were sent to all members of the public who made representations on the planning application advising them of the appeal and how to send any further comments to PEDW. The appointed external consultant is preparing the Council's statement of case, which will be submitted to PEDW by 9th December, 2024.

Supplemental

Councillor Carroll asked for clarity surrounding the voting procedure at a meeting in March 2023 as members of the public felt confused as to what they were voting for, to which the Cabinet Member responded she had been at that meeting and she did not think there had been confusion but if members of the public or Members were confused they would be welcome to write to her for clarification.