

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 19th April, 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, I.R. Buckley, S. Campbell, G.D.D. Carroll, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy 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 C.P. Franks, W. Gilligan, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

902 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.”

903 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor M.J.G. Morgan and V. John (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

904 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 8th March, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

905 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

906 PRESENTATION: ATAL Y FRO: SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT CONCERNING DOMESTIC ABUSE –

The presentation was given to the Committee by the Chief Executive and the Operations Manager from Atal y Fro, who outlined the work of this charitable organisation, which supported survivors of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), which included:

- An outline of the values, mission and purpose of the charity. Atal y Fro was primarily focused on female survivors but acknowledged that there were also male survivors of domestic abuse and violence as well; the charity worked with regional partners to ensure that male survivors were also able to access tailored support services.
- Atal y Fro's approach was trauma informed, strengths based, needs led and risk assured, in order to engage effectively with survivors, give them hope and support them to move on, with this approach embedded across the whole of Atal y Fro's services.
- The services provided by Atal y Fro were outlined, ranging from its helpline as the first point of contact for survivors, where a domestic abuse practitioner would have an initial conversation in order to identify risk and needs as well as any immediate issues, through to one-to-one support for survivors via the Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART) and support provided to children and young people who had witnessed or experienced high levels of domestic abuse within the home or had entered their own abusive relationships.
- Services were tailored to the individual needs of the survivor with the aim for the same support worker to be involved throughout; thereby ensuring a 'one-story, one-time' approach.
- Support also came through the provision of secure accommodation, both in a communal refuge and a dispersed property setting, as well as ongoing help via the Vale Women's Wellbeing Centre.
- A new project had been started in conjunction with Cyfannol Women's Aid and the South Wales and Gwent Police Crime Commissioners to help survivors of abuse perpetrated by serving Police Officers.
- Over the last twelve months Atal y Fro had supported almost 1,000 adults, introduced a new case management system to highlight areas of development as well as areas of good practice, and had invested in and upskilled its workforce, as well as its work to help deliver 'Ask and Act' within the region.
- Challenges ahead lay around recruitment, capacity, finances and Atal y Fro's current location and facilities, whilst it strived to maintain and develop high quality VAWDASV/aftercare services.

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

- On the Chair's and Vice-Chair's query about exploring the possibility of training for Elected Members to help them spot the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), and how to signpost victims to the relevant help and support, it was confirmed that this would be something that Atal y Fro could provide following any necessary discussions with the relevant Council Officers.

- On Councillor Aviet's query around ongoing support and aftercare for survivors of VAWDASV, it was explained that continued support and aftercare was provided to survivors in order to deal with their trauma and to continue with the healing and recovery process. The aim was to develop and to extend this outreach and aftercare provided by Atal y Fro. On the Councillor's follow up question regarding keeping survivor families together in refuge type accommodation, particularly for those with male children over 16-years old, it was explained that self-contained units and the 'dispersed' accommodation scheme were used to help house larger families and those with male children and young people.
- On Councillor Buckley's comment on the importance Atal y Fro placed in its VAWDASV staff as its most valuable asset and on the need to regularly check up on their wellbeing, it was explained that the charity did its utmost to support staff, who were extremely dedicated to their roles, including providing various benefits to staff, a 35-hour week and a robust supervision policy entailing ease of access for staff to managers and supervisors in terms of support, etc., due to their handling of traumatic cases on a daily basis. On the Councillor's follow up question regarding addressing younger persons who had been or potentially could be perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, in order to break the cycle of behaviour and abuse, this was something that Atal y Fro would be addressing, with partners (i.e. the Youth Offending Service (YOS)) to provide support to young people around this and to have honest conversations with them regarding VAWDASV, including reaching out to schools via group programmes to be rolled out over the next 12 months.
- On the Vice-Chair's query on whether the new project around survivors of VAWDASV perpetrated by Police Officers would also cover historic incidents, the project was still in its infancy and work was still being undertaken in terms of eligibility and support. The focus at this time would be on recent survivors of VAWDASV, but with the aim to extend this in future.
- Councillor Perkes asked about the makeup of the funding Atal y Fro received i.e. whether this was yearly or over a longer period of time. It was explained that the charity was well supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Council, through the Housing Support Grant, as well as funding via the local Police and Crime Commissioners and the Safer Vale Partnership. This included a five-year funding stream, awarded in 2021 to help Atal y Fro's Response Team. Aftercare Services were less well funded and relied on more grant-based funding. This was area that the charity would be looking to improve upon.
- The Head of Housing and Building Services wished to add that the Council welcomed the data collection undertaken by Atal y Fro which provided a clear evidence base and helped to promote its services to Elected Members and others.
- On the improvement of accommodation and facilities for Atal y Fro and its services, there had been discussions between the charity and the Council's Principal Community Safety Officer, in conjunction with the Estates Team, in order to look at providing larger, improved, accommodation from Council assets to house Atal y Fro in order to deliver a wider range of services connected with VAWDASV and for a larger wellbeing centre for survivors.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the presentation regarding Atal y Fro: Survivor Engagement Concerning Domestic Abuse be noted.
- (2) T H A T Officers explore with Atal y Fro further training opportunities in order to raise awareness with Elected Members to help spot the signs of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV), and how to signpost victims to the relevant help and support.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order to raise awareness among Elected Members around violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

