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CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 18th January, 2023.

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 and N.J. Wood.

Also Present: Councillors I. Buckley, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), N.C. Thomas and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

615 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”.

616 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards.

617 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

618 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

619 AUDIT WALES: VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ASSURANCE AND RISK ASSESSMENT (ARA) REVIEW 2021/2 AND THE AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES NATIONAL STUDY REPORT ON PUBLIC SECTOR CARBON READINESS FOR NET ZERO BY 2030 (REF) –

The reference from the Governance and Audit Committee of 12th December, 2022 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

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The annual report (appended at Appendix A) summarised Audit Wales's findings from its Assurance and Risk Assessment review of the Council for the audit period 2021/22, including the Council's financial position, implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (including self-assessment arrangements) and carbon reduction plans.

Of note, was the recommendation made that the Council needed to fully cost its action plan, as well as 'calls for action' from the national study on Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030, concerning leadership and the use of resources, amongst other activities, in order for the public sector to achieve decarbonisation. The Council's proposed response was to undertake a costing exercise of Project Zero as part of its delivery, referenced in the Cabinet report regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan refresh and develop proposals for the revenue budget.

After the presentation of the reference, the Committee raised a number of questions and comments.

Councillor Dr. Johnson commented on the wider challenges of costing and funding of decarbonisation, and the need for a higher and wider level of leadership in this area. The Director stated that this illustrated the complexity of the challenge in both costing Project Zero and the sourcing of funding for this. The Council, at various levels, was looking at potential sources of funding that was consistent with the Project Zero ethos, and this was a work in progress.

The Chair referred to the excellent 'rhetorical' questions within the national audit report, which set out difficult, but essential, queries that the Council needed to address in order to achieve decarbonisation. The Director agreed, and this was why Project Zero was one of the three critical challenges outlined in the 2023/24 Annual Development Plan (ADP).

Councillor Franks referred to the paragraph in the Assurance and Risk Assessment Review concerning the Council's 'mixed track record' on delivering savings targets and whether the Council was confident that this had been overcome. It was explained that the regulators had concluded that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was well-placed to keep its financial resilience but would still need to address the budget 'gap' over the medium term, with consideration needed on the use of savings, additional sources of income and reserves. On the query concerning a previous budget surplus, this would be referred to officers in Finance for a response. With regard to the future pressures on the budget, the Strategic Leadership Team and other Council officers and staff, had taken a significant amount of time to look at the future budget proposals and the means to monitor this effectively.

The Vice-Chair suggested that, with regard to the Audit Wales report and savings being achieved in previous years, it would be beneficial to ensure targets were set for specific areas which would then be less likely to make an impact on services and other key areas of Council business, as well as assisting the proper scrutiny of these.

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Having considered the reference and appended reports, Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the following comment from the Committee, regarding the contents of the Vale of Glamorgan Council Assurance and Risk Assessment Review 2021/22, be referred to Cabinet:

- The need for the Council to monitor and address savings targets, for example, looking to set targets for specific areas of savings in order to help meet savings targets in a more targeted way which achieves the savings requested without impacting on services and other key areas of Council business.

(2) T H A T the following comments from the Committee, regarding the contents of Public Sector Readiness for Net Zero Carbon by 2030 National Report and the Council's response, be referred to Cabinet:

- It was important for the Council to consider the wider challenges regarding funding the move to Net Zero, where this funding will come from, and to address decarbonisation around the wider supply chain linked to the Council.
- The need for leadership at a higher and wider level in order to achieve decarbonisation.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) For Cabinet to be informed of the views of the Committee, as part of their consideration of these reports.

620 COST OF LIVING SUPPORT FOR FOOD, WARM SPACES AND OTHER MEANS OF SUPPORT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 15th December, 2022 was presented the Director of Corporate Resources, the purpose of which was to provide an overview of the work undertaken by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and others to support residents during the current cost of living crisis and to detail the Council's response to the national study by Audit Wales. The report also set out:

- The economic challenges faced at a UK, Wales and county level, not only by residents but also by the Council itself.
- The work undertaken by the Council to address and track increasing food insecurity and related issues over the last few years i.e. through the Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing and Community Impact Assessments.
- That over the last year approximately £100,000 funding had been sourced externally to tackle food insecurity and related issues in order to help support initiatives such as the Penarth Food Pod (run by the Council Housing Team), as well as Vale Foodbanks. The funding also helped the Council to create

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and distribute over 1,200 essential food and hygiene support parcels, in collaboration with partners.

