

No.

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2023.

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

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

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair); Councillors J. Aviet, G.M. Ball, S. Campbell, 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), G. Doyle, D. Dutch and H. Smith (Representatives from Tenant Working Group / Panel); Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and Welsh Language), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), E. Goodjohn, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 688 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”.

### 689 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor I. Buckley and V. John (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

### 690 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### 691 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor J. Aviet declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 – Capital Monitoring for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022. The nature of her interest was that she was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant. This was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council’s Constitution. Therefore, Councillor Aviet remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

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Councillor J. Aviet declared an interest in Agenda Item 11(i) – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53. The nature of her interest was that she was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant. This was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council's Constitution. Therefore, Councillor Aviet remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 – Capital Monitoring for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022. The nature of his interest was that he was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant. This was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council's Constitution. Therefore, Councillor Hennessy remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor W.A. Hennessy declared an interest in Agenda Item 11(i) – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53. The nature of his interest was that he was a Vale of Glamorgan Council tenant. This was a personal interest only and not prejudicial as per paragraph 19.3.3(b)(ii)(A) of the Council's Constitution. Therefore, Councillor Hennessy remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

## 692 GYPSY TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 was presented by the Operational Manager, Public Housing Services. The reference asked the Committee to consider the appended report and approve the Vale of Glamorgan Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2022 in order for it to be submitted to the Welsh Government (WG). This was part of a legal requirement for Local Authorities across Wales to undertake a gypsy and traveller accommodation assessment in order to identify the need for sites and pitches within their area for such communities. There was also a prescribed methodology for undertaking these assessments.

The GTAA was completed on the Council's behalf by Opinion Research Services (ORS) and the work was overseen by a steering group comprising Council staff and representatives from partner agencies. Unfortunately, it was not possible to get a member of the Gypsy / Traveller community to sit on the group.

The GTAA had identified a shortfall of nine pitches to 2026 and a further two pitches required by 2036. However, the occupants at Hayes Road, Sully had been omitted from the calculation of 'need' due to the fact they had occupied the current site for over ten years and the site was owned by the Council; therefore, it was not possible to take planning enforcement action. This was in line with the guidance document published by WG concerning undertaking GTAAs.

Both the Operational Manager, Public Housing Services and the Director of Place emphasised that it would be for the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP)

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to set out how the identified need for sites / pitches would be met. The GTAA would ultimately feed in to the RLDP and help to inform it.

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

The Vice-Chair asked for clarification on the level of engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller communities with regard to the GTAA, where, despite the best efforts of the Council and partners (such as Gypsy Traveller Wales) to use various avenues to engage with these groups, there had only been a limited response. It was confirmed that a number of Gypsies / Travellers responded to the GTAA process and completed surveys. A Group representing the Gypsy / Traveller community had acted as a liaison and made contact with occupants at the Hayes Road site. This resulted in responses from one household and a further response from other occupants declining to participate in the survey.

Councillor Carroll asked what consultation had been undertaken with the wider community and residents of the Vale of Glamorgan as part of the GTAA in order to ensure their participation, raise awareness and to help maintain good inter-community relations, as well as providing assurance to all parties. It was explained that the GTAA was a specific piece of work and methodology focusing on the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities. The Council had also undertaken broader housing needs studies in order to assess the needs of the wider population, but these did not always have the necessary 'reach' in order to engage with the Gypsy and Traveller community, hence the need for the GTAA. However, there had been some engagement with other stakeholders around the GTAA, such as Community Councils and there would be further consultation with residents following the identification of any potential sites for the Gypsy / Traveller communities as part of the new LDP. It was important to emphasise that the GTAA would not identify specific sites or proposals, but rather highlight the general need of the communities in question; specific sites, etc. would be looked at by the LDP. On Councillor Carroll's follow up query on what security was in place on Gypsy / Traveller sites, it was explained that the GTAA did not cover specific security arrangements and the Council did not manage such arrangements over the existing Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Vale. However, at the Hayes Road site, there was a gate in place at the entrance which was locked.