907 PRESENTATION: CCTV UPDATE –

The presentation was given to the Committee by the Council's Principal Community Safety Officer in conjunction with the Head of Housing and Building Services on the upgrading of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's CCTV system. Key areas highlighted to the Committee included:

- The background to the CCTV system, from the initial installation of CCTV in 1998 via Home Office funding, through to the eventual challenges faced with aging equipment, critical failures and growing difficulties to repair and maintain the existing CCTV system in recent years.
- Subsequently, a strategic review was undertaken which led to Cabinet agreement in 2020 to fund the capital replacement of the cameras, in conjunction with a search for partners willing to contribute to ongoing revenue costs. This led to securing funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner in South Wales (plus additional investment from Welsh Government (WG)) to develop a regional approach to CCTV monitoring that would help bring the Vale's CCTV into the 21st Century.
- The new CCTV system (which utilised the new 'Synergy' software) would offer a more 'dynamic, integrated and higher quality monitoring system which would help identify crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) 'hotspot' areas as well as assist safeguarding, including the integration and use of both 'deployable' cameras and their static counterparts across the Vale, in order to help support the Council, Police and partners. It would also allow quick and easy access to the CCTV and the review of footage retrospectively.
- Community Safety staff were also trained to become CCTV operators to ensure a quicker response.
- The CCTV upgrade was nearing completion, despite challenges in getting the fibre connections installed, with the replacement of analogue by HD/digital cameras. The process was expected to be complete by the Summer.

- As part of this, the effectiveness and success of the new CCTV system would be incorporated into the Community Safety Highlight Report in order to raise awareness with local residents and communities, help showcase their work and build public confidence.
- There would be an ongoing review of the CCTV system, including a new performance framework, to ensure that the full benefits of this new system could be fully realised, i.e. located in the right place, to develop links with town centres and the late night economy, etc.
- The new CCTV system was already making a positive impact within the Vale, with a significant number of requests since October 2022 for CCTV footage regarding instances of burglary, ASB, welfare and criminal damage, resulting in police involvement and attendance.
- Arrangements would be made for Members to visit the new CCTV control room in Cardiff.
- Examples of the quality of the new CCTV cameras were demonstrated to the Committee, at various sites in the Vale.

Following the presentation:

- The Chair welcomed Mr. Stuart Burnell, a public speaker and Vice-Chair of the Holton Road Traders Association, who put forward his concerns around the CCTV system, which although extremely welcome in terms of addressing crime and ASB concerns for local traders, was felt to be not working as effectively as it should and therefore not ‘value for money’ in that it did not seem to be catching all instances of vandalism and burglary that were impacting local shops, i.e. the CCTV was not pointing in the right direction when some of these crimes occurred and despite being manned 24/7. It was felt that, due to the CCTV being monitored in Cardiff, they may not have the local knowledge necessary to have the CCTV monitoring the relevant spots.
- In response to Mr. Burnell’s comments, the Head of Housing and Building Services explained that CCTV could not cover everything at the same time, and there were limits to the numbers of CCTVs that could be installed and deployed, but it was important that CCTV monitoring be intelligence-led and a monitoring station had been located at Barry Police Station in order to have that mix of strategic oversight and local knowledge, plus a speedy response from the local Police. Also, the Council with partners, would be looking at the root causes of ASB and related criminality in order to undertake preventative work. The Principal Community Safety Officer wished to reassure the Committee and Vale residents that CCTV footage was available for many of the incidents mentioned by Mr. Burnell, as well as for other similar activities elsewhere in the Vale. CCTV was being used to build intelligence on these activities and operators were trawling through previous footage as part of this. In tandem with this approach, stronger links were being forged with traders and town centres in the Vale as well as stronger communications with victims.
- On Councillor Buckley’s query around the use of ‘dummy’ CCTV cameras to help increase the deterrent capability of the real cameras, it was explained that these could lead to public expectations that all the cameras were able to pick up ASB and criminal activities which would subsequently be dashed if they were only dummy cameras, leading to the public losing faith in the CCTV system and removing the dummy cameras’ deterrence factor. There was also

the legal requirement to inform the public of the location of the CCTV cameras and ensure their visibility.

