

## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair in the Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood.

Also present: Councillors A. Asbrey and L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources).

### **347 ANNOUNCEMENT –**

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer 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”.

### **348 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –**

These were received from Councillors J. Protheroe (Chair), R. Fisher, H.C. Hamilton and S.M. Hanks.

### **349 MINUTES –**

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### **350 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –**

Councillor Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 4 – Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council Annual Self-Assessment 2023/24 – referring to the fact that he dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak as a Trustee of a county library in Dinas Powys.

351 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT 2023/24 (REF) –

The Director of Corporate Resources, in presenting the reference and the report, stated that the Draft Vale of Glamorgan Council self-assessment findings would enable the Council to identify how it could further enhance its internal processes and use of resources to support achievement of the Annual Delivery Plan commitments and the Corporate Plan wellbeing objectives. The Director drew particular attention to the engagement section of the report which had been strengthened following responses received from Elected Members. The section incorporated an overview of key Council decisions taken throughout the year, the work of the Member Champions and collaborative working. The Director highlighted that evaluation of a wide range of performance, engagement and other data insights had informed the Council's three main annual self-assessment judgements.

The report highlighted that the Council judged that it had made good progress in delivering its Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan 2025. The Annual Governance Statement also provided a reasonable assurance judgement from the Head of Internal Audit on the Council's governance, risk management and internal control effectiveness, which indicated that from a governance perspective the Council's systems and processes were generally sound and that an overall judgement of good had been attributed to the Council's use of resources.

Councillor Franks, in referring to page 16, having regard to the statement "to work with voluntary and community organisations to deliver and shape local services, encourage people to get more involved in their local communities and support them to seek funding", considered that the loss of support for community events, in particular for Dinas Powys was disappointing and in his view would be a disadvantage to the communities.

The Director commented that he was aware that the loss of support may not be welcomed, however the Council had to consider its priorities, for example Social Services and Education, which were symptoms of the financial situation that the Council found itself in and difficult decisions were having to be made.

Councillor Carroll considered that the report was overestimating the Council's performance drawing attention to the Barry Interchange and Bus Station with no buses, which he said was not a good use of resources. In his view the statements did not give an accurate reflection of the current situation. He also considered that the Council's view of the Eagleswell site being a successful project was inaccurate.

The Leader in response said that a well-developed case for the use of the Eagleswell site had been made. The Council had been required to provide homes for families in need, which in her view was a success. Discussions in relation to the site had been considered in detail by the Planning Committee and the project she said provided good quality temporary homes.

In response to Councillor Carroll's comment regarding the Council's planning process the Leader offered to meet with Councillor Carroll to discuss the process if

he so wished. Furthermore, with regard to the bus interchange, this was a regional project which had taken some time to set up however buses were now running.

Councillor Dr. Johnson said that he too did not agree with Councillor Carroll's comments in relation to the Eaglswell site and subsequently referred to the actions contained within the report commenting that out of the 591 actions 85% were noted as Good, which left 15% unachieved. The financial and engagement insights had also been downgraded from Good to Fair and he asked the Director for an explanation.

In response the Director advised that the financial situation was preventing the Council from succeeding in every aspect and the self-assessment needed to reflect the under-funding situation. Furthermore the Director said that the requirement within the self-assessment was for the Council to show a level of performance and under-performance. The peer assessment process was intended to supplement the process with the two processes needing to complement each another. With regard to the 90 actions noted as not achieved these he said would feed into the following years' Service Plans. The Director also took the opportunity to refer to the pockets of good practice advising that the report showed the breadth of engagement work the Council undertook and their outcomes. There were also comments received from the Life in the Vale survey which would be taken forward.

Councillor Dr. Johnson thanked the Director of Corporate Resources for the honesty presented in the report in relation to engagement work and considered that all departments should be making statements in this honest way.

Councillor Loveluck-Edwards referred to the references throughout the report regarding the continued financial pressures the Council was facing, but she said that she wished to see "starker" language in the document being used as the way in which the Council acted now had fundamentally and significantly changed as a result of the current financial situation. In recognising that the Council wished to encourage debate and communication from its residents the Councillor enquired as to whether the Council would focus on the challenge of recruitment and selection in care provision. The Director stated that as a Local Authority the Council was actively considering what the Local Authority looked like now and what it would look like in the coming years, which would be addressed within the Corporate Plan. He also commented that the recruitment and selection challenges had also been reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as part of the risk register.

