

No.

HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 8th November 2022.

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

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

Present: Councillor J.E. Charles; Councillor N. Thomas (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, C.A. Cave, M. Cowpe, R. Fisher, S. Lloyd-Selby, J.M. Norman, and C. Stallard.

Also present: Councillors H.C. Hamilton, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport, and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson.

419 ANNOUNCEMENT –

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

420 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors A.M. Collins, J. Lynch-Wilson, and H.M. Payne.

421 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

422 DECLARATION OF INTEREST –

Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby declared an interest in Agenda Item No. 8 - Telecare Services Update in that she had multiple family members in receipt of Telecare support and one family member in receipt of a care package. Councillor Lloyd-Selby advised that she had a dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only on matters relating to Telecare and Care Packages at Vale of Glamorgan meetings. The Councillor remained in the meeting but did not partake in the vote.

423 VALE, VALLEYS, AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22 (DSS) -

The Regional Adoption Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to provide Committee with the appended Annual Report and review of the Collaborative. Vale, Valleys, and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative (VVC) was one of five regional Collaboratives which formed part of the National Adoption Service (NAS) and provided an adoption service on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff Council, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was the host for the Collaborative.

The report covered the period from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2022 and had been extended to cover the first six months of the current reporting year to meet the requirement to review the service under Regulation 39 of the Local Authority Adoption Services (Wales) Regulations 2019. It also incorporated the reporting requirements set out in the legal agreement underpinning the Collaborative.

The Officer apprised the Committee on the governance and scrutiny of the regional arrangements at a local level, staff changes and areas of service development. The report also provided key performance information relating to the placement of children for adoption, recruitment and assessment of adopters, and the provision of adoption support services.

The Officer outlined the way services were delivered due to the restrictions imposed as a result of the pandemic and the new ways of working and adaptations which had been retained during the recovery period. They also highlighted the key challenges and future priorities for the service in terms of developing the service against an ever-increasing national improvement agenda.

In conclusion, the Officer drew Members' attention to the Appendices within the report that provided data in respect of key performance measures in respect of children, marketing activity, adopter recruitment, adoption support and the Adoption Panel. This information was broken down by local authority.

Following the Regional Adoption Manager's presentation and subsequent questions from the Committee, the Manager offered additional advice in partnership with the Head of Children and Young People Services as follows:

- VVC received a total of 369 adoption enquiries during 2021-22. This was a decrease when compared to the previous reporting year (377) but an increase when compared to 2019-20 (336). Whilst neither VVC nor the national service had commissioned any research into understanding the reasons behind the reduction, it was suspected that a number of factors were pertinent e.g., the cost of living and fuel crisis could be leading to people being more cautious about beginning the process at such an uncertain time. As part of the monitoring of enquiries, reasons for non-progression were recorded in order to better understand the decline in enquiries. The Collaborative also continued to raise awareness at local

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events such as the Vale of Glamorgan Show, Cardiff Pride and Eisteddfod and were continuously looking for new opportunities to promote.

- During the Coronavirus pandemic the Collaborative continued to receive a high level of adoption enquiries however, the national economic climate had significantly changed in recent months. Although a drop in adoption enquiries was evidenced, the number of approvals of prospective adopters had not decreased and although the number of adoption enquires was important, the priority remained the quality of potential adopters.
- The drop-out rate for adopters at application stage was extremely low. By way of example, 369 enquiries had been received for the reporting period which had resulted in 64 adopters being approved. At this stage, a small number of approved adopters dropped out.
- In terms of Adoption Support there was a waiting list for assessments resulting in some delay in financial assessments for therapeutic support being presented however, every effort was made to complete the monthly decision-making processes as soon as possible to ensure that support was provided to adoptive families as soon as possible.
- One of the aims of the National Adoption Service was to place adoptive children in their local/known area wherever possible. However, this was not always possible due to considerations around sibling groups, ethnicity and/or complex needs; with ethnicity being the primary factor. Therefore, promotion and publicity of adoption services within the Local Authority area would take ethnicity into account in terms of adopter recruitment.
- Placements made outside of the Local Authority area were monitored very closely and maintaining the National Adoption Register was a statutory function of the Council which included English resources.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the appended Vale, Valleys and Cardiff Adoption Collaborative Annual Report 2021-22 and related covering report be noted.
- (2) T H A T Scrutiny Committee continues to receive annual reports in line with the requirements of the Legal Agreement which underpins the Collaborative.

