

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 16th December, 2021.

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

The Meeting recording is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillor. J. Aviet (Vice-Chair); Councillors J.C. Bird, B.E. Brooks, C.A. Cave, S.M. Hanks, R. Nugent-Finn, A.C. Parker, S.D. Perkes and L.O. Rowlands.

Also present: Councillor N. Moore (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources); W. Hennessy, V. John and H. Smith (Representatives from Tenant Working Group / Panel) and C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale).

678 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”.

679 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from G. Doyle (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representative).

680 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

681 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

682 PRESENTATION – CIVIL PROTECTION UNIT (CPU) UPDATE –

The presentation was given by the Principal Civil Protection Officer. She explained that this was an update on what the Civil Protection Unit had been doing over the last two years in both its regular work and the actions undertaken as part of the response to COVID-19.

By way of background, the Council had a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as a category one responder and under that act there were six duties i.e. assessing the risk of emergencies, planning for emergencies and business continuity, training and exercise with partners, responding to emergencies, as well as cooperation and sharing, carried out through the CPU.

A key challenge for the CPU has been responding to COVID-19 with the CPU undertaking various actions, including the following:

- Utilising the Council's Business Continuity Critical Services List in order to prioritise services; although the situation was initially difficult due to the unexpected nature of this emergency, this critical services framework had since proven effective in setting priorities and maintaining the Council's key services during the pandemic.
- Also, the Council's ICT infrastructure was heavily impacted by the effects of COVID-19 (i.e. large numbers of staff working from home) but the Council was able to rise to the challenge and increase its ICT capabilities in undertaking more of its business virtually thereby ensuring business continuity and continued support for the community.
- The Council had undertaken regular 'Gold' meetings (including the Senior Leadership Team, the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council) in order to coordinate the Council's response to COVID-19.
- A personal protective equipment (PPE) store was set up in the Council in order to support the social care sector to make sure that they could continue their vital work and also to make sure Council services like waste could continue in a safe environment in order for key public services to continue during the pandemic.
- Supporting Cardiff and Vale Health Board i.e. through their vaccination centres as well as assisting Welsh Government (WG) with food parcels and helping the Community Safety Team and the Joint Enforcement Team (JET) in dealing with 'hotspots' such as Barry Island and Ogmore by Sea around breaches of COVID-19 restrictions. CPU also assisted around enhanced cleaning and security on Council buildings and supporting schools and libraries.
- South Wales Local Resilience Forum: a regular forum for Category One responders and partners hosted and coordinated by the Council in order to ensure mutual, multi-agency support, including WG and Army support such as with COVID-19 testing / vaccination sites and managing excess deaths.

Despite being involved in the in the work and coordination around the pandemic, the CPU had also continued with its regular work, including an ongoing review of its emergency plans such as Emergency Fuel Arrangements, Barry Chemical Complex External Plan – COMAH, Emergency Contacts Directory, Snow Arrangements and Flood Plan as well as Stray Horses & Livestock Arrangements, with some of these plans needing to be utilised recently such as last year's flooding in the Vale due to heavy rain and the more recent 'fuel panic'. A CPU duty officer was on call 24/7, all year round in order to respond to any calls from the emergency services or from the Council. The Council had also dealt with removing vessels in the old Barry Harbour due to various issues with these (including pollution and the boats potentially breaking free of its moorings), which CPU had co-ordinated.

The CPU chaired the Events Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) and the Protective Security Preparedness Groups (PSPG) as well as being a member of the Cardiff & Vale CONTEST Board, dealing with managing events under a consistent approach and handling new duties on the Council around counterterrorism respectively.

Finally, the CPU had produced new guidance recently in order to build community resilience around extreme weather events as well as guidance on the use of the Barry Old Harbour and the relocation of the Council's stock of sandbags from Court Road down to the Council Docks Offices.