The Leader said the report was a retrospective report and Cabinet were aware of the shortfalls but that it was important to move forward with the Council confirming its commitment to the most vulnerable as well as noting that the "Let's Talk about Life in the Vale" survey had informed the Council's budget.

The Chair, in conclusion, in referring to a more honest assessment of public engagement having regard to previous comments made by the public in previous consultations and it being acknowledged that there had been some failures in public engagement, how these could be improved upon needed to be considered and addressed further going forward.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the document be approved and the Committee's comments as outlined above referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Reason for recommendation

Following consideration by the Committee with comments referred back to Cabinet.

352 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2024/25 (DCR) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 1 (1<sup>st</sup> April, 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2024) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2024/25) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Strategy and Insight Team, the format for the quarter's (Q1) Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report had been revised temporarily, to enable the Council to continue to provide Elected Members with an overview of progress in delivering the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the remit of each Scrutiny Committee.

The presentation appended at Appendix A to the report provided a summary of progress against the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2024/25 as aligned to the remit of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q1 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Councillor Dr. Johnson, in commenting on the Q1 performance, considered that it was misleading to place a Red status within the document at Q1 when the work was not expected to take place within the quarter. The Director stated that a review of performance arrangements was to be undertaken and that a meeting with the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group and Group Leaders was being arranged to discuss such matters. Councillor Dr. Johnson also enquired about the number of actions and measures in the year's framework to support the Annual Delivery Plan and although the Director of Corporate Resources did not have the information to hand, he said he would share it with Elected Members as soon as possible.

Having considered the report, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 1 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

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

#### Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements as outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflected the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

#### 353 WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2023-24 (REF) –

The Operational Manager for the Service Area in presenting the reference and the report advised that the Annual Monitoring Report contained a summary of the progress achieved in the year for each of the 33 actions contained in the Council's Plan associated with the introduction of the Standards. The report also set out the details of performance against the area of work including details regarding the number of Welsh language complaints, a skills profile for the Council and the number of staff learning Welsh at different levels. A key priority for 2024/25 was to recruit more Welsh speakers into the workforce and to encourage more members of staff to update their Welsh language skills.

In considering the report, Councillor Dr. Johnson took the opportunity to congratulate all staff who were learning Welsh and offered his best wishes. With regard to the challenges facing the Council and in referring to the funding available to organisations within the Vale of Glamorgan, Councillor Dr. Johnson enquired as to how this compared with other Local Authorities, for example Caerphilly and RCT and in particular how the Council would achieve the provision of child care through the medium of Welsh. In response the Operational Manager advised that the Council was currently looking at reviewing its strategy for Welsh medium childcare in the Vale with the Director advising that as the budget planning cycle was due to commence in a few weeks, the comments would be considered during that process.

It was subsequently.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2023-24 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and the Update on the Welsh Language Promotional Strategy (attached at Appendix 2 to the report) be endorsed.

#### Reason for recommendation

To allow the Council to meet its reporting duty to the Welsh Commissioner as part of the Welsh Language Standards.

### 354 APPLICATION TO BE RECOGNISED AS A COUNTY OF SANCTUARY UPDATE (REF) –

Appendix A to the report detailed the draft submission to the City of Sanctuary Network and showed how the Vale of Glamorgan Council already supported its residents as an age friendly county, recognised as a Race Equality Matters trail blazer, a Stonewall Diversity Champion and a Disability Confident Employer.

The report had been referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for its consideration to enable the Committee to contribute any views following which the Council would submit the application and work to progress the action plan contained in the submission.

Councillor Carroll, however, said that the Conservative Group did not support the application and expressed his concerns. In particular he drew attention to a statement in the strategy that the Council had supported Black Lives Matter and said that on their website they detailed their support for glorified terrorist attacks and called for the defunding of the Police. He asked the Leader whether she was proposing a commitment to support Black Lives Matter. In response the Leader said she was thrilled to be making an application to be recognised as a County of Sanctuary on behalf of the Council, for the Council to be wholly inclusive and in particular a County of Sanctuary for all. She however said that Councillor Carroll was making a lot of allegations that she did not recognise and that there was no evidence to support his comments.

