

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 7th September, 2022.

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

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

Present: Councillor A. M. Collins (Chair), Councillors J. Aviet, G.M. Ball, I. Buckley, G.D.D. Carroll, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, M.J.G. Morgan and S.D. Perkes.

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale Representative) and G. Doyle, D. Dutch and H. Smith (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representatives); Councillors L. Burnett (Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

239 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.”

240 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair) and S. Campbell; and V. John (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representative).

241 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 6th July, 2022 be approved as a correct record.

242 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

243 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR 2022/23 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7th July, 2022 was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, who outlined the following:

- The report itself set out the new duties on the Council due to the new performance requirements of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (LG&E Act) and the requirement to contribute to the national goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG) as well as align with the Socio-economic Duty.
- Key to the above was for the Council to keep under review its performance, as well as consult and report on its performance through self-assessment, and arrange and respond to a panel performance assessment once in every electoral cycle. These duties had also informed the development of the Annual Delivery Plan for 2022/23.
- Another opportunity highlighted was that the Council could now engage with a new cohort of elected Members, following the recent local elections, in order to shape the Council's Annual Performance Calendar (attached to the report) and other key areas, such as developing the Annual Self-Assessment of Performance.
- The various duties to be undertaken by the Council, as part of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021: Part 6 Performance and Governance of Principal Council provisions were also outlined, which included arranging a panel assessment of performance, to respond to a panel performance assessment report and set out the duties and responsibilities of the Auditor General for Wales's powers to conduct a special inspection and the powers for intervention by Welsh Ministers where Ministers consider that it was likely that the Council was not meeting the performance requirements.
- It was also explained that, in terms of the Annual Self-Assessment Report for 2021 / 22, the Council was already halfway through a number of key delivery tasks, with this draft report currently being considered via reference by Scrutiny Committees and its final version to be presented to Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee in October, with final consideration by Full Council in November. Subject to agreement by the Full Council, the Self-Assessment Report would then be formally published, with Cabinet to also approve the Annual Draft Delivery Plan 2023 / 24 (which would be informed by the findings of the Self-Assessment Report).
- The Annual Performance Calendar was outlined to Members, highlighting both the associated timetable and crucially, how Members could get involved with these performance management, scrutiny, etc. processes themselves. The Member Working Group had also been reinstated and the importance of Chairs, Vice Chairs, Group Leaders and key Council Officers in developing the performance management framework was recognised. A series of Member workshops were also proposed throughout the year to complement the comprehensive Member Development Programme.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar 2022/23 and the proposed approach to engaging with Members in-year to shape and refine the Annual Performance Calendar and associated processes, plans and reports to enable the Council to meet the new performance requirements be noted.

Reason for recommendation

The Scrutiny Committee, in line with Section 114 of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, had oversight of the Annual Performance Calendar and its views inform the Council's approach to meet the new performance requirements.

244 REVENUE CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (DEH) –

The Finance Support Manager presented the report to the Committee and set out the following to Members:

- Following the end of the financial year, Cabinet was provided with provisional outturn figures for the Council. It was anticipated that the Statement of Accounts would be considered for approval by Full Council in the early part of November 2022, which would follow the audit to be undertaken by Audit Wales.
- It had been another challenging year for the Council both financially and operationally due to COVID-19. However, Welsh Government (WG) had provided financial support to the Council in order to cover additional expenditure incurred due to COVID-19 through the Local Authority Emergency Hardship Grant amounting to approximately £15M, as well as approximately £1.3M from WG for grant support to cover the loss of income due to the Pandemic.
- The Finance Support Manager also referred to the budget variances detailed within the report for year-end for all amended 2021/22 budgets within the Committee's remit, which also outlined the main reasons for the variances, as well as setting out the various reserve contributions made during the year.
- The 2021/22 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) outturned a surplus of £5M compared to the amended budget deficit of £11M, with a favourable variance of £16M, with the largest variance being on the Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account budget.
- The HRA reserve balance opened at £12.000M and closed at £17.4M, due to the planned reserve use for capital expenditure being lower than previously expected.
- Transfers into reserves (such as from favourable variances) could be used to fund future revenue or capital expenditure, with further details on this, relating to both General Reserves and HRA, provided within the report.
- Finally, the Finance Support Manager referred to the Council's efficiency target of £500K for 2021/22, of which the target for services within this Committee's remit was £6K: consisting of £4K on General Fund Housing and Private Housing which had an efficiency saving of £2k. These targets were both fully achieved.

Following on from the presentation of the report, Councillor Carroll raised a query on the transfer of reserves to cover the various running costs for the Council's CCTV system and asked whether this included new equipment. It was confirmed that this transfer was purely for running costs, with the purchase of any equipment, if applicable, to come under capital costs, as detailed in the Capital Closure of Accounts report to follow shortly. On the Councillor's follow up query on why the

CCTV costs were unfunded, it was explained that the CCTV funding had been subject to a savings target, however, due to the costs and funding not been transferred to South Wales Police as planned, the Council still had to fund its running costs, etc.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services was invited to speak, who endorsed the report and asked the Finance Support Manager to outline to the Committee what an adverse and favourable variance entailed with regard to income and expenditure. Such terms could mean different things in different financial situations i.e. an adverse variance could describe a situation where, for example, in terms of costs / expenditure, an overspend had occurred and therefore more had been spent than was originally budgeted for. A favourable variance would in this case mean that there had been an underspend with less money spent than was originally budgeted. Conversely, for an income target / budget, a favourable variance would mean that additional income had been achieved and if less than the target income had been received, an adverse variance had occurred.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the report and the financial measures taken and proposed be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Final amended 2021/22 budget as shown in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and amended budget for 2021/22 which reflects an increase in Revenue Support Grant awarded by Welsh Government during 2021/22.