Following the Officer's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee to them:

- The Chair wished to address the comments made on social media around the removal of the boats in the Old Harbour in Barry and what procedures the Council followed as part of removing these. It was explained that the boats had been in the harbour for some time and the Council had tried to identify and write to their owners. In the meantime, the Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) had contacted the Council regarding their concerns about the vessels causing pollution and the vessels breaking free and disrupting the pilotage of the Bristol Channel. If that had happened, the Council as the Harbour Authority would have been held responsible. As a result, the Council had taken legal action against the boat owners, resulting in the boats being impounded and disposed of.
- On Councillor Nugent-Finn's question on how the issues raised around the boats at the Old Harbour could be mitigated and avoided in the future, the CPU had written a new procedure to go on the Council website shortly, stating that the Old Barry Harbour was not an operational harbour and having rapid enforcement measures should people try to moor their boats within the Harbour without permission. As part of this, the existing legislation relating to the Harbour would be reviewed in the medium and longer term as well.
- The Councillor followed this question up with one concerning how best to direct the public to contact the Council regarding sandbags in the event of flooding and not solely direct them to the Council's website, to which the reply was that once the new procedure on this was in place, the CPU / Council would be monitoring the weather and if the risk of flooding was identified then this would trigger the central supply of sandbags to be opened (with a maximum allocation of sandbags of 15 per house). The details of Private suppliers of sandbags would also be put on the Council website if the public wished to purchase these themselves. A link to the new procedure would be shared with Members once ready.
- Councillor Cave raised the issue of flooding and stated that within the rural Vale, a couple of points where sandbags were now readily available had been established. She also referred to the ongoing issues of flooding caused by field run off in rural areas, impacting local housing and roads / lanes and if this was something that CPU could provide information on. Previous communications with the Highways Authority had been unsuccessful in resolving this issue. The Principal Civil Protection Officer stated that she would need to refer this to the Flood Risk Team at the Council to see what flood prevention measures could be put in place and to identify this as a

potential flooding 'hotspot', but also suggested that the Community Guidance recently drafted by CPU maybe able to help local rural communities also on flooding matters and provide greater resilience around this. She explained that it was challenging to manage flooding within the Vale as this could happen anywhere at any time, particularly with heavy rain downpours and flash flooding. The Chair and Councillor Bird also suggested contacting Natural Resources Wales (NRW) as well as the landowner which could also help to get this matter resolved more speedily.

- Councillor Brooks raised the issue of increasing COVID-19 infections with the Omicron variant, with preparations needing to be ramped up again. As a result, how would the CPU cope with this, with potentially less staff available during the upcoming holiday period. It was explained that staff levels would be maintained over the Christmas period for critical Council services and plans were in place to ensure continued staff resilience in key services in light of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. More broadly, restrictions and further guidance would also be potentially put in place by WG to deal with the resurgence in COVID-19. For Housing and Building Services, risk assessments continued to be made (in conjunction with Public Health Wales) in light of the rising new variant to ensure that public building and spaces as well as sheltered housing accommodation remained safe and if needed, restrictions would be put in place to ensure continued public safety.
- Councillor Hanks asked for clarity on the Vale's Flood Plan and Snow Arrangements which were referred to separately on the presentation, with the Community Flood and Extreme Weather Guidance also mentioned and therefore under which of these the Council was working under. It was explained that the Community Flood and Extreme Weather Plan was a public facing document, whereas the Vale's Flood Plan and Snow Arrangements were internal documents which dealt with the Council's response to all forms of extreme weather.

Committee, having considered the presentation and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation on the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) Update be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

683 PRESENTATION – DISABLED FACILITIES ADAPTATIONS –

The presentation was given by the Operational Manager, Regeneration who, by way of background, explained that the Disabled Facilities Team sat within the Council's Economy Team. It has sat within this service area since 2012 and was one of three adaptation teams within the Council. The Council had a statutory duty to consider and approve applications (by owner occupiers, landlords and private tenants) for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) where there was an identified need, and a property could be reasonably adapted – the key criteria being that such adaptations

were 'reasonable and practicable'. The statutory limit (across Wales) was £36,000, with the Vale offering a discretionary top up grant to a maximum of £60,000. The Vale offered a Grants Agency Service that managed adaptations on behalf of residents, for a fixed percentage fee.