On Councillor Campbell's query on the use of 'Gypsy' as a term to identify some of the communities covered by the GTAA and her concern that this was impacting on the level of engagement with such groups, it was explained that this was not considered to be an offensive term to the communities who identified as Gypsy and was a prescribed term used by WG to identify such demographic groups and individuals. The key issue around engagement with these groups was their historic distrust of authority and the GTAA process, despite the efforts of the Council, partners and other interested parties to engage with these groups.

Councillor Perkes endorsed the report and the work of the GTAA in helping to calculate the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in order to feed into the LDP and any planning requirements needed in the future or retrospectively. She also stated that It was important to consider the discrimination that these

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communities faced in general, including housing, and the dangers of raising unwarranted fears and concerns among adjacent communities regarding their accommodation and siting in nearby areas.

The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources emphasised that the GTAA was a requirement of WG in order that the Vale had the right sort of facilities for its Gypsy and Traveller residents, as was done for the wider local communities, and to look at the expansion of existing sites in order to cater for those members of the Gypsy and Traveller communities approaching adulthood, amongst other needs. She was not aware of any issues concerning relations between these communities and other residents within the Vale of Glamorgan. It was important that Elected Members informed and reassured their constituents that processes such as the GTAA existed in order to address the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller communities in a fair and structured way.

Councillor Morgan emphasised the continued need for greater dialogue and engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller communities, as fellow residents of the Vale, and the GTAA was important in helping to ensure that their accommodation was appropriate and acceptable to them. The Operational Manager, Public Housing Services reiterated the numerous attempts to engage with these communities and the challenges in order to try to achieve a closer dialogue with them.

The Vice-Chair and Councillor Hanks stated that this positive and comprehensive report would help to start a wider consultation process (such as through the LDP) and it was important that the Committee approved the submission of the GTAA to WG.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference, report and assessment subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the report and the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment be noted and that the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment be submitted to Welsh Government.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the Cabinet reference, report, assessment and discussions at the meeting.

693 BUDGET 2023/24 FOR CONSULTATION AND FURTHER MTFP UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 was presented by the Finance Support Manager, in conjunction with the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer as part of the consultation process on these key areas. It was explained that the Local Government Settlement for 2023/24 had been more favourable than had been expected. The Welsh Government had directed £227m of its £644m funding to local government, with the Vale of Glamorgan's Aggregate External Finance

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(AEF) having increased by 8.9% (£16.6m). However, despite this, there still remained a funding gap that the Council would need to address.

The Council had worked at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) level to revise cost pressures down across Directorates and to submit the cost pressures or increased costs that they anticipated for future years. Such cost pressures included Pay and Energy pressures, as well as more specific cost pressures related to this Committee, i.e. the cost of B&B Homelessness Accommodation, the placement of Ukrainian refugees, CCTV and the Private Rented Co-ordinator Support to support new temporary accommodation property.

As part of the Budget Strategy, the Council had worked to identify a number of savings proposals over ten 'themes'. Savings proposals specific to the remit of this Committee included areas such as Pre-Tenancy Advisor and Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme (VATS) budgets through to the removal of means testing, increasing income for the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) budget.

The Council's reserves had also been reviewed in order to align with the Council's overall objectives and risks. Reserves had also been used to smooth the impact of homelessness and energy costs, stepped down over two years. Also, Housing and Building Services were putting together a Homelessness Strategy which would be looking at increasing capacity for homelessness over the next few years. As that provision came on stream, this would help to ease off some of the budgetary pressures. The reserves had also been streamlined which would help with their monitoring and reporting.

The timetable / next steps for 2023/24 Budget for Consultation and Further Medium Term Financial Plan Update were also outlined, from public and Scrutiny consultation in January / February through to the final proposals to go to Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

Following the presentation of the reference, Councillor Perkes asked about the impact of any potential lowering of energy costs by Ofgem on the Council's reserves. It was explained that the forecasting of energy cost pressures on the Council's budget and reserves had been challenging due to the volatility of energy prices recently, so any potential lowering of these costs would help to remove some of the pressures on the budget.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference and report subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report in relation to the 2023/24 Budget for Consultation and Further Medium Term Financial Plan Update be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

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

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694 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL – PROPOSED FEES AND CHARGES FOR 2023/2024 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 was presented by the Finance Support Manager to the Committee, which provided an overall, consolidated, view of the fees and charges for the whole Council, including Neighbourhood Services, Resources, Place, Learning and Skills and Social Services for the Committee's consideration. The majority of the proposed fees and charges reflected an increase of between 5% and 11%

The Committee were also informed that there were no specific fees and charges in the report that fell within their remit.

