

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 19th June, 2019.

Present: Councillors Ms. J. Aviet, J.C. Bird, Ms. B.E. Brooks, Mrs. C.A. Cave, Ms. A.M. Collins, S.J. Griffiths, Mrs. S.M. Hanks, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and L.O. Rowlands.

Also present: Councillor M.R. Wilson, Mrs. G. Doyle, Mrs. I. Gannon and Mr. A. Raybould (Tenant Working Group Representatives) and Mrs. D. Murphy (Cardiff and Vale Citizens Advice Bureau Representative).

51 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN -

RESOLVED- T H A T Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes be appointed as Chairman for the Municipal Year.

52 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN -

RESOLVED - T H A T Councillor Ms. J. Aviet be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year.

53 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE -

This was received from Mrs. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group).

54 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting on 3rd April, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

55 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

No declarations were received.

56 DIGITAL INCLUSION UPDATE (MD) -

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations presented the report the purpose of which stated on 5th December, 2018 the Committee received a report which set out the Council's Digital Strategy and approach to Digital Inclusion, ensuring that all citizens had access to the financial, social and employment benefits of digital services.

The report also drew attention to how the Council worked with partner organisations to provide those citizens with the digital skills and access they need.

The report set out options currently being considered by the Get the Vale Online Partnership for inclusion on a revised Digital Inclusion Plan 2019-21.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations referred to page 2 of the report, in particular the goal of enabling citizens to have access to digital services and the required skills necessary to use them. The Operational Manager stated that since the report was written additional information had been provided both internally and from the Welsh Assembly.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations asked for permission to include these in his presentation, which the Committee approved.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations went on to say that the figures used in 3.3 of the report had now been updated and it was in fact 93% of households in the Vale that had access to superfast broadband. The Operational Manager mentioned in the age group 16 - 24 the majority now accessed services via the internet, but this dropped down to 45% once you got to the 75 or over age group. The Operational Manager mentioned the breakdown by housing type where 81% of social housing tenants had internet access compared with 89% of home owners.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations referred to Section 4.1 of the report. The main way in which GTVO provided citizens with digital skills was by training at "drop-in sessions" at various locations across the county. These were run by 27 volunteer digital champions (trained by Digital Communities Wales) who contributed a total of 1,138 hours. 307 unique participants attended the sessions and 100% reported that they felt more confident in using a digital device and 89% (272) reported that they now accessed the internet more regularly (data from 2018). He also mentioned additional figures in relation to Section 4.1 provided by Housing for the 2018/19 period. They had trained 1,000 tenants involving 872 hours of training. A Member mentioned that this was equivalent to 45 minutes per person on average. The Operational Manager also mentioned that from April 2019 to date 178 tenants had received 202 hours of training. The Operational Manager also mentioned that similar tutoring was on offer at sheltered housing for older users and they were looking to get more volunteers in order to assist with this.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations then moved on to points 4.2 to 4.4 of the report relating to the launch of iPad lending in libraries. A Member queried the officer about another scheme of Alexa training at Newydd Housing in care homes and how this was linked to the Vale to which the officer replied that he was aware of the trial and if successful, such facilities could be made available.

Newydd Housing Association had begun a pilot to use Amazon Alexa devices in care homes and sheltered housing to address issues of social isolation and promote independence. The results of this pilot would be reported to Committee in the future.

A Member asked about point 4.2 of the report regarding the iPad lending scheme as this could be challenging due to the limited number of libraries in the rural Vale. The

Member stated that the only library in her area was Cowbridge. The Operational Manager – Customer Relations responded that they would be happy to discuss this further with the Member and see what could be done.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations referred to point 4.7 of the report. Citizens Advice was now providing support to citizens claiming Universal Credit under their 'help to claim' initiative, funded by the Welsh Government. Under the scheme, staff members would assist citizens in making an application online using Chrome Books.

The Operational Manager – Customer Relations requested Members' feedback regarding points 4.8 and 4.9 of the report (Digital Inclusion Sessions and Digital Inclusion Action Plan 2019-21 respectively) and stressed the importance of capturing what the Council was doing and what the outcomes were in terms of digital inclusion in order to measure the Council's success.

The Vice-Chairman queried how people could apply for H4U without using digital services or getting advice online, to which the Operational Manager responded that people could still come into the Council offices in order to ask advice or contact C1V via the telephone.

A Member referred to 4.91 of the report – Armed Forces Digital Champions – and if those Champions were working with Blind Veterans UK? The Operational Manager advised that the Council would be working more closely with the organisation in the future following the recent change of Armed Forces Champion and added that both Blind Veterans UK and the Council already had seats on the Armed Forces Forum. The Member thanked the officer for his advice and added that the organisation was very active and aware of their difficulties so the Council would be able to gain a lot of useful knowledge from working with the group.