Reason for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of both the covering and appended annual report to review the work of the Collaborative undertaken to date.
- (2) To ensure that members maintain close scrutiny of the regional service on a regular basis.

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424 DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2023/24 AND INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2023/23 – 2027/28 (REF) -

The reference from Cabinet on 6th October 2022 was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

The Cabinet report sought approval for the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2023/24 to 2027/28 so that they may be submitted to Scrutiny Committees for consultation and to set out the Draft Capital Strategy for Cabinet Members to consider.

The Officer advised that the Cabinet report provided the Council's overall Draft Capital Strategy for 2023/24 at Appendix 1 as well as the current 5-year Capital Programme for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 and the Capital Bids that had been submitted for the period in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

The Capital Strategy provided a framework which outlined how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contributed to the provision of corporate objectives, along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. The Officer advised that it was difficult to predict capital resources over a long-term period as the level of general capital funding provided by Welsh Government was usually advised on a year-by-year basis and their priority areas of spend, that would be influenced by the provision of specific grants, would change over a period of time. Uncertainty in the current economic climate, particularly with regard to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and Britain's exit from the European Union, could have an impact on developments.

On the 1st of March 2022, the Welsh Government announced the Final 2022/23 General Capital funding settlement which was £5.829M, being made up of £2.378M grant and £3.451M of supported borrowing. This was a decrease of £1.038M from the 2021/22 funding of £6.867M. Within the settlement it had been advised that General Capital Funding for 2022/23 for Wales as a whole would be set at £150M. This would increase to £200M for the following two years, including £20M in each year to enable authorities to respond to the joint priority of decarbonisation. The 2023/24 and 2024/25 settlement figures provided in paragraph 2.16 of the report had been estimated using the above data and adjusted to exclude the £20M for decarbonisation as this element may be in the form of a specific grant. As no further indication had been received from Welsh Government, it had been assumed that from 2025/26 onwards, the level of capital funding would revert back to the same level as set out in the 2022/23 Provisional Settlement and would then remain constant for the remainder of the period of the programme.

The Officer added that the value of capital bids received totalled a gross amount of £16.718M (£14.533m net) in 2023/24 and £109.968M (£41.723M net) over the 5-year period. As the bids had yet to be evaluated by Strategic Insight Board and the Welsh Government settlement for 2023/24 had not been confirmed (expected in December '22), it was proposed that at this point, due to the uncertainty in the

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level of funding that would be provided, no schemes would be approved for inclusion in the Capital Programme and further assessment would be carried out by the Budget Working Group once the level of funding was known and consultation had taken place. The Officer apprised the Committee on the proposed bids within the remit of the Committee included at Appendix 3.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that the Council was currently working to balance the revenue budget for 2023/24, it was a particularly challenging year due to the current economic climate and the cost-of-living crisis and significant cost pressures had been submitted and were currently being reviewed. The level of acceptable borrowing would be dependent on the resources that were available within the revenue budget which would not be known until January '23. No further unsupported borrowing would be added to the Capital Programme until this time and consideration would need to be made of the revenue costs associated with any proposed borrowing.

The approved reporting timetable required Cabinet to approve the final budget proposals by no later than the 16th of February 2023 so that Cabinet's final Capital Programme proposals could be considered by Council at a meeting to be held on 6th March 2023 to enable the Council Tax to be set by 11th March 2023.

With no comments or questions from the Committee, the Committee subsequently

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

Reason for recommendation

(1) Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report on the Council's Initial Capital Programme for 2023/24 to 2027/28 and Capital Bids.

425 FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6th October 2022 was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy.

There was a three-year settlement announced in March 2022 and indicative Aggregate External Finance (AEF) increases of 3.5% and 2.4% for 2023/24 and 2024/25 respectively. Indications currently suggested that there should be no expectation of an improved settlement for 2023/24. The settlement was not expected to be announced until late December. Council Tax was assumed to increase by 3.9% but this was only for planning purposes and would be subject to a policy decision by Full Council in March '23.