- The establishment of a cross departmental Cost of Living Group in order to ensure that the maximum value was being delivered and to strategically shape the Council's response to the crisis.
- An overview of the funding to support such measures. i.e. the Welsh Government's Cost of Living Scheme(s), the Winter Fuel Scheme, community food support, food partnerships and warm spaces. At this time, it could be confirmed that in total the Council received £166,000 in additional funds and committed just approximately £158,000 of those, which was helping approximately 5,000 Vale residents per week. Funding had helped to purchase additional food stock and support food banks at a time of decreasing donations, as well as help establish 'pop up' foodbanks and support community workshops for cooking. Also, £97,000 in additional funding, in conjunction with the Food Partnership, would be provided in due course.
- An overview of the 'Warm Welcome / Croeso Cynnes' Project, funded via WG, which gave funding to organisations to facilitate their establishment, provide hot refreshments, help cover volunteer expenses, etc. The aim was to create a County-wide network of warm spaces for local residents in order to provide warmth, break down social isolation, provide free refreshments and other support or advice. The Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee had suggested that the network be further expanded to increase accessibility for all Vale residents. The Warm Welcome web page had been launched on the Council's website, which included an interactive map that allowed residents to search for a warm space that was close by.
- The range of other support offered by the Council and partners was mentioned, including the More Than Food Hub project in Llantwit Major (with funding of approximately £100,000 coming via the National Lottery), the Cost-of-Living webpages, raising the public profile of the Warm Spaces Project, through to providing Council staff with the Real Living Wage.

The Director also referred to the Audit Wales report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' published in November 2022, which detailed a number of recommendations for National and Local Government to respond to i.e. local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty.

After the presentation of the reference, the Committee raised a number of questions and comments.

On Councillor Carroll's query about the use of approximately £158,000 of the £166,000 in additional funding for food, cost of living support and warm spaces projects, it was confirmed that this amount had been allocated or transferred to the relevant community schemes in order for them to spend. On the Councillor's query about the remaining funding and the allocation of the second stream of funding before the first, in relation to the allocation of funding in non-chronological order, this was dependent on the value of the various funding bids, and the allocation of the funds from different sources to ensure this funding went as far as possible. On the outstanding funding, £1,000 remained for the Direct Food Support Fund and £5-

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6,000 left in the Warm Banks fund, with a breakdown and further details to be provided.

On Councillor Haines' comment on the concentration of warm spaces within the more urban areas of the Vale, compared to more rural areas which also needed this support, it was explained that initially the rationale for setting up warm spaces in these areas was that there were existing facilities that could be used in order to get them up and running quickly. However, warm spaces had also been established in more rural areas of the Vale, i.e. Wick, St Brides Major, Pendoylan and Cowbridge, with the aim to expand into similar areas, such as Llandough, Rhoose and potentially St. Athan and any other areas that Members could identify that had community warm space initiatives that needed support. Councillor Haines suggested the use of public houses in rural areas as possible warm spaces going forward.

Councillor Dr. Johnson highlighted the need for longer term sustainability and funding for these warm spaces and related initiatives, as well as additional support and coverage required even in more urban areas, i.e. Lower Super Output Areas, the central estates and more westerly areas of Barry. It was explained that additional community spaces for those parts of Barry were being explored, with food and other initiatives being undertaken at Gladstone Road and Holton Road Primary Schools.

The Vice-Chair cited the warm space at Wick Youth Club and the positive impact of this on younger people living in a rural setting, adding that it was important to extend the coverage of these spaces throughout the Vale during the cost-of-living crisis. He also suggested that any further updates or reports to Cabinet on the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report be referred to the Committee in order to scrutinise the effectiveness of the actions and projects undertaken as part of the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, and to highlight the progress or success of these in addressing food and fuel poverty, etc.