It was important to manage the expectations of residents around adaptations they may require in their homes in order to ensure that adaptations were practical and reasonable, within the current constraints of funding. Medium and large adaptations were also means tested.

In terms of performance, 56 grants were awarded in 2020 / 2021, with it taking on average of 340 days to complete such adaptations (against a target of 350 days) at Quarter 2. It was estimated that between 65 - 75% of capital allocation for DFG would be used in 2021 / 2022. The 'Care & Repair' service (funded by various grants) also provided an excellent service in delivering various small-scale adaptations.

The Operational Manager, Regeneration went on to discuss the challenges during COVID-19 and in its immediate aftermath; this included staff and contractors being unable to go into residents' homes and therefore being diverted into emergency business support (although some adaptations in homes did still go ahead), a backlog of requests, through to increasing costs and issues around the availability of building materials (overall costs rising as high as 25% compared to pre-pandemic) and the loss of contractors.

Finally, the Operational Manager, Regeneration looked at potential challenges going forward i.e., around changes in legislation, the potential removal of means testing and the development of a strategic adaptations' framework (around multi agency working and providing a fair and equitable service).

Following the Officer's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee to them:

- Councillors Parker and Nugent-Finn asked how people (including the elderly and vulnerable groups) could be made aware of the DFG (i.e. getting it out in the public domain) in order to access the grant and services, including patients in hospitals. It was explained that the majority of referrals for DFG were made via Occupational Therapists and Social Services. Publicity for such services was sometimes impacted by funding running out for Care & Repair, etc. (unless additional funding could be found i.e., via the Enabling Grant). The Head of Housing and Building Services also added that it was standard practice that patients in hospital would receive a discharge plan if required which would include referrals from Occupational Therapists and Social Services on any adaptations needed. Going forward, the Council was looking at a 'Vale Alliance' model, a formal partnership with the Council, Cardiff and Vale Health Board and others to provide a 'one stop shop' for residents who may have both health and social care issues that needed to be addressed at the same time.

- Councillor Parker also asked about the means testing on DFG, and it was confirmed that small scale adaptations (including stairlifts) were not means tested, only medium and larger sized adaptations were.

The Committee wished to thank the DFG team for all their efforts during the last year.

The Committee, having considered the presentation and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation on the Disabled Facilities Adaptations be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

684 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING MID TERM REPORT (REF) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer made the Committee aware of a small error on the date of the Committee on the reference front sheet of the report, which read 8th December when it should be the 16th December.

The reference from the Cabinet meeting of 22nd November, 2021 as contained within the agenda was presented to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the Council had a corporate responsibility to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements were in place for children and adults who require specific Council services and the report updated Members on the effectiveness of those arrangements and developments over the last period. He added that there was a cross Council commitment and involvement for safeguarding and that it sat in a number of portfolio areas and Committees and there was a statutory requirement to corporate safeguarding as part of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and specifically under Part 7 of the Act.

The work of the Corporate Safeguarding Group (CSG) focused on the strategic overview of safeguarding across the Council and had met regularly since April 2021 and a number of priorities have been considered. Good practice was being shared both internally from work within the Vale, but also regionally in terms of the work of the Regional Safeguarding Board.

Furthermore, there had been contact with the new Wales-wide DBS representative who shared with CSG areas where they could support Councils in terms of DBS barring and referrals, safer recruitment data was also regularly reported to the group and on the whole safer recruitment practices were adhered to effectively, as well as having a Corporate Safeguarding Work Plan to focus on priority areas and areas of learning from reviews. CSG was involved in developing / reviewing safeguarding data and safeguarding training (ensuring greater focus and based on outcomes), as well as progressing developments in response to audit and considering wider quality assurance activity that can support the work of CSG.