245 CAPITAL CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22 (DEH) –

The Finance Support Manager presented the report to the Committee, who set out the following key points:

- As was the case with the Revenue Closure of Accounts, the Capital Closure of Accounts would need to be signed off by the Council as well, which would follow the audit to be undertaken by Audit Wales.
- The overall position on the revised 2021/22 Capital Programme was a variance of £13.4m against a planned programme of £79.8M, of which £11.5M has been slipped into the 2022/23 Capital Programme.
- The year-end position for this Committee was a variance of £4.8M against a planned programme of £15.8M; the list of projects or schemes that had to be slipped into the 2022/23 Capital Programme were detailed in the report.
- The impact of COVID-19 and other external factors had been instrumental in placing the Council in this position, including the rising costs in labour and materials as well as the difficulties in sourcing these, leading to a disruption in

planned timescales for capital projects, etc. In some cases, this had required renegotiation and the ‘reengineering’ of capital projects in order to bring them back into budget, which lead inevitably to delays.

- The most significant variances within the Capital Programme were also highlighted within the report.

Following on from the presentation of the report, Councillor Perkes asked about the slippage money and, if the Council could not easily renegotiate rising costs, etc. for capital projects, would these lead to delays or even cancellations of such projects. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the Council had a viable Housing Business Plan where all work had been costed in order to ensure they were affordable and regular adjustment was made to this to ensure its sustainability. At present, where Housing and Building Services had determined a capital budget, if the tenders came back in excess of that budget (due to inflationary costs on construction materials, etc.) and a re-evaluation of the costing of the project was needed, then a discussion would be held with the Housing Accountant. This would entail a review of the implications of those spending decisions and whether the project remained viable. If the project remained viable, then permission would be sought to spend more than had originally been planned. The ongoing cost of living rise could see some projects being delayed or even mothballed until funding became available. However, Members were assured that no capital projects were under critical threat at this time.

The Head of Housing and Building Services, in light of the comments made previously on the Revenue Closure of Accounts report, also referred to the capital expenditure and investment on the renewal of the Vale’s CCTV system and that the project was almost complete. In terms of revenue expenditure on running the CCTV system, he explained that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was working with Cardiff Council on a regional approach to CCTV. Furthermore, after discussions with the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office (PCC), the Council had received funding from the PCC for CCTV running and monitoring costs. The Vale of Glamorgan Council continued to work with Cardiff Council and the PCC to ensure continued funding of the CCTV service.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the year-end capital position for financial year 2021/22 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and the year-end capital position for financial year 2021/22.

246 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2022/23 (DEH) –

The performance report, presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, outlined the Council’s progress at quarter 1 (Q1) (1st April, 2022 to 30th June, 2022)

towards achieving its Annual Delivery Plan (2022/23) commitments as aligned to its Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, the key points of which were:

- All 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives were attributed a Green performance status at Q1 to reflect the good progress made to date in meeting the Council's Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2022/23.
- 94% (341 out of 362) 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, 1% (2) of planned activities were attributed an Amber status and 5% (19) of planned activities were attributed a Red status.
- Of the 128 performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 32 measures where a performance status was applicable. 56% (18) measures were attributed a Green performance status, 13% (4), Amber status and 31% (10), Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 96 measures, 22 of these related to those measures establishing baseline performance for 2022/23, 67 of those measures were monitored annually and for 7 of the measures no update was provided.
- In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, 94% (51 out of 54) were attributed a Green performance status, and 6% (3) were attributed a Red status. Of the 7 measures reported, 71% (5) were attributed a Green performance status and 29% (2) were attributed Red status.
- The Head of Housing and Building Services also referred to several achievements made in terms of performance of those services that fell under the remit of this Committee and which aligned to the four Well-being Objectives:
 - Work with and for our communities: the Council's ongoing work, engagement and support of the Penarth Food and Information Pods, whose importance had grown since the start of the cost-of-living crisis and which continued to be highly valued by the local tenants and the community.
 - Support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth: the formal opening of the One Stop Shop at Holton Road, Barry, which provided support to people with housing and related issues.
 - Support People at home and in their community: this included the work undertaken as part of the Housing Development Programme and the new 'Value in the Vale' scheme, which replaced and improved upon the work done previously by the Timebanking volunteer scheme.
 - Respect, enhance and enjoy our environment: this included the work undertaken on setting up a carbon reduction team within Building Services to complete Building Passports to all Council homes by 2026 as part of Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2 (WHQS2).
- The Head of Housing and Building Services made reference to the performance exceptions detailed within the report, and the current or future actions to be undertaken in order to resolve these. For example, work would be undertaken in quarter 2 in order to address the performance exception around maximising mobile working opportunities within Shared Regulatory Services (SRS). Similarly, the work undertaken to improve the percentage of

households successfully prevented from becoming homeless was mentioned, including the challenges involved (such as the WG homelessness policy and the resumption of Section 21 eviction notices to tenants from landlords) and the key work around the Council and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) new build programmes which had had a very positive impact in terms of providing additional accommodation and relieving the pressures within this area.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services was invited to speak, who referred to the important work that Housing staff had undertaken with the Food Pod and similar schemes in Penarth and elsewhere within the Vale of Glamorgan. He urged Committee Members to support such initiatives, due to their importance during a time of rising food prices, etc., and talked about the work undertaken by FareShare and similar organisations in conjunction with the Council and supermarkets in distributing surplus food to local communities and foodbank / food pod groups that required it. He reiterated that it was important for elected Members to get involved with these schemes due to the continued rise in inflation and costs for food and other staples for residents, and to visit the Food Pod in Penarth in order to see the work being done there.

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

RECOMMENDED –

(1) THAT the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2022/23 commitments, as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

(2) THAT 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.

Reason for recommendations

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