Councillor Loveluck-Edwards also raised her concerns at the comments, stating that a number of people had to flee their homes in recent years and that the proposal was reaching out to remind everyone that the Vale was county who provided dignity and compassion. The document was also about safety for Vale residents, and she wished to place on record her sincere thanks to the working party for the work they had undertaken.

Councillor Dr. Johnson said that Councillor Carroll's comments showed where the Conservative party's views lay. His only comment related to the fact that there was a lack of a timetable for undertaking the work. In response the Operational Manager said he would be happy to develop a timetable to sit alongside the proposal.

Having considered the reference and the report, all the Members of the Committee, save for Councillor Carroll who said he did not support the application,

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the application to be recognised as a County of Sanctuary be supported and a timetable developed for undertaking the work.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to discussions at the meeting and the need for a timetable to be prepared.

### 355 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2023/2024 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Head of Human Resources. The report provided an overview of the corporate safeguarding activities taking place across the Local Authority. It was further noted that the Human Resources Department had implemented an electronic transfer system for DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks which had sped up the DBS checking process as it provided an electronic portal where applicants could apply for a DBS check online and allow checks to be approved and tracked by the Council.

There being no queries from Members regarding this report, it was subsequently.

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** both the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of both the reference and Cabinet report.

### 356 VALE OF GLAMORGAN PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT (CX) –

The Public Services Board (PSB) had launched its first Well-being Plan in 2018 which concluded in 2023, whereby the PSB agreed its second and current Well-being Plan (2023-28) in May 2023. All partners had been working to progress the PSB's Well-being Objectives and Priority Workstreams and the steps set out to take forward the work. To capture the progress made in the first year of the Well-being Plan, the PSB had produced an Annual Report in the form of an online report using Microsoft Sway. The Annual Report gave an overview of the progress that had been made by partners in implementing the three Well-being Objectives, the 19 steps and against the PSB's priority workstreams.

Over the past year, the PSB had submitted progress reports to various Scrutiny Committees as part of the rolling programme of providing updates on its work.

The Annual Report had been considered by the PSB on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2024 and had also been published on its website.

The Operational Manager for Corporate Strategy and Insight presented the report with it being recognised that many of the activities being taken forward by the PSB would contribute to a number of local priorities and the national wellbeing goals for Wales. The PSB had identified 19 steps which collectively would help to deliver the wellbeing objectives and the priority workstreams for the PSB.

It was further noted that this was the first year that partners had been working together to deliver the Wellbeing Plan 2023-28 and the examples included provided a good overview of the work undertaken within the challenging context of pressures

placed on partners such as the Cost of Living Crisis and the particular budgetary pressures.

Councillor Dr. Johnson in commenting on the report, said that he was looking forward to hearing more about the work currently taking place in the Buttrills area of Barry, the areas of deprivation and the support provided.

Councillor Carroll said it was important to place on record that the winter fuel payment reduction undertaken by the UK Parliament would be a cause for concern going forward and should be treated as a priority. The Director of Corporate Resources in response said that in terms of the Council's response to the cost of living issues, a reserve had been established and a county grant scheme was now live.

The Leader also advised that the County of Sanctuary report and Self-Assessment report had also been taken to the PSB together with the "Let's Talk About Life in the Vale" survey and she hoped that a workshop would be held in the new year to explore all the issues that had been raised.

With the Director of Corporate Resources saying he would refer the comments back to the PSB, it was subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the review the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board's Annual Report for 2023-24 and the progress partners had made in delivering the priorities set out in the Well-being Plan be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments made at the meeting be reported to the Public Services Board by the Director of Corporate Resources.
- (3) T H A T the report be circulated to all Elected Members and members of the Equality Consultative Forum via email and referred to Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee for their information and consideration

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To enable Members to make recommendations to the PSB in the context of the progress made in delivering the Well-being Plan 2023-28.
- (3) To ensure all elected Members, members of the Equality Consultative Forum, the Community Liaison Committee and the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee are aware of the work of the Public Services Board.