A full year report, providing more detail, would come to the Committee in due course.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Nugent-Finn raised the issue of Elected Members for the Vale of Glamorgan Council not receiving DBS as part of their role, unlike the relevant employees within the Council and unless they individually chose to do so. Elected Members met with families and children at surgeries. The Councillor felt that this issue should be taken forward to Cabinet as a recommendation as part of good practice. Councillor Parker added that many Elected Members were probably school governors as well and, in his experience, they were not asked for DBS checks even though governors could move around a school with only their governor's badge. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that DBS checks were constrained by legislation and the statutory framework and would only apply to Members in circumstances where they actively engaged on their own with individuals, adults or children in their own homes or for example, at a children's home or sheltered housing scheme. This would have to be defined, regulated activity (such as lone working with children, etc.). He would seek further clarification on the issues raised with the lead officer in this area and with Democratic Services as well as sharing with Members the statutory basis on which DBS checks were made in order to help progress this area of concern for the Committee.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Corporate Safeguarding Mid-term Report be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet considers the comments made by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for Elected Members at the Vale of Glamorgan of Council and seeks clarification as to whether all Elected Members should be required to undertake such checks as part of their role.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order that Cabinet considers the comments made regarding DBS checks for Elected Members by the Scrutiny Committee.

685 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-23 (REF) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer made the Committee aware of a small error on the date of the Committee on the reference front sheet of the report, which read 8th December when it should be the 16th December.

The reference from the Cabinet meeting of 22nd November, 2021 as contained within the agenda was presented to the Scrutiny Committee by the Head of Housing and Building Services as part of the programme of consultation, requesting any comments to be shared with the Head of Policy and Business Transformation to inform revisions to the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP). The timetable for consultation and approval of the ADP was detailed in the body of the report

The ADP for 2022-23 was aligned to the Council's four Well-being Objectives. The Plan detailed the activities that would be undertaken in 2022-23 to deliver those objectives. The commitments within the ADP would be reflected in the Annual Service Plans together with service improvement targets which would detail how different Council services would contribute to the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives.

The objectives and associated commitments outlined in the Plan would be reflected also in Service Plans to show how the different services would contribute to those ADP outcomes. Service Plans were anticipated to be presented to Scrutiny in the New Year, together with the proposed service improvement targets for 2022/23 as well.

The ADP provided a bridge between the five-year Corporate Plan and the Annual Service Plans and set out clearly the actions people could expect from the Council in the year ahead and how the Well-being Objectives would be delivered.

In this year's ADP, there was a particular emphasis on a series of six cross cutting themes, including Project Zero, Community Capacity, Hardship, Care and Support, Transformation and Infrastructure.

The Head of Housing and Building Services drew Members' attention to a number of areas of relevance to the Committee i.e. Objective 3, to support people at home and in their community, which was a key area of focus and interest for Members and updated them concerning the new Safer Vale and Community Safety Strategy for 2023/26, maximising Council house building (such as Holm View Phase 2), an additional 100 new Council homes in 2022 and the development of the new five year Local Housing Strategy next year. Also, in terms of other areas and objectives, the work and progress made with the 'Food Pod' in Penarth and the positive impact it made to communities there was highlighted.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Hanks asked about the difficulties recruiting Rapid Rehousing (RRH) Officers and an update on staff shortages. The Head of Housing and Building Services stated that despite additional funding, it was difficult to recruit people with the right expertise for such roles and the Council was working with local recruitment agencies to help recruit where necessary. The Operational Manager Public Sector Housing wished to add that the RRH Officer positions were funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG) and one had been filled, but recruitment was still challenging due to the Council competing with other Authorities for a small number of people with the necessary skills and with the challenges around wage inflation, etc. to contend with as well.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the draft Annual Delivery Plan be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

686 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE 2021/22 (DEH) –

The performance report presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services charted the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (1st April to 30th September, 2021) towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Council had made positive progress in delivering its in-year commitments in relation to its Annual Delivery Plan (2021/22). This performance had contributed to an overall Green status for the Plan at Quarter 2 (Q2).

All four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q2 to reflect the progress made to date. This was positive given the ongoing challenges arising from the pandemic.

