

## CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> July, 2022.

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

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

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair), Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, S.J. Haines, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood.

Also Present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Well-being) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 161 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair 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”.

### 162 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

### 163 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2021/22 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2022 was presented by the Operational Manager Employee Services, which included the following key points:

- In terms of safeguards concerning the Council’s recruitment of staff and the Safer Recruitment Policy, these were a vital consideration due to the large number of Council roles that involved working with and supporting children, young persons and vulnerable adults. Due to this, the Council undertook numerous checks before staff could join (i.e. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks). However, such checks could not always be completed prior to staff starting work, due to the urgency of their role or delays in the process. This meant that a risk assessment may have to be applied in order to get new staff in post prior to the completion of the appropriate checks, but with the necessary safeguards in place, i.e. not working unsupervised with children or vulnerable adults whilst those checks were being completed.
- In terms of compliance rates for the Council’s Safer Recruitment Policy for Corporate and Schools New Starters for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2022, this was 93% for all appointments (equating to 37 breaches), which had dropped compared to the same period in 2020/21. 538

appointments of new starters had been undertaken via Safer Recruitment, which was a significant increase compared to the previous year. A key factor here was the impact of COVID-19 on schools, with increased absences and changes to working patterns driving more recruitment in order to fill these gaps and ensure that schools could still run effectively.

- When looking at compliance rates for Schools New Starters only, compliance rates were overall very good, but with some exceptions (i.e. 89% in September 2021). However, when looking at the first quarter for 2021/22 compared to 2020/21, there were only 3 breaches compared to 8. Such breaches could be technical ones only, i.e. schools starting back on a Friday for the new term, but due to this being an inset day, no pupils would actually be in attendance. This would be looked at going forward in order to see if such technical breaches could be removed from the reporting process. Similarly, compliance rates for Corporate New Starters were overall very high, with only 2 breaches.
- Actual breaches in safer recruitment compliance were taken extremely seriously, with the individual concerned being informed that they were missing their reference or DBS check, as well as the relevant headteacher or line manager and in conjunction with the appropriate risk assessment.
- Although compliance rates were lower than seen previously, this could be explained in large part to the volumes of recruitment seen for 2021/22, as well as the impact of existing COVID-19 rules and the Pandemic in general, i.e. difficulties in getting hold of some individual references because they were off with COVID.

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

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report: 2021/22 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

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

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

- The proposed draft response was a technical but also a very diverse document, covering key areas such as the Council's Constitution and associated guide, as well as other wide-ranging areas as part of the consultation, due to this being a significant cornerstone piece of legislation. A

number of provisions also covered and promoted diversity, involvement and participation within the local government family in Wales.

- Over the last 18 months, there had been a number of reports linked to this legislation that had gone through to Full Council, Cabinet etc. i.e. on family absence arrangements, and interim guidance on multi location meetings, as well as other consultations such as Corporate Joint Committees.
- Some of the work had already been in train in terms of the Act, with some of it having come into effect last year, from May 2021, but the majority taking effect from 5<sup>th</sup> May this year, which included the introduction of a new Model Constitution and guide, arrangement job sharing, assistants to the Executive, and changes to petitions i.e. the provision of electronic petitions.
- Unfortunately, although the legislation was in place, there was a significant suite of statutory guidance still awaited from Welsh Government (WG).
- The deadline for the consultation response to be submitted to WG was 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2022.
- Work to progress the extensive and detailed provisions within the Act had been overseen by an officer working group with an associated action plan.
- Discussions were ongoing at an officer level relating to resourcing for the implementation as a result of the instruction of legislation and requirements of proposed statutory guidance.