Having considered the reference and appended report, Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, be noted.
- (2) T H A T any further updates or reports to Cabinet on the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Committee, in particular, any reporting on the effectiveness of the projects being undertaken as part of the response to the cost of living support for food, warm spaces and other means of support.

Reasons for recommendations

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

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(2) In order that Committee can scrutinise the actions and projects undertaken as part of the Council's response to the Audit Wales Report, and to highlight the progress and success of these in addressing food and fuel poverty, etc.

621 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (CX) –

The report, presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, detailed the response to the comments and recommendations made by the Committee in July 2022 on future reporting of Project Zero, and the changes made to reporting as a result. The appendix to the report addressed the key points raised by the Committee previously, such as greater detail on finances and the allocation of funding, resources and reserves, challenges and barriers to the Project, etc. As part of this, a new Project Zero Programme Manager was in place and one of her priorities was to strengthen the reporting arrangements around Project Zero.

The Challenge Plan set out the activities that would contribute not only to the Council's aim of being net zero by 2030 but the wider aim of being net zero across Wales by 2050. Appendix A outlined the progress since the last report around the 18 challenges and 3 themes (including the Council's need to demonstrate strong leadership, to fulfil its responsibility to current and future generations and to make a difference now). A wide range of activities had been undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and to take forward Project Zero. This included greater community consultation / conversation events on net zero in Penarth and Llantwit Major, the development of a green infrastructure plan, the installation of charging points for electric vehicles, updates on the Waste Strategy and the installation of automatic water meters through council properties. Funding had also been secured to survey the potential for decarbonisation work at 22 community centres and two buildings leased to Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS). Other areas included the drafting of a Procurement Strategy taking into account the need to achieve net zero, the installation of hybrid heating solutions in Council owned housing as well as the implementation of the new Staff Travel Charter.

The key data regarding the Council's carbon emissions as reported to Welsh Government in October 2022 was set out, based on 3 'scopes': from Scope 1, direct emissions such as fuel combustion and fleet emissions through to Scope 3, in-direct emissions such as those attributed to procured goods and services, where the majority of carbon emissions lay (89.5%).

Work was also being undertaken on looking at the county wide scale of emissions within the Vale as a whole, as well as the report providing an update on the approach to programme management and progress reporting for Project Zero, including the use of data and its prioritisation in order to set these with the Project Zero Board for the year ahead.

The Council had also received Welsh Government (WG) funding as well as from the Shared Prosperity Fund and part of this required work to support decarbonisation with schemes to be determined.

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After the presentation of the report, the Committee raised a number of questions and comments.

Councillor Franks queried the funding for decarbonisation of community centres within the Vale of Glamorgan and if this would be provided by the Council or would it need to be matched by community sources, such as the volunteers who support the operation of these centres. It was explained that funding had been secured regarding the survey of 22 community centres and the two buildings leased to GVS to see what decarbonisation measures could be achieved. Community sources and volunteers would not be charged for these decarbonisation surveys. Funding for any subsequent measures would need to be considered after the surveys were completed. On the Councillor's other query about the Zero Carbon Llanfair Primary School scheme, the Director of Corporate Resources stated that he would request this information from colleagues in Learning and Skills in order to provide an answer to the Councillor.

The Vice-Chair asked about the high percentage of carbon emissions for procurement and if the proposed Procurement Strategy would address these. The changes in methodology around measuring emissions for WG and the impact on emissions recording during COVID-19 was outlined. The high carbon emissions from procurement demonstrated the need for the Council and the public sector to address these effectively by understanding where these emissions came from, such as from materials for buildings and roads. The Procurement Strategy would form a key piece of this work on understanding and tackling emissions. The Chair added that in her experience, the level of emissions identified from procurement were consistent with those seen in other Local Authorities. It was important for the Council to develop, with regard to its decision-making processes, the need to consider whether materials or items should be purchased or if existing materials, etc., could be repurposed, reused or recycled instead.

