

No.

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 12th March, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Chair); Councillor I.A.N. Perry (Vice-Chair); Councillors C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, M.J. Hooper, E. Penn and J. Protheroe.

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), Dr. I.J. Johnson, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

927 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.”

928 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor C. Iannucci and S.T. Wiliam.

929 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the Special meeting held on 13th February, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

930 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor V.P. Driscoll declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 7 – Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report. The nature of the interest was that Councillor Driscoll was the Director of a company that had received a Council grant. The nature of the report meant that Councillor Driscoll was able to remain in the meeting for the agenda item.

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931 HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE INSPECTION REGIME (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 6th February, 2024 was presented by the Neighbourhood Manager Highway Maintenance.

The Council had a duty maintain the highway at public expense under Section 41 of the Highways Act (1980). The report sought the approval of Cabinet for Highway Condition Inspection Regime changes including amendments to the Council's Highway Network Hierarchy, Inspection Regime and Repair Regime following the initial Highway Risk Review with the County Surveyors Society Wales (CSSW) in October 2019.

The report proposed that the Highway Maintenance Manual 2021 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) superseded the Highway Safety Manual 2014 (Appendix 2 to the report referred).

Councillor M. Hooper raised a series of questions beginning with the cost implications around road resurfacing work given the financial challenges facing the Council. In addition, Councillor Hooper queried the level of consideration within the regime for cyclists. Councillor Hooper's final query was how did the Council's regime compare with the neighbouring Authorities. In reply, the Neighbourhood Manager advised that in terms of cost variations, there was opportunity to save money from following a more regular inspection regime in order to potentially identify more defects earlier. Once identified, the Council would be able to carry out increased monitoring. With regard to cyclists, the officer stated that the Council was mindful and there were close links with the Council's Active Travel Officer. Therefore, when patching work was being considered, liaison would take place with the Active Travel Officers and also other stakeholders such as local cyclist groups and organisations. With regard to a comparison of neighbouring Authorities, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Bridgend Councils both had the same inspection regime as the Vale of Glamorgan and only Cardiff Council would be undertaking weekly inspections, but only for certain roads.

Councillor I. Perry queried whether the changes to the inspection regime were likely to result in more repairs being carried out. In reply, the Officer referred to challenges as resources were limited. There were currently 606 carriageway defects identified as backlog works that required attention, which was in comparison to over 1200 defects the same period last year. The issues last year being because of adverse weather conditions. It was important to recognise that roads were not designed to handle the level of traffic, so more investment was required.

In response to a query regarding gullies, the Committee was advised that there was a cleansing regime, which generally operated at intervals ranging between 12 and 15 months.

The Committee discussed the reporting of issues and defects through the Council's C1V app with some Members expressing the view that the app could be more user friendly. Therefore, it was recommended that Cabinet be asked to look at ways to improve the reporting process for carriageway defects.

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Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Cabinet be advised of the view of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee that consideration should be given to improving the online reporting process for carriageway defects to ensure it is easier to use.

Reason for recommendation

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

932 QUARTER 3 REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24 (DEH) –

The purpose of the report was to advise Committee of the Quarter 3 Revenue Monitoring position for 2023/24.

The table below set out the Original Budget and Revised Budget for approval by Directorate:

Directorate	Amended Budget 2023/24 £000's	Projected Outturn 2023/24 £000's	Variance £000's	Unplanned Use of Reserves £000's	Residual Variance 2023/24 £000's	Use of Reserves 2023/24 £000's
Schools	114,239	115,089	850	-850	0	9,600
Learning and Skills	14,090	14,668	578	-578	0	1,292
Social Services	85,460	93,098	7,638	-5,052	2,586	9,051
Environment and Housing	32,009	33,359	1,350	-300	1,050	550
Corporate Resources	16,641	16,356	-285	0	-285	430
Place	3,401	3,503	102	-102	0	495
Policy	30,678	27,327	-3,351	0	-3,351	-42
Use of Reserves	-2,096	-2,096	0	0	0	2,096
Total	294,422	301,304	6,882	-6,882	0	23,472
Housing Revenue Account	15,538	15,538	0	0	0	0
Adjusted Total	309,960	316,842	6,882	-6,882	0	23,472

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The revenue position for 2023/24 continued to reflect challenging demand and inflationary pressures, with increasing demand in respect of Children’s and Adults Social Care and significant increases in the cost of placements and care packages and support for Additional Learning Needs continued to be an area of significant pressure within Learning and Skills. The Council was also experiencing continued inflationary pressures in respect of School Transport. Across services inflationary pressures were also being experienced in respect of pay, most notably where market forces were being utilised and for the funding gap between provision for the 2023/24 pay award and the flat rate pay award for 2023/24.