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

- Councillor Dr. Johnson, as both a Committee Member and as a Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, wanted to raise the following points:
  - There were some very important issues being raised in the consultation about the sufficiency of resources for the Democratic Services Team. There was a clear need to ensure sufficient resources for the Democratic Services Team in order to address areas such as additional information, research and support services for all Elected Members in order to hold Cabinet and the Council to account and to discuss key issues in a more effective manner. This would help to address the current 'imbalance' between the support Council Officers currently gave to Cabinet Members and that given to opposition and 'backbench' Members as well as Independent Members of the Council.
  - The need to emphasise, as part of this consultation, the importance of the Welsh language not being treated any differently or any less favourably than English i.e. the use of an interpreter at hybrid meetings and the importance of bilingual participation, in a majority English speaking area, which the Vale of Glamorgan was.
- Councillor Loveluck-Edwards stressed the importance of issues around Committee meeting timings, training and development of Members, etc. as part of the consultation, in order to help promote diversity and accessibility. It had been extremely beneficial to undertake the various induction training for new Councillors online and it was good to see that this was also being addressed as part of the consultation. It was also good to see the response on ethics and standards and the importance of new Members understanding their obligations. The Councillor asked what the timeline was on feedback from new Members regarding training and development, when the draft

consultation needed to go back to WG on 22<sup>nd</sup> July and be finalised by Autumn. The Operational Manager, Democratic Services, explained that the survey on training circulated would be looked at in the Autumn / Winter (which would help inform a training needs analysis for Members), with other surveys planned such as timings of Committee meetings, to be undertaken in due course.

- The Operational Manager, Democratic Services, wished to add that the Council had provided thorough training to Members, (i.e. to ensure that key business such as quasi-judicial committees and Cabinet could commence as quickly as possible) but this needed to be balanced with not overwhelming new and existing Members straight away. The Vale had been one of the first Welsh Local Authorities to have its Committees resume following the recent local elections, as well as undertaking Member inductions and issuing new ICT equipment. He thanked the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer and her team for their support in delivering the Member Development Programme activities to date, as well as the support provided at Committee meetings.

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

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

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

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

#### Reason for recommendation

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

## 165 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (DCR) –

The report, as presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, detailed a wide range of activity being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and took forward Project Zero. This was the Council's response to the climate and nature emergencies declared by the Vale of Glamorgan Council (in conjunction with Welsh Government and others). Such updates would be presented to both this Committee and that of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee three times a year as part of pre-cabinet scrutiny.

Key points raised were:

- The Plan detailed eighteen challenges framed around the need to demonstrate strong leadership (i.e., leading by example as an organisation) fulfil our responsibility to current and future generations (including areas where the Council could help shape the activities of others and through its policies, the way that the Council delivered services and where the Council could influence the actions of others) and to make a difference now (such as the areas that the Council had direct control over how it operated as an organisation, i.e. how it used its buildings).
- The overall aim of Project Zero was decarbonising the Council's activities by 2030 and then contributing to the WG target of a zero carbon Wales by 2050.
- Work had been undertaken with a series of community groups, i.e. in Llantwit Major, Wenvoe and Penarth, around Project Zero and how collectively these ambitions could be achieved within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- Work was also underway to ensure that all press releases by the Council included and clearly showed links to Project Zero, as well as having physical signage in areas such as country parks.
- The Council was already in the process of collating data to be submitted to WG regarding the Council's carbon emissions.
- The vast majority of the Council's carbon emissions were within its supply chain, which had led to a review of the Council's procurement strategy, and to identifying opportunities to challenge carbon usage in the various areas of procurement.
- Furthermore, there were to be consultations / reviews on a Green Infrastructure Plan / Strategy and of the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) which would include action towards tackling climate change as well as the use of Section 106 funding to support initiatives that were supportive of this agenda as well. Also of note, was the work through the Cardiff Capital Region which continued to support work on climate change including the plans for the Aberthaw site in terms of renewable energy and support for developing green skills in the Vale.
- Another key area was around the local production and sourcing of food to help the environment, support the local economy as well as ensuring that Vale residents ate healthily and well, i.e. the Council were part of the Food Vale partnership, which had been awarded the Bronze award status as part of the Sustainable Food Places Network.

- Also, the Council was encouraging active travel and making sure that the infrastructure was in place for the charging of electric vehicles as well as supporting activity that was not associated with the use of the private car.
- The new ten-year Waste Strategy had been reported to Cabinet recently that would be consulted across the Summer, which would encourage more reuse and recycling so that the Council could reduce further the amount of residual waste going into the system.