95% (296 out of 313) of planned activities outlined in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter, 2% (5) an Amber status and 3% (12) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.

Of the 12 actions attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, 25% (3) were directly as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to these areas, where appropriate, work was now recommencing as part of the Council's recovery plans and strategy. Progress in relation to Coronavirus recovery was being reported to Members in the presentation accompanying this performance report at Scrutiny Committee and focused on highlighting issues pertinent to the Committee's remit. The Coronavirus recovery update formed part of quarterly performance reporting to ensure Members maintained an oversight of the recovery issues impacting on the work of their respective Committees. From this perspective, Members were requested to note the progress to date in relation to Coronavirus recovery.

Of the 42 quarterly performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 36 measures where a performance status was applicable. 61% (22) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 6% (2), Amber status and 33% (12), Red status. Data was unavailable for 6 quarterly measures due to reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. A performance status was not

applicable for 107 measures including a number of annual indicators (89) and those establishing baseline performance for the year (18).

In relation to the 12 measures attributed a Red performance status during the quarter, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to 58% (7) missing target.

In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, 100% (37 out of 37) were attributed a Green performance status. Of the 7 quarterly measures reported, 57% (4) were attributed a Green performance status and 14% (1) Amber status, and 29% (2) Red status. In relation to the 2 measures attributed a Red status, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to missing the target for 1 of the measures.

Members were referred to Appendix C of the report, which looked at the two Red performance measures:

- Average number of working days to let an empty property. Performance unfortunately had slightly worsened in Q2 due in part to issues around supply of materials and with availability of contractors and subcontractors. It was anticipated that the Council would come back into line in Q3 and at the end of the year out turn on target in relation to that important indicator.
- Percentage of households successfully prevented from becoming homeless. It should be noted that the targets set were pre-pandemic and the need to accommodate people presenting as homeless regardless of priority need had impacted prevention activities. With the WG looking to removing the priority need criteria, the Council would need to have discussions with WG around resources and the way that in future the Council dealt with preventing homelessness and assisting residents within the Vale into accommodation.
- The Operational Manager Public Sector Housing wished to add that regarding the performance measure for rent loss / reletting (due to complex void, etc.), this had started to improve in Q3 and would continue to do so in Q4 it was anticipated.

Councillor Aviet referred to comments on social media around refugees receiving preferential treatment over military veterans / ex-armed forces personnel for housing and if such rumours could be dispelled. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that measures were in place to assist both refugees and ex-armed forces personnel equitably i.e. 2 Afghan refugee families had been provided non Council owned housing and ex-armed forces personnel were given a specific allocation or priority for social housing as well as tailored support as part of the Armed Forces Covenant. Other forms of housing allocation were also undertaken transparently and fairly such as through Homes4U.

The Committee wished to thank both Officers and staff in Housing and Building Services and in the wider Council for all their efforts during another challenging year.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2021/22 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 the progress being made through the Council's recovery strategy and the Directorate recovery plans in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

687 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AND REVISED REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2021/22 (DEH) –

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer explained that the report related to the revenue monitoring position as at the end of September 2021, with the report advising that at this time of year the Council revised the budget for any technical adjustments and any virements. These revisions did not alter the bottom-line position of the outturn for those areas under the Committee's remit. The report went on to advise that the current projected outturn for this year was for an outturn within budget at year end; however, the Officer needed to caveat this by saying that for the CCTV budget there may be a shortfall, and if at year end the Council could not cover that from other areas linked to the Committee's remit, it would have to be drawn down from reserves. A 'watching brief' would be kept on this potential shortfall for the remainder of the year.

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer also stated that funding had been provided by Welsh Government (WG) in order to cover the loss of income incurred by certain Council services as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Areas where such funding had been drawn down included the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), where an anticipated shortfall in fees would require the Council claiming back these losses from WG.