Next steps would include consultation with all five Scrutiny Committees in February through to final proposals to Cabinet at the end of the month.

Following the Finance Support Manager's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee.

On Councillor Morgan's queries concerning increased fees and charges on parking and cafes within the Vale, it was suggested that these should be raised at the relevant Scrutiny Committee (Environment and Regeneration).

The Vice-Chair wished to stress the need to not simply look at the percentage increase of such charges but also look at the wider impact and context and that such decisions had not been taken lightly or quickly but rather after a considerable amount of thought and discussion.

On Councillor Campbell's query on the rationale for the Committee having this reference on its agenda, it was explained that due to the Council wide nature of this report / reference, it was being sent to all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration and any comments to be forwarded on to Corporate Performance and Resources and then on to Cabinet.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference and report subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report in relation to Vale of Glamorgan Proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/2024 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

No.

695 DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2023/24 TO 2027/28  
(REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 was presented by the Finance Support Manager for the Committee's consideration.

Areas covered included the award by Welsh Government (WG) of £6.997m to the Council in terms of the General Capital Funding (GCF) settlement for 2023/24, which was a relatively small increase compared to last year and was less of an increase compared to the revenue equivalent. Also, £20m worth of capital across Wales in each year was to be provided to enable Authorities to respond to the joint priority of decarbonisation. The Council was awaiting further information from WG in relation to this to understand what it meant for the Council. WG had confirmed that the General Capital Funding would remain at the same level for 2024/25 but no further projections beyond this point had been given.

The Officer presented to the Committee the areas of anticipated spending over the 5-year programme, including those areas within the Committee's remit i.e. £167m for the Housing Improvement Programme. Total Capital Programme funding came to just over £98m, which comprised over £74m in various grant, S106, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding and just over £23m in borrowing.

A breakdown of the Council's Capital Programme New Schemes 2023/24 was also provided; of particular note to the Committee was the £85k match funding for the Empty Homes Scheme Grant, WG were providing a fairly healthy grant that the Council would need to find match funding towards that was included in the programme for next year.

The timetable and next steps for the Draft Capital Programme Proposals 2023/24 to 2027/28 were referred to, including public and Scrutiny consultation through to the drafting and submission of the final proposals to Full Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023.

Following the Officer's presentation, Councillor Morgan asked how residents went about engaging in the consultation process. The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer explained that the consultation could be found on the Council's website, as well as a number of press releases and social media posts being made to encourage public participation. There had been just under 600 responses to date.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference and report subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** both the Cabinet reference and appended Cabinet report in relation to the Draft Capital Programme Proposals 2023/24 to 2027/28 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

696 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2022 (DEH) -

The purpose of the report, as presented by the Finance Support Manager, was to advise Committee of the progress on the 2022/23 Capital Programme for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 within their remit.

The report provided an update on the progress of the Capital Programme for the above period and included any changes requested. There were two change requests within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee regarding a carry forward into the 2023/24 Capital Programme:

- Social Services - Salisbury Road No.91 (YOS) External Repairs Phase 2 - £15k; and
- Place - Penarth Renewal Area - £5k.

In terms of the use of Delegated Authority within the remit of the Committee, reference was made to the carry forward £4.544m into the 2023/24 Capital Programme under the Housing Improvement Programme 2022/23. This was as a result of delays in planning decisions and procurement and had been exacerbated by staff shortages.

The progress on the various significant capital schemes within the Committee's remit were also outlined, i.e. the 138 new Council homes that were due to be developed as part of the New Builds scheme, under the Housing Improvement Programme.