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

- Councillor Franks asked for additional information and details concerning the following areas which he felt were only mentioned briefly within the report:
  - The Aberthaw Power Station development. The Director of Corporate Resources explained that he would obtain the additional information required concerning the Aberthaw development, including press releases and on the latest situation in terms of the negotiations around that particular scheme, in the concise format requested.
  - Regarding 'Big Fresh' and what 'locally sourced' actually meant, this did mean purchasing through local suppliers, including both wholesalers and producers. One of the benefits of having Big Fresh, a Local Authority Trading Company, was to have that flexibility in terms of the way that those items were procured.
  - OVO Bikes (e-bikes), and rates of use and any instances of abuse of these installations. Regarding the rate of use of OVO bikes, etc. the Director would ask colleagues in the transport service to provide this data.
  - The Council's recent installation of photovoltaic solar panels and its plan for a future programme of works targeting high energy consuming assets. On the solar panels for community centres, etc. the Director of Corporate Resources had spoken recently to the Chief Executive of Glamorgan Voluntary services about this, who were looking at this from both an environmental and inflationary perspective concerning energy use; due to this the Council would be looking at how to have a more sustainable footing for community centres and other community groups as a whole, as a way of potentially alleviating in the medium to long term cost pressures around energy, as well as looking to get additional funding via WG for community centres operated by community groups but owned by the Council in order to see if sustainable alternatives of energy could be installed.
- Councillor Carroll asked about the status of the reserves to support the delivery of Project Zero, for example, had there been any drawdown on these due to budgetary or other pressures. It was explained that the information would be shared with Committee via finance colleagues, and it was requested that this type of information be included in future reports on Project Zero.
- Councillor Dr. Johnson raised the following points:
  - Although it was the intention for the report to be more a summary, it was still important to have a more detailed update which could be accessible, particularly for new Committee Members.
  - It was also important to see what actions had been undertaken so far against objectives too.

- As raised by Councillor Carrol, greater clarity on the expenditure allocated and spent on the project, to be included within the report, would also be extremely beneficial to enable scrutiny.
- For future reports, a greater emphasis on the barriers, emerging risks and challenges, as well as the successes or work undertaken around Project Zero and on the progress made addressing these should be included in the update to Committee.
- Additional details were requested around the Local Nature Partnership / Local Places for Nature and regarding 'blue spaces', including coasts, rivers, etc. within the Vale and any work involving Project Zero with these. The Director of Corporate Resources suggested a presentation on the Local Places for Nature and Local Nature Partnership could be arranged for a future meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and / or an addendum included with the report prior to its referral to that Committee.
- Also, additional details and reassurance about the time scale for the carbon footprint work that was being undertaken and if these were being met.
- The use of hyperlinks or other means of access to the relevant background reports and papers linked to Project Zero, as well as the related minutes, in order to track decision-making more easily.
- The Chair echoed Councillor Dr. Johnson's points above and the need to refocus the report going forward; Councillor Loveluck-Edwards also felt that the use of a 'RAG' rating that was used by other reports submitted to Scrutiny would be useful for future updates of Project Zero and its performance, timescales, etc. The Director of Corporate Resources added that the additional information required would be included in future reports and for those relevant areas, i.e. financial information, these would be included in an addendum and appendices for when the report was referred on to Cabinet, and the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- Councillor Wood asked the following:
  - Did the Council have enough resources within the Council to achieve the decarbonisation targets by the 2030 deadline. It was explained that although the associated plan, etc. around Project Zero was ambitious and aspirational, it was backed up by a realistic assessment on how and what resources the Council would need to deliver this, including investment in the Council's Energy Service to assess and interpret the carbon emissions data more effectively and to drive wider community information and engagement work to help achieve the project's goals. The project was also being looked at and delivered from a corporate level by multiple teams and services.
  - How much benchmarking was done against other Councils around carbon emissions / decarbonisation measures and performance, in order for the Council to take a fully constructive, 'strategic' approach. It was explained that in terms of the carbon emissions data return that was submitted to WG, there was a cross public sector working group that looked at this data, which was broken down to the Local Authority level as well in order that the Vale and other Authorities could compare themselves against their peers. The Council and others used this data to learn and share 'best practice' with each other as well.

- On where the Councillor could find the catalogue of working practices or plans that helped to meet Project Zero's aspirations, it was explained that these were covered in the Climate Challenge Plan and the Council's Service Plans.

Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report in relation to a number of the challenges within the Climate Change Challenge Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T Cabinet be informed of the comments made by Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Project Zero Update Report, namely:

- Additional information be provided on the following areas covered by the report:
  - Aberthaw Power Station.
  - OVOBikes (e-bikes).
  - On the status of the reserves to support the delivery of Project Zero (i.e. has there been any drawdown on these, etc.).
  - On the engagement with, and the work of, the Local Nature Partnership in relation to Project Zero.
  - On any work to be undertaken around 'blue spaces' (i.e. rivers, coasts and streams);

and, where relevant, the above information be included as an addendum or appendix prior to the report being referred onto Cabinet, and the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee as well as for future reports for the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

- Future reports include the following in terms of its focus and format:
  - The use of hyperlinks or other means of access to the relevant background reports and papers linked to Project Zero, as well as the related minutes, in order to track decision-making more easily.
  - A greater emphasis on the barriers, emerging risks and challenges, as well as the successes or work undertaken, around Project Zero and on the progress made addressing these.
  - To update on the timescales around decarbonisation and whether these are being met, as well as utilising 'RAG' ratings (Red, Amber and Green) for the various elements of the Project.
  - To provide more detail on the financial aspects of this Project, i.e. an update on the finances and reserves that support the delivery of Project Zero.

(3) T H A T following consideration of the report by Cabinet that they refer the report to Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to consider with the



comments of both the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and refer any further comments back to Cabinet.

(4) T H A T Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet that this report be distributed to all elected Members, the Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their information.

#### Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) In order for Cabinet to consider the comments and views of the Scrutiny Committee.

(3) To enable the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee to consider the report and the comments of both the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

(4) To update all elected Members and other stakeholders on the arrangements in place to deliver Project Zero.

#### 166 REVENUE MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2022 (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer who explained that a new approach had been taken with regard to the report, by both looking at the key headlines / themes seen across the Council overall during this initial period of Quarter 1 (Q1) in order to understand the full context of the Council's spending as well as continue to draw down into the specific areas of the Committee's remit. The key points raised included:

- The Council was experiencing some initial financial pressures around Children's Services regarding placement and legal costs.
- Similar pressures could also be seen with the Council's Leisure Services contract and the operating costs that had been incurred, which tied in with increasing utility and other costs that the Leisure Services contract provider had been experiencing throughout COVID. However, there was some return to normality now with this contract.
- In terms of inflationary pressures, a more thorough assessment of these would be made in readiness for reporting in Quarter 2 (Q2).
- Regarding increased utility costs, the Council had protected itself by the purchase of gas and electricity two years in advance. However, as seen with other Welsh Local Authorities, energy providers had altered / increased their standing charges – potentially this would amount to a £300k cost pressure, but more would be known in Q2.
- In terms of pay awards for 2022/23, there would be protracted discussions on these, with pressure coming from the drive for an increase in the living wage, and in relation to the staff grades / pay scales lower down.

- In terms of the Council and Directorate(s) financial position and budget, it was important that this was presented in order to give the Committee as clear a view as possible of the number of resources that the Council put into its key areas and services, i.e. Housing Benefits and try to filter out recharges, etc., as well as making financial information more accessible to Members.
- Regarding Corporate Resources, there were emerging and underlying pressures within that budget, which were under discussion with the relevant senior leaders and management. This was being masked to some extent by the current level of vacancies within this service area, which the service would need to recruit for in the longer term.
- The Policy section of the report currently showed a neutral position.
- The Council had a good record on Council Tax recovery; however, the situation would need to be monitored more closely now due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.
- On Councillor Carrol's point earlier in the meeting, future revenue reports would include greater transparency on reserves and how these were being drawn down through the year.