The Officer advised that there was a significant funding gap in 2023/24 and across the medium term for the Council as a whole. The gap for 2023/24 was forecast at £28.190m. There were forecast cost pressures of £38.108m but likely funding of only an additional £9.918m coming through from Welsh Government grant and

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Council Tax. The key cost driver was inflation with £21.659m of pressure coming through on pay awards, energy costs, care, and transport contracts. On top of this were the continued demographic pressures coming through with a growing number of pupils with Additional Learning Needs and an aging population.

The overall level of reserves and how they were earmarked needed to be continuously reviewed. The Officer advised that this was both to protect against unexpected costs and enable investment in services to ensure they operated as efficiently as possible in the future. It was not just about having sufficient overall reserves but ensuring that as well as covering known commitments, both revenue and capital, that they reflected the risks which the Council faced. There are new risks around interest rates and inflation which would not have featured significantly more recently.

In conclusion, the Officer noted that the Committee was requested to review the finding and costs assumptions in the MTFP refresh as set out within the Cabinet report prior to further consideration of the Draft Budget by Cabinet in January '23 and subsequently Full Council in March'23 prior to the Council Tax setting deadline. Subsequently, the Officer apprised the Committee on the cost pressures within the remit of the Committee included at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

Following the Operational Manager's presentation, the Vice-Chair thanked officers for a comprehensive report and acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding the Council's finances until the Welsh Government settlement was received later in the year. They added that the Social Services Directorate was a big spender in terms of the Council's overall spending due to the number of statutory services covered by the Directorate and therefore, due to the statutory nature of the spending, this was unavoidable.

In addition, the Director for Social Services highlighted that the cost pressures for the Directorate were staggering and were further impacted by the rise in energy costs and financial inflation. The difficulty of recruiting domiciliary care staff continued to be a significant concern for the Council.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T both the Cabinet reference and appended report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the following comments of the Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee be passed to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee:
 - The Cost Pressures set out within the report, that lie within the remit of the Committee, are legitimate and fully endorsed by the Committee.
 - The majority of services provided by the Council under the Social Services Directorate are statutory provision and therefore, the Council has very little choice over the spending in relation to these services. Therefore, meeting

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the needs of the most vulnerable to ensure that the Council complies with its statutory duties remains paramount.

- Committee notes the significant pressures placed on the Domiciliary Care Service in terms of recruitment and the need to enhance the Council's employment offer to potential employees in order to improve recruitment and subsequently provide the level of care the Council is required to provide.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of both the Cabinet reference and report on the Financial Strategy assumptions made on costs and funding in the Medium-Term Financial Plan refresh.

(2) In order that Cabinet be informed of the comments of Committee via the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee before further Cabinet consideration.

426 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER, 2022 (DSS) –

The Operational Manager for Accountancy presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2022/23 Capital Programme for the period 1st April to 30th September 2022 and to request changes to the Capital Programme.

An update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the period, detailed by scheme, was set out 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 7th March 2022 to 30th September 2022, and included any changes requested within the report.

The Officer advised that Capital schemes were facing challenges due to significant cost increases, which could necessitate scheme re-engineering or re-tendering, resulting in delays to projects. Project officers were also reporting long lead time on the delivery of materials and a shortage of skills in some areas. Therefore, overall slippage was requested of £2.524m. Schemes would continue to be monitored closely as part of the regular monitoring arrangements with project managers and sponsors.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised the Committee on changes to the 2022/23 and future years Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee as follows:

- Penarth Leisure Centre – High Level Glazing - Carry forward £1,546k into the 2023/24 Capital Programme.
- Murchfield Community Sports Facilities - Carry forward £178k into the 2023/24 Capital Programme.

With no comments or questions from the Committee, the Committee subsequently

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RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the progress made on delivering the 2022/23 Capital Programme within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T the use of Delegated Authority, as set out in the covering report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2022/23 and future years' Capital Programme as set below be noted.
 - Street Lighting along Frampton Lane – Increase this scheme budget by £5k in the 2022/23 Capital Programme, to be funded by a contribution from S106 monies.
 - Dinas Powys Library Bridge – Include this scheme in the 2022/23 Capital Programme with a budget of £2k to be funded from an Environment and Housing revenue contribution.
 - Cosmeston Play Area – Vire £13k from the Cosmeston Play Area scheme to the Porthkerry Play Area Scheme.
 - The Knap Gardens – water and biodiversity project – Include this scheme in the 2022/23 Capital Programme with a budget of £6k, to be funded from a contribution from S106 monies.
 - Ysgol Sant Curig – Lighting renewal – Carry forward £56k into the 2023/24 Capital Programme.
 - Review alterations of parking permit schemes - Carry forward £55k to 2023/24 Capital Programme.
 - Penarth Leisure Centre – High Level Glazing - Carry forward £1,546k into the 2023/24 Capital Programme.
 - Barry Regeneration Partnership Fund - Carry forward £689k into the 2022/23 Capital Programme.
 - Murchfield Community Sports Facilities - Carry forward £178k into the 2023/24 Capital Programme.