- Councillor Carroll commented on the deterrence value of CCTV in helping to prevent crime, ASB and other disorderly behaviour, i.e. vandalism, litter, dog fouling, etc. which benefitted the Council via less costs in any follow up activities such as replacing damaged bins and cleaning up, as well as the intelligence and detection benefits it brought to South Wales Police. On his query around quantifying the benefits of CCTV to the Council, it was explained that this was difficult to quantify, with there being more obvious direct benefits to the Police in detecting serious crime, etc. However, with the deployment of a Council Enforcement Team, CCTV would help them to be proactive in dealing with neighbourhood and environmentally related activities and issues, bringing together operational, front-line, services with a more strategic overview.
- On the Vice-Chair's query around strengthening communications with victims following ASB and crime, a more proactive approach would be pursued in order to explain to the public what the Council, Police and partners were doing in order to deal with these issues, and the benefits of CCTV in achieving this, i.e. the work undertaken with the Youth Offending Service (YOS), Police and schools to identify young persons involved in the recent ASB and vandalism at Holton Road Barry and to address their behaviours, as well as supporting the local community and ensuring safe spaces for all.
- Councillor Perkes commented on the improvement and efficacy of the new CCTV system (particularly the use of re-deployable cameras) and suggested that Elected Members have the opportunity to visit the new CCTV centre in Cardiff.
- H. Smith (a Tenant Representative) asked about the range and coverage of the fixed CCTV cameras (including any blind spots); the example of Holton Road was given where the current fixed CCTV coverage included virtually the whole length of the road, with very few blind spots and with the pre-programmed ability for the cameras to all be brought up in a cluster.
- Councillor Hanks asked that the presentation be referred to the next meeting of the Community Liaison Committee. This would help to raise awareness of the benefits of the new and improved CCTV system and increase engagement and transparency with Elected Members and Vale residents.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the presentation on the CCTV Update be noted.
- (2) T H A T the presentation be referred to the next meeting of the Community Liaison Committee for their information.

Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) To apprise the Community Liaison Committee.

908 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT (DSS) –

The report, presented by the Youth Offending Service Manager, brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Committee the six months performance report for the Youth Offending Service (YOS) for the period April 2022 – September 2022. The report was designed to enable Elected Members to have effective oversight of the performance of the YOS, through various performance indicators, including national, devolved and local indicators, etc.

Key areas highlighted to the Committee included:

- In terms of key performance metrics, there had been a number of positive results, i.e.
 - A 36.8% decrease in first time entrants (FTE) compared to the same period last year based on the rate per 100,000 for the Vale.
 - There had also been, when comparing performance against other areas, a 2.5% reduction across South Wales and a 4.5% reduction across Wales and a reduction of 16.5% across the Youth Justice Service (YJS) family (which consisted of Stockport, Warwickshire, Solihull, North Somerset, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Essex, Staffordshire, York, and East Riding of Yorkshire).
 - The data demonstrated that 5 of the 38 young people tracked had re-offended in the 9 months committing a total of 10 offences. This equated to a re-offending percentage of 28.5% with 1.66 re-offences per re-offender.
 - No children had been sentenced to custody, which remained a key aim of the Youth Justice Board to reduce the number of children entering custody and in tandem with the use of diversionary and restorative justice, community based, measures instead as effective, rigorous and robust alternatives.
- Regarding restorative justice, there were 20 interventions that closed in the period April – September 2022 which related to 27 identified victims from all linked offences to the interventions. Victim officers attempted to contact all victims and were successful in receiving a response from 24 of the identified victims. Engagement in restorative justice was voluntary on the part of both the victim and the child/young person. Due to the impact of COVID-19, etc. there had been a national and local review/audit of these measures and as part of service development, which was already leading to positive results, such as increased victim feedback, greater face to face victim engagement and the building up of 'best practice'.
- YOS had successfully recruited into an additional post of Turnaround Support Practitioner to increase capacity and improve outcomes for children about to enter the youth justice system.
- Following on from His Majesty's Inspection of Probation (HMIP) who inspected the YOS service in April 2022, they evaluated the Vale YOS as 'good' and having the right ingredients for success to enable YOS to progress

in terms of providing an outstanding service to children. YOS were also making significant progress in implementing the HMIP recommendations.

- Further changes to Performance Indicators and tackling key issues going forward were outlined, i.e. ensuring the fair and proportionate treatment of children and young persons from minority backgrounds and continuing to build on the strong reparative and diversionary approach undertaken locally i.e. via strong engagement with communities in environmental and other restorative activities, i.e. offender reparation via litter picking and graffiti removal in the community, where victims did not want a direct reparation.

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

- On Councillor Hanks' query concerning the remaining number of vacancies at the YOS, it was explained that there were currently two vacancies, in specialist roles, which would be shortly going out to advert. The delay in recruitment for these lay with internal processes and not in a lack of external interest. There had also been significant recruitment of volunteers and community members as support for YOS activities.
- Councillor Aviet asked about the possibility of YOS supporting litter picking, graffiti removal and similar activities in her ward. It was explained that YOS, though its Reparation Officer(s) would be able to help arrange this, and the Councillor would be contacted following the meeting.
- The Vice-Chair suggested, which was endorsed by the Committee and the YOS Manager, that it would be beneficial for the report to be shared with all Elected Members, in order to raise awareness and greater understanding of the work that the YOS undertook, particularly around preventative and diversionary measures, and to encourage greater engagement with the YOS team.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Youth Offending Service (YOS) Mid-Year Performance Report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the report be shared with all Elected Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order to raise awareness and a deeper understanding of the work that the YOS undertake, particularly around preventative and diversionary measures, and to encourage greater engagement with the YOS.