

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 12th June, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair in the Chair); Councillors J. Aviet, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, S. Lloyd-Selby and M.J.G. Morgan.

Also present: Councillors A. Asbrey, C.P. Franks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement).

110 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Vice-Chair in 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”.

111 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors A.M. Collins (Chair), G.M. Ball and H.M. Payne; G. Doyle and D. Dutch (Representatives from Tenant Working Group / Panel) and C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale).

112 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 15th May, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

113 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

114 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2030, PANEL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6th June, 2024 was presented by the Director of Environment and Housing, the purpose of which was to outline, in order for the Committee to consider and comment on, the new Corporate Plan for 2025-2030,

arrangements and proposed scope for the Panel Performance Assessment and to present the Vale of Glamorgan Annual Performance Calendar for 2024/25. The report also outlined the key findings and learning from the review of last year's Annual Self-Assessment approach and made proposals to further enhance the process in readiness for the 2023/24 self-assessment.

The report was broken down into several key themes, which included:

- Corporate Plan 2025-30 Development.
- Panel Performance Assessment (PPA).
- Proposals for the 2023/24 Annual Self-Assessment.
- Elected Member Engagement.
- The Annual Performance Calendar.

Following the presentation of each of these themes, a number of comments, queries and recommendations were provided by the Committee.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby, on the Corporate Plan, asked whether the development of the Plan included engagement on the draft well-being objectives and it would also be helpful to understand who was actually being engaged in relation to those. In response, the Director explained that these were developed internally, as well as informed by the Public Service Board. The proposal was to get a structure for the plan in place and then to fully engage with Elected Members and to circulate the document for full consultation later in the process. One thing that was clear about this whole process and timetable was that the Council wanted as much input as possible, particularly from Elected Members, to make sure that they had their voices heard but also, just as important, for feedback from the members of the public. Initially the aim was to put a structure together, in order to give something to people to comment on, with the intention to get as much comment and detail as possible over the duration of the time it took to put the Plan into its final stage.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair asked, in relation to engagement, the resident survey Let's Talk and the data / results from it, whether the Council would be taking on board the lessons learned from it, particularly with regard to the profiling of individuals from it in terms of younger and older persons and ensure that their voices were properly heard through a more 'intergenerational' approach. In response, the Director explained that every effort would be made to engage more with residents of all generations in order to ensure that they had a full and proper input into the developing the Plan as part of the consultation. This would be clearly evidenced in order to address the public's concerns that their views were not being sufficiently listened to and which had been reflected in the residents' recent survey. This had been subsequently identified by the Senior Management Team and the wider Council as a key area to be actively addressed going forward as part of the Corporate Plan.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair also referred to the use of easy to read and plain language formats for the Corporate Plan and related documents, and to ensure that there was a mechanism in place so that the terminology used for such documents was appropriate for members of the public to fully understand and appreciate what the Corporate Plan was about. In response, the Director explained that the Senior

Management Team had met with the officers of the Future Generations Office a few months ago in order to test and sound out the objectives and ideas which formed part of the Plan (i.e. to ensure that they were clearly understandable to residents) and the Council also had clear speaking and information policies to disseminate information to residents in an easy to read format. The Council was trying to ensure that every objective was easily understood, properly able to be measured and evidenced as part of the Plan and as a public facing document which would be readily accessible and could be easily read and understood by residents.

Councillor Hennessy highlighted that many older residents may not have access to laptops and similar devices and so could not engage or access the relevant documents around the Plan, etc. digitally and asked if residents could receive hard copies of this documentation if needed. The Director stated that hard copies could be provided, and similarly bilingual copies of the documentation could also be shared with residents via the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Contact Centre.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby commented on the national guidance that had been issued on preparing the scope for the Panel Performance Assessment, and commended the Council's decision to engage with that external scrutiny which would be extremely beneficial by providing an outside, different perspective on the Council's plans and objectives in conjunction with resident feedback. The Director explained that Council officers went through a selection process in order to be part of these reviews, similar to a job application which ensured that the most suitable officers were chosen and whose skills and experience could best inform this process. The Panel would consist of senior officers, Directors and Chief Executives from a variety of Welsh Local Authorities and would help to provide a learning and development framework or process in order that the Council could match the Corporate Plan to residents' needs and achieve the best outcomes for them more effectively. The Chair added that this response would help to reassure both Elected Members and residents of the Vale of Glamorgan that the selection process for Council officers to sit on the Panel was robust enough.

Councillor Lloyd-Selby referred to the performance timetable and that the Council were planning the engagement on the self-assessment findings with staff, public and other key stakeholders in August. She was concerned that August would be a time when many staff with childcare responsibilities would take leave and members of the public were often away or busy with childcare and other responsibilities. She asked what measures would be taken by the Council to ensure that the engagement was effective and meaningful given the risk of that particular month. The Director explained that due to the amount of work included in the performance calendar, both July and August, traditionally 'holiday' months, had to be included. It was stressed that the whole month of August would be used for the engagement however, which would ensure that the engagement process would subsequently pick up people who may be taking a two week break within that period. However, the Councillor's comments would be taken on board and efforts would be made to see if the engagement period could be extended further. The Councillor added whether the Council could proactively monitor the engagement process to ensure that it was effective, meaningful and that participation levels were sufficiently high. Increasing the length of the engagement period would assist in this. The Director stressed that

the Council was looking to engage with residents, etc. better and would look to lengthen the consultation period wherever possible.

The Vice-Chair in the Chair asked for a more detailed explanation on what this engagement process was, and whether the Council would have an indication and the relevant data on the engagement response rate at the midpoint of August in order to determine whether the Council needed to consider extending the timeline for consultation, i.e. if the rate of engagement was low. In response, the Director agreed that levels of engagement needed to be monitored and that it would be useful for Members to be provided with further details concerning the consultation process and the engagement plan for the Annual Self-Assessment. Although a significant part of this process would be undertaken digitally, non-digital forms of engagement would also be utilised to ensure maximum engagement with residents and others.

There being no further questions, Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Chief Executive's Office be asked to provide further details concerning the consultation process and the engagement plan for the Annual Self-Assessment to this Committee and that a commitment be made to ensure that those groups that cannot engage digitally in this process be consulted via alternative means, such as the provision of hard copies of the relevant documentation.

(2) T H A T Cabinet consider the Committee's suggestion that as part of the consultation process for the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Self-Assessment the response rate is monitored. Should it become apparent midway in this process that the consultation response rates are relatively low, consideration should be given to extend the consultation period if required and that this should also be shared with those Council Officers with the relevant delegated powers in order to implement this extension.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure that all residents, stakeholders, etc. are properly engaged and have the opportunity to be part of the consultation process.

(2) To ensure that Cabinet has the opportunity to consider the Committee's recommendation as part of its consideration of the report and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in this process as well as ensuring that the consultation is sufficiently robust and effective.