Finally, the Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer informed the Committee about the Capital Programme, where the only change for the Committee was the inclusion of the Penarth Food Pod.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.
- (2) T H A T the revised budget for 2021/22 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

688 INITIAL REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 (DEH) –

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer explained that the Council's provisional settlement had not yet been announced by Welsh Government and was expected this year on 21st December, 2021 with the final settlement due to be published in March, 2022. Even though this crucial information had not been received yet, the budget setting and consultation process had to commence in order to meet statutory deadlines. Therefore, several scenarios had to be considered in terms of potential funding by Welsh Government (WG):

- A cash neutral settlement.
- A 1% reduction each year.
- A 1% increase each year.
- The settlement for 2022/23 being at the same level as the 2021/22 settlement (4.42%).

The cost pressures for this Committee totalled £2.2m, including the provision of B&B accommodation; although there was the potential for WG to fund some of the block booking of rooms from next year. This was confirmed by the Head of Housing and Building Services, who explained that the Council had been in talks with WG officials today concerning funding and the block booking of B&B and temporary accommodation for homeless persons for next year and WG had offered their assurance such funding would be available if required. However, discussions and negotiations on this issue were still ongoing with WG and the Council needed to consider what the exact needs and demands would be for such accommodation next year within the Vale, particularly in light of the growing number of new housing developments coming on stream next year which could help to house people in temporary accommodation or who had become homeless. The Council needed to avoid over booking B&B and other temporary accommodation, as this could result in unused rooms.

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer then referred to the various options / scenarios for the level of Council Tax to be fixed by the Council for 2022 / 23, which were as follows:

- The latest reported CPI rate which was 3.2% (although this had come from the CPI level in August and had since risen);

- A 3.9% increase which was the same level as Council Tax increased in 2021/22;
- Or an increase to the Welsh average, which would be 7.05% in 2022/23. As a result the potential shortfalls from the varying levels of Council Tax proposed ranged from £13.6m to £26m.

Following the Officer's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Brooks referred to the potential, continued, funding by WG of the temporary accommodation, which could help the Council's cost pressures substantially. She also asked about the review of Cadoxton House referred to within the report under cost pressures. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the review was around a change of use in the building, with certain Council and Third Sector services relocating from the building and providing services differently, which would impact the running costs on the building and, if the building was declared surplus by the Council, the associated costs pressures due to the 'clawback' clause by WG as part of its previous funding. Other options included leasing the building to other organisations either on a short or medium- or long-term basis or to convert it into housing. It was also important to stress however that the changes and the review around Cadoxton House did not entail any reduction in services such as around drug and alcohol addiction, due to such support being co-ordinated from alternative accommodation. It was agreed to endorse and refer this review to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as an example of a means that the Council could look at addressing its cost pressures by looking 'outside' the box by way of looking at alternative uses for the building, etc.
- Councillor Bird asked if the proposed funding from WG for temporary accommodation would fully negate its £2m cost pressure; the Head of Housing and Building Services explained that it would not, as this was the full year cost based on approximately 120 rooms occupied in three hotels. If the Council estimated that the numbers of rooms needed next year were less than this, then it would still be a proportion of that £2m that would remain. However, the exact amount of rooms required would still continue to be impacted by the pandemic and the numbers of homeless, so the proportion of costs pressures to be negated could still be relatively small.
- Councillor Hanks asked about the way forward on the ongoing issue with costs pressures and CCTV provision within the Vale and the increasing obsolescence and break downs of the existing CCTV stock, as well as the long wait for South Wales Police to assist in its provision. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that there were 77 CCTV cameras within the Vale and due to the age of the existing CCTV stock that some of the cameras no longer functioned. However, the Council had committed £350k to renewing the CCTV stock and had no plans to reduce their numbers. Currently the Council funded all the revenue costs for CCTV, but with other agencies also using this service. The Council were looking for these partners to assist with the CCTV costs, with officials from the Police and Crime Commissioner for South Wales Police (PCC) indicating they would help with revenue funding for CCTV (subject to final approval from the PCC Executive

Board). The Council were currently working with Cardiff Council to develop a regional approach to CCTV monitoring in conjunction with the Police Basic Command Unit (BCU) for Cardiff and the Vale. In the meantime, the current CCTV system continued to be monitored by Bridgend Council and maintained by the CCTV contractor.