The Council had identified a number of steps to be taken in year to help mitigate this emerging overspend and safeguard reserves, this included tighter controls on expenditure and recruitment and a review of the Capital Programme. The Corporate Resources Directorate had identified a potential underspend of £285k to be offset against emerging overspends and there was a projected underspend of £1m against Council Tax income due to the projected collection of arrears, new properties, changes in allowances and premiums on empty homes in addition to surpluses on investment income and borrowing costs.

Challenging savings and efficiency targets had been set for 2023/24; this included a target of £2.75m for schools and £4.628m of Corporate savings. The progress against these savings targets was reflected in the Appendix to the report and summarised in the table below:

Directorate	Target	Projected	% Achieved	Mitigation	Mitigation Achieved %	Shortfall	Shortfall %
	£'000s	£'000s		£'000s		£'000s	£'000s
Policy	1,615	1,615	100%	-	0%	-	0%
Resources	582	331	57%	250	43%	1	0%
Neighbourhood and Housing	1,000	640	64%	40	4%	320	32%
Learning and skills	564	383	68%	-	0%	181	32%
Social Services	681	556	82%	-	0%	125	18%
Place	265	173	65%	-	0%	92	35%
Total	4,707	3,698	79%	290	6%	719	15%

Projected transfers to and from reserves are set out in the table below:

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As at	Balance 01/04/2023	Capital Funding	Planned Transfer (from) reserves	Planned Transfer to reserves	Unplanned Drawdown from Reserves	Estimated Balance 31/03/2024
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
General Fund	11,523	-	-496	0	-850	10,177
Insurance	4,877	-	0	0	0	4,877
Service Reserves	22,521	-154	-6,325	2,842	-6,031	12,853
Risk and Smoothing Reserves	29,802	-1,302	-3,780	-944	-	23,776
Capital	17,726	-10,825	443	-1,898	-	5,446
Schools	7,254	-	-174	0	-6,677	403
Housing Revenue Account	16,486	-15,537	0	0	0	949
Total	110,190	-27,818	-10,331	-0	-13,558	58,481

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2023/24 revenue budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the budget virements for 2023/24 as presented in the report be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

933 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER, 2023 (DEH) –

The report was presented, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2023/24 Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 within their remit. Details by scheme were shown in Appendix 1 to the report.

Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the position of the Capital Programme by Directorate from approval at Council on 6th March, 2023 through to 31st December, 2023, including any changes requested within this report. The

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report set out any requested changes to the 2023/24 and future years' Capital Programme.

The report noted the current approved Programme of £103.677m, but it was important to note that this was unlikely to be delivered and slippage was requested of £7.692m with a forecast outturn of £96.763m. Schemes would be closely monitored over the coming months and officers would continue to work with project managers and sponsors to ensure value for money and that all possible funding opportunities were identified and were fully explored.

Councillor J. Protheroe queried the timelines for the improvements for the Llandow household waste recycling centre. In reply, the Head of Neighbourhood Services and Transport advised that a detailed report for Cabinet would be considered at a Cabinet meeting set for 21st March, 2024, and that would be referred onto the Scrutiny Committee.

With regard to the retendering of the Council's bike scheme, the make-up of any future scheme was currently being considered and a report to be presented during the summer.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress made in delivering the 2023/24 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of delegated authority within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraph 2.7 and detailed in the report at paragraphs 2.16 and 2.64, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2023/24 Capital Programme and future years Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee, as summarised in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.6 and detailed within the body of the report from paragraph 2.15 onwards, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

934 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE 2023/24 (DP) –

The purpose of the report was to present Quarter 3 (Q3) performance results for the period 1st April to 31st December, 2023 in delivering the 2023/24 Annual

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Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The performance report presented progress at Q3 (1st April, 2023 to 31st December, 2023) towards achieving Annual Delivery Plan (2023/24) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Due to current capacity challenges within the Corporate Performance Team, the format for the Q3 Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report had been revised temporarily, to enable Elected Members to be provided with an overview of progress in delivering the 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 Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2023/24 as aligned to the remit of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

The report sought Members' consideration of Q3 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 M. Hooper asked for more information regarding the timescales for the Making Waves Project and he also asked for more detail around the approach to the Council's green infrastructure plan. In reply, and in respect of the Barry Making Waves Project, the Director of Place stated that a progress report would be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny over the next few months. The Director clarified, that although a provisional award had been made by the UK Government, there were still some additional questions being answered by the Council as part of a gateway before the funding could be allocated. With regard to the green infrastructure plan, the Director stated that an initial draft had been produced via consultants appointed by the Council to carry out the work. Consultation on the initial plan would therefore be carried out over the summer months and feedback from the consultation would advise the final draft plan. The Director, in being asked to comment further on the Levelling Up Fund, stated that there was an understanding from the UK Government that the need for additional information would have an impact on the deadline by when the money needed to be spent. Therefore, the UK Government was considering changing the deadline by which the Council and its partners had to spend its allocation.