A Member asked if free wifi would be rolled out as part of the Digital Inclusion Programme. Previous trials had shown this to be successful – for example, IT suites previously set up in social housing or sheltered accommodation encouraged social inclusion such as when school pupils had been involved in training others in IT skills. The Operational Manager – Customer Relations advised that some of this work had been done already by Digital Inclusion Wales as well as there being free wifi in businesses around the Vale such as coffee shops, and he would need to look into this further as well as drilling into the data on the national survey and would then feedback via future reports or updates to the Committee. The Head of Housing informed Members that the Vale had been successful in bidding for a grant which meant sheltered accommodation, hostels and other Council buildings had free wifi access.

A Member asked where the five community hubs were as stated in the officer's report. The Head of Housing mentioned these would have been located in sheltered and housing association accommodation, for example. The Head of Housing added that the Citizens Advice Bureau have also helped in securing funding from the Welsh Government with regards to this.

The Member then raised a secondary question and asked if the Digital Inclusion lessons would continue and be rolled out as they know someone who had found these extremely useful. The Operational Manager – Customer Relations replied that yes, the aim was to in fact increase the number of lessons and the number of available volunteers as the project was dependent on the numbers of volunteers that could be recruited.

A Tenant Working Group representative pointed out that even though such training was useful that there would be some people, like herself, who did not like using computers or the internet despite receiving support. The Operational Manager – Customer Relations responded there would still be access to services without the need to use digital technology. People could still deal with Council staff face to face or contact via telephone. In response to a Member's supplementary question as to whether there was anything else the Council could have done to support the Tenant Working Group representative to access digital services, such as being able to take the equipment home, the representative advised that there was not and that she was offered to take equipment home but she did not wish to.

A previous Committee Member asked for permission to speak on the report, to which the Committee gave their approval. The former Committee Member wished to push for further roll-out of free wifi and wanted to trial services using Office 365. They also mentioned the major challenge of roll out of Universal Credit as it would require all applicants to apply digitally as well as potential concerns of persons using digital technology, such as the use of Alexa and similar devices which can record conversations. The former Committee Member and a current Member also mentioned the need for Information Technology to be easy to use, otherwise people would simply not use it. The former Committee Member finally asked when the Council would be implementing the report fully, to which the Operational Manager – Customer Relations responded by saying they would need to take the points back to the 365 Steering Group.

A Member raised a formal recommendation for regular updates on the progress of digital inclusion. This was seconded by another Member and approved by the Committee that they would receive updates on a six monthly basis. The Operational Manager – Customer Relations replied that he would be happy to update the Committee on a six monthly basis.

The Head of Housing added that there was £300,000 in the Housing Business Plan for Cloud based services which would be delivered in the next financial year, including a new Housing Tenant Management System and that a new Digital Liaison Officer would be employed to assist with the transition. Also mentioned, was the need to incorporate a question on barriers for accessing services on the STAR survey.

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the progress set out within the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee receives six monthly updates regarding progress towards achieving the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy.

(3) T H A T a formal thank you from the Committee to be passed on to all volunteers involved in the digital drop in sessions.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To give Members of the Committee an overview of the work being undertake to support citizens who were not able to use digital and online services due to lack of access or skills.

(2) To enable Members of the Committee to consider and provide feedback on this work.

(3) To ensure that Committee Members are kept up to date regarding the Digital Inclusion Strategy.

(4) To ensure volunteers are aware of the Committee's gratitude.

57 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2019/20 (MD) -

The report advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and confirmed the proposed Work Programme Schedule for 2019/20:

- 4th Quarter January to March 2019 (Appendix A);
- 3rd Quarter October to December 2018 (Appendix B);
- 2nd Quarter July to September 2018 (Appendix C);
- 1st Quarter April to June 2018 (Appendix D);
- Proposed Work Programme Schedule for 2019/20 (Appendix E).

The Democratic Services Officer asked that the status of recommendations contained in Appendices A, B, C and D be approved and that Appendix E be uploaded onto the Council's website.

The officer referred to Minute 648 (3) (Appendix A) regarding a request be passed to the Head of Democratic Services for the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group to consider a change to the status terminology within internal scrutiny tracking documents. This was pending the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group.

The officer stated that Minute 815 - also on Appendix A - regarding the six-monthly monitoring report for the Environment and Neighbourhood Strategy (Housing) was still waiting on the Committee meeting on 16th October, 2019 when the newly amended report would return to the Committee for the first time since the recommendation was raised.

The officer also referred to Minutes 277 and 278 (Appendix C) - Vale of Glamorgan Annual Report (Improvement Plan Part 2) 2017/2018 and Environment and Neighbourhood Strategy (Housing) Six Monthly Report respectively - these were still labelled as ongoing and were being actively monitored.

The officer stated Appendix E had slipped slightly as there had been no meeting in May and no Chairman until today's meeting, following the recent changes in the Council's Administration. The officer also reiterated that the Forward Work Programme was a continuously changing document.

RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T the views of the Committee on the status of the actions listed in Appendices A, B, C and D be agreed and the following actions deemed completed:

9 January 2019	
Min. No. 648 – 3rd Quarter Scrutiny Decision Tracking of Recommendations and Updated Work Programme Schedule 2018/19 (MD) – Recommended	
(2) That the Forward Work Programme attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.	Work programme uploaded to the Council's website. Completed
Min. No. 649 – Vale of Glamorgan Council Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 (REF) – Recommended	
(2) That the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the minutes above be referred to Cabinet along with the draft Strategy and Action Plan.	Cabinet, at its meeting on 4 th February, 2019 resolved that the comments of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee as contained in the reference be noted as part of the formal draft Strategy consultation exercise. (Min No C570 refers) Completed
(3) That the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee receive a quarterly update report on the output information and relevant statistics informing the Action Plan.	Added to work programme schedule on a quarterly basis. Officers currently compiling data for first report scheduled for June 2019. Completed
6 February 2019	
Min. No. 726 – Presentation - Future Generations Act and Committee Reporting – Recommended	
That the comments as set out above regarding the formatting of the new report template be forwarded to the Performance and Development Team following the meeting.	Point raised by Democratic Services Officer verbally with Performance and Development following the meeting on 7 th February 2019. Point also raised by the Democratic Services Officer via e-mail on 21 st March 2019. Completed
Min. No. 727 – Corporate Safeguarding Mid-Year Report (REF) – Recommended	
(2) That a request be raised with	Request e-mailed to Operational

relevant Officers for a regular reference to be provided to the Committee following the rolling annual and mid-year Corporate Safeguarding reports provided to Cabinet.	Manager for Safeguarding and Service Outcomes by the Democratic Services Officer on 21 st March 2019. Reports added to Committee forward work programme as expected. Completed
Min. No. 728 – Timebanking Project - 12 Month Monitoring Report (Ref) and Six Month Progress Report Presentation - Community Investment Team – Recommended	
(2) That the extension of the project for a further 12 months be strongly endorsed by the Committee.	Recommendation raised and minuted on 6 th February 2019 (Min. No. 728) Completed
6 March 2019	
Min. No. 816 – Quarter 3 (2018-19) Performance Report: An Inclusive and Safe Vale (DEH) – Recommended	
(2) That Cabinet be advised of the view of the Committee that the new covering report template requires more development, particularly in relation to greater clarity and consistency between Report Owner and Report Author, and also in relation to whether Ward Member consultation is required or has been carried out.	The Committee's views have been forwarded to the Improvement and Development Team for incorporation into an updated report to be presented to Cabinet. Cabinet, on 1 st April, 2019, resolved [1] That progress to date in achieving outcomes in line with Well-being Outcomes and Corporate Health priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2016-20 be noted and endorsed. [2] That the performance results and remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified be noted and endorsed. (Min No C636 refers) Completed
5 December 2018	
Min. No. 543 – Wales Audit Office Report: Vale of Glamorgan Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Review Including Council Housing Tenants Perspective (DEH) – Recommended	
(2) That the proposals for improvement be addressed as part of the Service Planning process for 2019/20 and also incorporated within the Council Insight Tracker for monitoring.	Service Plans 2019/20 noted by Committee on 6 th March 2019 (Min No 817 refers). The proposal for improvements confirmed as incorporated into the Council's Insight Tracker for 2019/20 as available on StaffNet under Staff Central Insight Board (Min No 749 refers) Completed
(3) That the report be referred to the Audit Committee and thereafter to Cabinet for their consideration incorporating any comments of the	Audit Committee, at its meeting on 25 th February, 2019, resolved that the reference from the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee and

Committee.	the comments of the Audit Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration. (Min. No. 749 refers) Completed
Min. No. 545 – Housing Asset Management Strategy (REF) – Recommended	
(2) That the comments of the Committee regarding the Housing Asset Management Strategy be referred to Cabinet for consideration.	Cabinet, at its meeting on 21 st January, 2019 noted the contents of the minutes. (Min No. C550 refers) Completed
12 September 2018	
Min. No. 275 – Presentation – Target Hardening for Domestic Abuse Victims – Recommended	
(2) That the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Manager reapproach the Tenant Working Groups to arrange further group training.	In addition to the training session already provided, the availability of the VAWDASV Manager has been provided to the Senior Tenant Liaison Officer for confirmation from the Tenant Working representative groups of their agreed date and time for a further session. Completed
13 June 2018	
Min. No. 83 – Youth Offending Service: 9 Months Performance Report for the Period April 2017 to December 2017 (DSS) – Recommended	
(2) That future Youth Offending Service Annual Reports and Appendices be amended to include benchmark data for the nine performance indicators against neighbouring Local Authorities.	First report of its kind received by Committee on 6 th March, 2019. Completed
(3) That future Youth Offending Service Annual Reports and Appendices include further detail on the types of provision offered to young persons of statutory school age and non-statutory school age in relation to the figure for the average number of hours ‘attended’ at start, review and end.	First report of its kind received by Committee on 6 th March, 2019. Completed

(2) T H A T the proposed Work Programme Schedule for 2019/20 attached at Appendix E to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council’s website.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee’s recommendations.
- (2) For information.