- Councillor Perkes enquired about the DAARC (Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Co-ordinator) service not being included on the costs pressures within the report, to which the Head of Housing and Building Services replied that the cost pressures for the service had been alleviated by a combination of funding through the Council's base budget, Housing Support Grant and the Council successfully attracting further WG grants for DAARC, moving as it had from a pilot to a 'mainstream' project. Such funding had meant an expansion of the service's existing functions, as well as recruitment of an advocate for children who had witnessed domestic violence at home and had led to the recommissioning of the Domestic Abuse Service through Atal Y Fro, who had entered into a long-term contract to provide this service.
- Councillor Nugent-Finn asked where the new Drug and Alcohol Outreach Service was based, with the Head of Housing and Building Services stating that he would speak to the relevant lead officer in order to provide a list of current outreach services and locations.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2022/23 be noted.
- (2) T H A T Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee be advised of the ongoing importance of funding the cost pressures as set out in Appendix 1 to the report including the provision of B&B accommodation (pending clarification of the exact cost pressures for B&B accommodation as a result of further discussions on continued grant funding from Welsh Government).
- (3) T H A T the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee considers the endorsement by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee of the Council's review of Cadoxton House and the potential alternative uses for the building as part of looking at costs pressures.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order to maintain funding for the services provided in Appendix 1.
- (3) To endorse the Council's review of alternative ways and uses of the building and their impact on costs pressures.

689 INITIAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2022/23 TO 2026/27 (DEH) –

The report submitted the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for the 2022/23 to 2026/27 to the Scrutiny Committee for consultation.

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer explained that as with the previous revenue report earlier the Council did not have any indication as yet what the final financial settlement from Welsh Government would be for next year. Within the report a number of capital schemes were outlined, and there was already included an annual budget for some schemes such as the Disabled Facilities Grants and the Housing Improvement Programme which tied in with the current Housing Business Plan.

In addition, one bid had been received in relation to this Committee's remit concerning the 'Safer Streets' programme. At this time, due to the uncertainty with the level of funding, no actual bids had been approved to go forward at this stage. The finalised capital proposals would be taken to Cabinet in February and receive final approval in March 2022 by Full Council.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Initial Capital Programme Proposals for 2022/23 to 2026/27 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

690 INITIAL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 AND REVISED BUDGET 2021/22 (DEH) –

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer outlined the report, which provided an update on the revised Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2021/22. There was a significant change to the net operational budget for 2021/22, from a surplus of £25k to a deficit of £11.085m. This change should not cause alarm however, as it was due to the HRA reserve at the end of 2021 being a lot higher than projected due to underspends in the last year and therefore this financial 'adjustment' was required in order to bring down the level of the reserve back in line with the Housing Business Plan. This would be achieved by increasing the revenue contributions to fund capital expenditure. This would increase expenditure and would be funded by drawing down from the reserve, thereby bringing the reserve back to the level that the Council had planned it to be. This would in turn mean that the Council would not need to raise as much funds through loans to fund capital expenditure, which would benefit the overall financial situation for the Council by reducing loan charges.

Another change outlined within the report was concerning Bad Debt Provision, which the Council was reducing as the actual position forecast for the year did not now require such a large increase for this provision.

The report also set out initial Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for 2022/23. The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer stated that at this stage the level of rent increase was not yet known as the rent policy had not been received from Welsh Government as yet. The Council was looking at net growth required for the budget for next year, the largest area of growth being an increase in borrowing costs. So even though the Council were reducing such costs, there was still a need because of an increase in spending on the capital program next year.

The Interim Head of Finance / S151 Officer stated that the final version of this report would go to Cabinet in February 2022, but also at that time the Housing Business Plan would be taken to Cabinet as well and they would both go to Full Council in March next year.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the amended Housing Revenue Account budget for 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the initial Housing Revenue Account budget proposal for 2022/23 be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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