Councillor Dr. Johnson endorsed the new format for the report and stressed the importance of having the key challenges, actions, etc., around Project Zero in these reports highlighted and categorised, in order to allow better scrutiny going forward. A 'RAG' rating / exception reporting would be useful and also help provide key areas of focus and challenges around implementation, funding, staffing, issues, etc., around decarbonisation. The Energy Review and Procurement Strategy would also be useful as part of the overall scrutiny of the Council's Decarbonisation Strategy and other procurement priorities i.e. value for money, with the caveat that the Council should avoid ending up with everything as a priority. The Director would be looking to implement RAG rating / exception reporting going forward, with actions broken down as 'business as usual' and those that required extra attention.

Councillor Haines felt there was no clear 'global' plan of action around implementing decarbonisation and what the Council was ultimately trying to achieve. The Director explained that the 'global' approach undertaken by the Council was contained within its Challenge Plan, with wide ranging measures to help achieve the 2030 and 2050 net zero goals. The Councillor's other queries concerned the lack of detail around Challenge 7, 'Achieve a modal shift away from cars to more sustainable forms of transport', particularly around an integrated public transport system (i.e. the use of buses), linking rural and urban areas of the Vale and the importance of installing

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Photovoltaic (PV) panels for solar power on various buildings throughout the County. On integrated public transport, further details on what the Council (in conjunction with partners such as Cardiff Capital Region City deal) was doing to help integrate and improve the transport between rural and urban areas would be detailed in future reports. On PV panels, a large number of Council / public buildings already had these installed and further information would be provided in future Project Zero reports. The Chair added that future building i.e. of Council housing, should include PV panels installed as standard.

On Councillor Wood's query around the level of engagement with Council suppliers on decarbonisation, this had only recently started and any feedback on this would be fed into the new Procurement Strategy. Different organisations had different abilities to quantify carbon emissions and the Council was awaiting additional information from the Welsh Local Government Association on quantifying these emissions.

On Councillor Hanks' query on whether the new Cowbridge Primary School would be zero carbon, the Director would seek additional information on this.

Councillor Carroll raised queries on improving, expanding and supporting additional bus transport links, such as in his ward area and the position of the budget for the new waste management site, with a new site not identified as yet. On transport links, the Director would refer the Councillor's comments to colleagues in Transport Services. On the waste management site, an update on this would be sought and provided.

Having considered the report, Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED –

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

(2) T H A T overall progress be reported twice a year, in addition to the progress reported already as part of the quarterly performance monitoring reports and specific topic related reports.

(3) T H A T the funding available in reserves and the arrangements proposed to approve the use of reserves to progress future schemes be noted.

(4) T H A T the information provided with regards to the Council's carbon emissions as reported to Welsh Government in the Autumn 2022 be noted.

(5) T H A T the report and the following comments from the Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration:

- The importance of the future Procurement Strategy, linking into the Climate Change Challenge Plan, in order to address the significant carbon emissions identified within procurement and supply chains.

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- To 'embed' within the Council's culture the importance of assessing whether additional materials, items, etc. need to be purchased, or if existing materials, etc., can be repurposed, reused or recycled instead.
- The importance of highlighting key areas of focus for future reporting, as well as the need to identify the key challenges, and the emerging priorities for procurement, going forward.
- The need to have greater detail concerning an integrated public transport system as part of Project Zero and sustainable transport, i.e. supporting and expanding the use of bus routes, in rural areas of the Vale of Glamorgan.
- To look at the greater use of Photovoltaic (PV) panels for solar power on both Council owned public buildings within the Vale of Glamorgan and other buildings, such as Council owned housing stock, and new build housing, as well as greater reporting on this.
- To report on work undertaken by the Council with suppliers and procurement partners on decarbonisation and sustainability i.e. as part of the Procurement Strategy.

(6) T H A T it be recommended to Cabinet that this report be distributed to all elected Members, members of the Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their information.

Reasons for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(5) In order that Cabinet can consider the comments of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as part of its consideration of progress in delivering the Climate Challenge Plan.

(6) In order to update all elected Members and other stakeholders on the arrangements in place to deliver Project Zero.