Scrutiny Committee having considered the report,

**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 within the remit of the Committee, as set out in the report, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the use of Emergency Powers within the remit of the Committee, as detailed in the attached Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.
- (4) T H A T the changes to the 2022/23 and future year's Capital Programme, within the remit of the committee, as set out in the report, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

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

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697 REVENUE MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 30TH NOVEMBER, 2022 (DEH) -

The purpose of the report, as presented by the Finance Support Manager, was to advise Committee of the progress relating to revenue expenditure for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2022.

The report detailed the revised budgets, once some transfers for Insurance and ICT Licences had been made. There had also been budget transfers within the Place Directorate, to reflect some restructuring.

The main headlines for the services within the remit of this Committee were outlined. This included the Youth Offending Service which was reporting an underspend of £100k due to staff vacancies in the service and additional income in 2022/23 to be transferred into the Social Services reserves at year end. Other services i.e. Public Sector Housing (HRA) and Regulatory Services, within the remit of the Committee were currently expected to outturn on budget. Pressures in respect of the unbudgeted element of the 2022/23 pay award, income and homelessness were highlighted, as well as the pressures concerning rental income for Cadoxton House and the Disabled Facilities Grant income.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report,

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the position with regard to the Authority's 2022/23 Revenue Budget be noted.
- (2) T H A T the arrangements to offset the projected overspends in 2022/23 as set out in the Report be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Amended Revenue budget for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

Reason for recommendations

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

698 3RD QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2022/23 AND UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2022/23 (CX) -

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report which advised Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2022/23.

With regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Recommendation Tracking October – December 2022 (Appendix C), these were all now completed. Also highlighted were the

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ongoing / uncompleted recommendation from 2021-22 concerning the DAARC Service, with a further update on the work to date i.e. a future presentation to the Committee by Atal y Fro on its work around survivor engagement.

Regarding the Forward Work Programme (Appendix D), the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer asked the Committee to allow an amendment to this, in that the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53 (reference from Cabinet) be moved from March 2023 to February 2023 in the Work Programme Schedule due to its inclusion on February's agenda as an urgent item.

Following the report, Councillor Hanks referred to Appendix C of the report and the recommendation concerning an update on the Vale's CCTV in the near future. It was explained that there had been an update on the roll out of CCTV at a recent meeting regarding the Update on the Community Safety Strategy Action Plan and there was a proposal for the Committee to visit the new CCTV (to be confirmed). The Principal Community Safety Officer would also be approached in order to establish when a further report / update on CCTV would be presented to the Committee.

On the Vice-Chair's query on the Forward Work Programme concerning the Community Investment Strategy scheduled for April 2023 and how she could access the previous iteration of this (November 2021), it was explained that a hyperlink to this item on the Council's website was included within the relevant part of the Forward Work Programme.

Scrutiny Committee having considered the report,

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A to C to the report be agreed.

(2) T H A T the Committee's updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2022/23 attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website, subject to the following amendment being made:

- The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53 (reference from Cabinet) be moved from March 2023 to February 2023 in the Work Programme Schedule.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.

(2) For public information.

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699 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

700 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2023/53 (REF) – **(Urgent by reason of the need that the matter needs to be considered by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee in a timely manner, in order for any views or comments from the Committee to be referred on to Cabinet for its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 prior to its submission to Full Council on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 for the Plan's approval and subsequent send off to Welsh Government by 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2023)**

The reference from Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2023 was presented by the Operational Manager – Building Services.

The Operational Manager explained that the timetable for turning around the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53 was extremely tight. The guidance from Welsh Government (WG) on this had only become available just before Christmas 2022 and the Plan had to be submitted to WG by the end of March 2023.

The Operational Manager stated that the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53 set out the considerable 30-year investment program for the Council's housing stock and how this programme would be implemented and maintained in conjunction with the Council's obligations under the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). It also provided consideration on the investment needed to respond to climate change / carbon reduction regarding the Council's housing stock (including the updating of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) on all Council properties), new builds and the expansion of Council housing stock as well as regeneration, whilst managing the level of debt within the HRA.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the Cabinet reference and report subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2023/53 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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