Reason for recommendations

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

427 TELECARE SERVICES UPDATE (DSS) -

In presenting the report, the Operational Manager for Locality Services advised that the report updated Members on the work of the Telecare Service over the last 18 months (during the Coronavirus pandemic) and advised members on Service Developments following the Telecare Service Review.

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In partnership with Customer Services, Adult Services commissioned a review of the Telecare Service which was completed in the Spring of 2021. The review highlighted the challenges associated with the Telecoms Digital Transfer along with the benefits of embracing new digital technologies to support people to live well within their homes and communities. The recommendations of the review were set out in paragraph 2.1 of the covering report.

The Officer added that telecare continued to be an integral element of the Care and Support services available to people across the Vale of Glamorgan enabling people to live independently at home for as long as possible by offering reassurance and support to family carers, by providing valuable information relating to the health and wellbeing of citizens to professionals and family and by providing early/timely access to emergency support.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Telecare Service supports citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan to live independently in their homes through the provision of an accessible alarm system that alerts carers/professionals in times of need. The Telecare Support Team was responsible for the promotion and development of the service and the installation and maintenance of the Telecare equipment. Once installed, all telecare alerts were responded to by the Contact One Vale Telecare Operators 24hrs per day, 365 days per year.

Telecare made use of an analogue base unit connected through an individual's home telephone landline, which could link to a personal pendant and a range of environmental sensors; these linked to the 24/7 monitoring centre at Contact One Vale.

The Vale of Glamorgan Telecare Team was the first service in Wales to move to a fully digital platform and as such it was being supported by the national Telecare body TEC Cymru, so that any learning could be shared across Wales.

Following the success of an Eastern Vale pilot and with the ambition to provide a Fall Services throughout the Vale, the Council had engaged St Johns Ambulance to provide a Rapid Response service to all areas of the county from 3rd October 2022. As with the pilot scheme, the service would be accessed via a person's Telecare Alarm, via the 24hr Telecare Monitoring Service. The advantages of engaging with St Johns Ambulance was the reassurance provided by fully trained staff and existing links with other emergency services as required.

Social Services was committed to increasing the number of Telecare service users and the range of service options. This would give more people the opportunity to benefit from the preventative interventions provided through embracing emerging technologies. Over the last 12 months, the Telecare Service had set out clear ambitions for the future and had made significant progress in its transformation.

Following the Operational Manager's presentation and subsequent questions from the Committee, the Operational Manager offered additional advice in partnership with the Director of Social Services as follows:

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- Since the 1st of October '22 the service had responded to 33 callouts. Out of these, 8 cases involved the service user being injured on arrival. The average overall response time was 38 minutes with 33 minutes being dedicated to travelling. On average, staff were required to stay with the service user for 45 minutes.
- St. John's Ambulance staff were trained in safety procedures and using mobility equipment in response to service users that had fallen at home.
- The vulnerability of the technological system, if faced with national electricity blackouts in response to the national energy crisis, was of significant concern to the Telecare Team. Some parts of the equipment relied on battery power however, in preparation, the team was identifying service users most at risk in a blackout scenario and it was hoped that any blackouts would be on notice.
- A corporate wide initiative was already underway to assess the risks to all Council services as a result of any possible future national energy back-outs.
- The Telecare Service had been through a significant change and had seen massive improvements which were recognised nationally and a credit to all staff involved.

The Committee recognised the exceptional work being undertaken by the service and commended the transformational involvement of St. John's Ambulance as well as embracing new technologies to enhance the service.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the work and future developments of the Telecare Service be noted.
- (2) T H A T Scrutiny Committee continues to receive annual updates on the work of the Telecare Service.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report on the challenges, opportunities, and strategic direction of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Telecare service and the ongoing developments and service models.
- (2) To keep Members apprised of the work of the Telecare Service.