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

- The Chair emphasised the pressures that residents would face with rising fuel and food costs and how this may impact the collection of Council Tax by the Vale going forward.
- Councillor Dr. Johnson wished to point to the important things the Council had implemented in terms of the real living wage and free school meals for infant children. Councillor Dr. Johnson also stated that it would be helpful to get assurances that the finances outlined in such reports to the Committee were based on the best knowledge that the Council had at the time, due to the initial financial forecasts that usually showed the Council would have a limited budget or be stretched, to only then receive additional Welsh Government (WG) or other funding midway through the year. It was explained that the Finance Team would be providing more updates and details concerning the use of reserves, Council Tax recovery and WG funds to Committee going forward to ensure greater transparency. Also the Council would not always know in the advance that such grants would be given to them by WG or others. The Council would also be lobbying WG through various channels to make sure the right funding was provided by WG. The Chair also added that WG was often having to react to various issues and crises so they could not always provide notice of additional funding in good time.
- Councillor Carroll asked what the expected impact of higher interest rates would have on the Council's investment and borrowing position. It was explained that the Council's Treasury Services were supported by a third-party advisor who meets with the team on a monthly basis on such matters. It was too soon to know how the interest rises would impact Council financial / budgetary considerations, but the Council was focused on this emerging issue.
- The Vice-Chair highlighted the shortfall in savings from Corporate Resources and asked if this would be reviewed or if the amount / shortfall was considered reasonable. It was explained that this shortfall would be addressed in-year

and therefore the related savings generated by vacancies in Corporate Resources would not need to be relied upon to help balance the budget. The Finance team would review the planning for the medium-term financial plan and to look at having a sound baseline going forward in order to address these underlying issues in the budget and due to the uncertainty on the size of future financial settlements from WG.

Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2022/23 Revenue Budget within the remit of the Committee be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

#### 167 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2022 (DCR) –

The report, presented by the Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer, provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2022. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1. The report set out any requested changes to the 2022/23 and future years' Capital Programme. The key points for the Committee to consider included:

- The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer stated that it was still very early days in terms of capital monitoring due to this being Q1. The main challenge for the Council was to deliver the Capital Programme, with £107.425m approved for 2022/23. This amount was in part due to slippage from 2021/22; typically, the Council delivered a Capital Programme of £60 – 70m only. A key challenge would be the impact of inflation on costs and prices and therefore keeping capital schemes within the costings agreed.
- Council Officers and Service Lines were optimistic at this time and at the start of the financial year that they would be able to deliver these schemes and therefore were reticent about forecasting any potential non-delivery of schemes in Q1 as yet.
- It was not forecast that the Council would have further slippage to be taken forward at this time. However, the Council would have a better understanding of this at Q2 and Finance would be working closely with service managers in order to get a better overview on the progress of their capital projects, based on the following questions:
  - What inflationary pressures were on their capital schemes.
  - Were they already onsite regarding these capital works?
  - Do you have your contracts agreed or are you just out to tender?
- One major capital scheme of note was the implementation of the new financial and HR IT system (known as Oracle - to go live in Autumn 2022).

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

- Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to the impact of increased slippage from 2021/22 into 2022/23 (as well as the ongoing issues with the disruption of supply chains, etc.) and asked what sort of confidence was there that the necessary capital works, such as with schools, had gone out to tender, been successful and were likely to have people conducting this work over the summer months. If not, when would the works be likely to be timetabled and take place. The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer explained that with the schools maintenance programme, it was generally good news, with contracts agreed for the majority of the work and a number of works would be undertaken during the Summertime.
- Councillor Wood asked if there were any indicative increase in costs, particularly for those older contracts with inputs which had gone up 20% to 30% in some cases and was concerned that for some of those older contracts the costs could be very high and could not be easily 'value-engineered'. Were there any indicative numbers from contractors for contracts or had there been any renegotiation requested by them. The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer stated he did not have visibility on this and would discuss the concerns raised with colleagues in order to get an answer for Councillor Wood and the Committee after this meeting, with the Chair also requesting information on programme slippages and also where the Council had identified increased costs.

Scrutiny Committee subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2022/23 Capital Programme for the schemes in the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority in relation to projects set out at Recommendation (2) of the report be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2022/23 and future years' Capital Programme as set out at Recommendation (4) of the report be noted.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the content of the report on Capital Programme progress, the use of Delegated Authority, the use of Emergency Powers and changes to the Capital Programme.