Councillor Hooper raised a query in regard to the composition of the Town Boards for the UK Government's long term plan for towns. The Committee agreed to raise that as a concern for Cabinet to consider, on the basis that there appeared to be a very limited role for Elected Members in the process.

There being no further queries or comments, the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Quarter 3 performance results and progress towards achieving

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the Annual Delivery Plan 2023/24 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 underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H A T Cabinet be advised of the concern of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee in relation to the constraints imposed by the UK Government in terms of the role of ward members in the composition of the Town Boards and use any opportunities which may arise to ensure effective local representation in relation to the UK Government's long-term plan for towns.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report to ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments.

(2) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to meet its performance requirements, as outlined in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and reflecting the requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 in that it maximises its contribution to achieving the Wellbeing Goals for Wales.

(3) To advise Cabinet of the concerns of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the make up of the Town Boards.

935 SERVICE PLANS AND PERFORMANCE TARGETS TO DELIVER THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL'S ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2024/25 (DP) –

The report sought Members' endorsement of the priority actions as reflected in Service Plans and proposed service performance targets for the period 2024/2025 that would deliver the Council's Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) within the remit of the Committee.

The report presented the planned service activities (as outlined in Service Plans) and associated performance targets within the remit of the Scrutiny Committee. These were the Committee's specific areas of focus associated with the delivery of the Council's ADP for 2024/2025 as aligned to the four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives. (attached at Appendices A and B to the report).

Progressing the ADP would help to meet statutory obligations under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WCFG). Both pieces of legislation placed specific duties on the Council in relation to reviewing and setting objectives, keeping performance under review and reporting on performance, with a focus on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

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In line with statutory duties the relevance of the Council's Well-being Objectives was continually reviewed. As a result, going forward into 2024/25, the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives and the associated commitments outlined in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/2025 (contained in the background papers to this report) were relevant in delivering improved outcomes for Vale of Glamorgan citizens and contributed to the national Well-being Goals.

All Scrutiny Committees considered a draft ADP in December 2023 and their views alongside that of other key stakeholders informed the final Plan.

The commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 were reflected in 16 Service Plans which were provided for information in the background papers to the report. These plans showed how individual service areas would contribute to achievement and overall delivery of the four Well-being Objectives and how resources would be deployed to do so.

In line with the Annual Performance Calendar, Members had continued to help shape the way in which performance related activity and reports were presented to support them in their critical friend challenge role. Feedback from the recent workshop (relating to the Committee specific presentation of service plan activities and performance targets) in February 2024, had been reflected in the approach to this year's reports.

Scrutiny Committee Members were asked to review the contributions from services (through planned activities and proposed performance measures and associated targets) as relevant to the Committee's remit that would support achievement of the ADP commitments for the period 2024/25. These were set out in Appendices A and B.

Upon review, Members were asked to recommend to Cabinet the planned activities and associated service performance targets as relevant to this Committee's remit as the primary means against which performance for the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 would be monitored, measured and reported quarterly. These were set out in Appendices A and B.

Councillor M. Hooper queried Council's ADP under Objective 13 and the co-working of shared working spaces. In reply, the Director of Place stated that a review of future Council buildings and assets was being undertaken and would be reported to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The review would look at how shared space across Council departments could be opened up and used by other services and Directorates. Therefore, the work would look at capacity in the market rather than impacting on private businesses.

The Chair stated the view that it would be helpful for Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees to have opportunity to consider how best to ensure the reporting framework was taken forward. The Committee agreed for this to be a formal recommendation to Cabinet.

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RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the planned service activities for 2024/25, relating to the remit of the Committee and set out in Appendix A to the report, be endorsed.

(2) T H A T the proposed measures and service performance targets for 2024/25, relating to the remit of the Committee and set out in Appendix B to the report, be endorsed.

(3) T H A T Cabinet gives consideration to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs meeting in order to consider how each Committee takes forward and supports the new reporting framework.

Reasons for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(3) In order to advise Cabinet of the view of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.