## 168 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (CX) –

The performance report, as presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, outlined the Council's progress at Quarter 4 (Q4) (1<sup>st</sup> April, 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2022) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The appended presentation was intended to provide Members with an overview of end of year performance earlier in the calendar year. This was ahead of the more detailed Self-Assessment 2021/22 which would be reported to all Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet, Governance and Audit Committee and Full Council prior to publication by early November 2022.

The report included three appendices, including performance within the remit of the Committee, exception reporting and a more detailed breakdown of performance based on the full workings and conclusions.

All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q4 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2021/22, although there was some minor slippage in some of the related performance indicators (i.e. given an Amber status). Key highlights around the performance of Well-being Objectives and other areas of performance included:

- Progress made on the redevelopment of the Council's website.
- Progress made on the range of methods used to engage and communicate with local citizens about Council services, using digital technology, i.e. the greater reach of the Council's media and the growth of the Bulletin Service via email to residents.
- Greater Council engagement with black and minority ethnic groups i.e., the Strategic Leadership Team met with representatives in order to identify actions to progress with the Council's Staff Network.
- The Council's ongoing support of the Vale's local communities (particularly during the current cost of living crisis) involving the Money Advice Team, Vale Heroes, other community groups and third sector organisations and the public sector, as well as the formation of a 'Cost of Living Crisis Huddle' group who met to discuss the needs of residents.
- Work around decarbonisation of schools and other Council buildings.
- Development of a Wellbeing Strategy and the use of well-being champions.
- Greater use of apprenticeship opportunities within different Council services, as part of the 16- to 24-year-old agenda.
- There had been some slippage related to COVID-19 and for non-COVID reasons; going forward the shift would be increasingly to non COVID factors behind slippage.
- The development of a strategy for sustainable drainage systems, the Council's Carbon Management Plan and the Corporate Asset Management Strategy.

- Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was also reported, including learning key lessons from the Pandemic such as the restructure of the Strategic Leadership Team and the use of flexible / hybrid working for Council staff.

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

- Councillor Dr. Johnson raised the matter of exception reporting and the ongoing nature or 'intractability' of some of the related issues, such as:
  - On the refurbishment of C1V, it was explained that this would be going out to tender in the near future and had been delayed due to both COVID and the need to review its scope due to changing work practices and the need to house partners i.e. the Health Service.
  - On the Welsh Community Care Information System, a report had been taken to Governance and Audit Committee; due to it remaining a Corporate 'risk'; an extract of the risk register would be forwarded to Members on how this risk was being managed.
  - On the review of building / street names and monuments, the relevant Panel would be reconvened (with new membership, post-election).
  - On the progress engagement work with children, young people and families (including those with protected characteristics) to help identify and inform service developments, information would be sought from Children Services in order to update Members.
- Regarding Councillor Loveluck-Edwards' query on analysis undertaken on staff feelings around empowerment and having 'ownership' of corporate complaints, it was explained that no analysis had been done on this area, but the relevant Operational Manager would be tasked to look at this in conjunction with the report to be submitted on the Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments to Governance and Audit Committee and on to Cabinet.
- The Chair raised her concerns around the 60% completion rate of the review for the customer relations operating model, as well as breaches / delays on complaint resolution and stressed the need for a centralised system to provide governance of customer relations and handling complaints as such instances could have a serious impact on the public's perception of how the Council deals with complaints. The Director of Corporate Resources confirmed that there was a centralised system for monitoring and dealing with complaints, which would be moving to a new technology platform in the near future. Further analysis on breaches / delays and whether these were due to cultural or capacity issues at service level would form part of future reporting on the Annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments to the Governance and Audit Committee.
- The Vice-Chair wished to add that C1V was a very important part of how the Council communicated with the public and if it did not have proper communication with the public, they would not trust the Council in the future. However, such instances were the exception, with the Council performing very well overall and he wanted to thank the Director and his staff for putting the report together.

- Councillor Dr. Johnson also wished to confirm that the Operational Manager for Customer Relations would be attending the Committee in the near future in order to update Members on how C1V was operating, and the progress made in addressing complaints, on customer satisfaction, monitoring performance, etc. The Chair asked if the Operational Manager could provide a presentation on C1V and its performance, which would be particularly useful for new Members of the Committee.

Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's recovery strategy and Directorate Recovery Plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.