

**JOINT PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(COMBINED MEETING OF START WELL, LIVE WELL, PLACE AND
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEES)**

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 16th December, 2025.

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

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

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, J. Aviet, G.D.D. Carroll, C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, C.P. Franks, E. Goodjohn, E.J. Goodjohn, S.M. Hanks, N.P. Hodges, M.J. Hooper, Dr. I.J. Johnson, S. Lloyd-Selby, J.M. Norman, H.M. Payne, J. Protheroe, C. Stallard, N.C. Thomas and S.T. Wiliam.

Also Present: Councillors B.E. Brooks (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places), L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), C.M. Cowpe, N.B. Marshallsea, S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

524 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”.

525 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair), G.M. Ball, R. Birch, G. Bruce, W.A. Hennessy, C. Iannucci-Williams and S. Sivagnanam.

526 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

527 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

528 VALE 2030 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 2 2025/26 (CX) –

The performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 2 (1st April to 30th September, 2025) towards achieving its Year 1 commitments as aligned to Vale 2030.

Appendix A to the report provided a position statement on the Council's performance mid-way through the year in delivering its annual commitments for 2025/26 as aligned to the five well-being objectives in Vale 2030. It detailed where the Council was doing well, where it was not doing so well, the challenges it was facing in delivering on its commitments and identified areas of further focus.

This was the first mid-year performance report established as part of the revised performance arrangements aligned to Vale 2030.

A new performance report format had been developed which would enable Members to holistically review performance in meeting the Council's Vale 2030 commitments through the lens of the three annual self-assessment questions, which were:

- How well was the Council performing?
- How well was the Council using its resources? and
- How effective was the Council's governance?

As part of developing its approach to support performance reporting, a new Power BI performance dashboard had also been produced, this was also provided as a link in Appendix A to enable Members to view and explore more detailed contextual information including performance commentary for measures and actions should they wish to examine this level of detail. The dashboard would be subject to ongoing refinement informed by the views of officer colleagues and elected Members throughout the year.

The Chief Executive shared that the Council was making good progress across all five well-being objectives but there were challenges. He reflected that the Council was responding to the Performance Panel Assessment and Future Generations Report, but there had been emphasis upon preventative work such as Real Living Wage Accreditation, the development of the Food Strategy and banning of advertising of HFSS food. He further noted that 98% of actions within the Corporate Plan were marked as being Green, whilst a significant number of measures not being applicable at the mid-year point. He identified several measures with a Red status, including fixed term exclusions, persistent absence, non-domestic building carbon emissions, affordable housing and the average days to process new benefit claims. The Chief Executive considered each Well-being objective from the Council's Corporate Plan and shared a number of achievements and challenges.

Councilor Dr. Johnson noted that due to the way the meeting was taking place bringing together multiple Committees rather than individual Committees looking at areas thoroughly, the scope of the meeting was fairly broad, but noted the points which worried residents, including the financial budget of schools, including the reasons for these challenges and the potential impacts whilst he further noted there

was an approximate 10% reduction in primary school place uptake, which could have an impact to areas where there is deprivation. He also noted that the waiting times for the contact centre were a cause for concern and welcomed the Council's move to being a Real Living Wage employee. He further considered that there were 145 measures presented, with no RAG rating for 119 (82%), which made it difficult to understand performance, and that there were challenges with targets provided being removed from reality including secondary school exclusions and carbon emissions. He further sought to understand what Additional Learning Needs (ALN) provision was available through Welsh medium and how the attendance figure was Amber not Red as it was far from the target.

The Director of Learning and Skills responded that there was a national response to the challenge of exclusions, including the arrangement of a summit by Welsh Government, meaning that the Council was working collaboratively. She shared that there was a working group of secondary schools as they recognised this was a growing problem with varying causes as this was a problem they were all facing and hoped to share greater detail when available. She noted that there had been discussions surrounding the provision of ALN in Welsh Medium secondary school and hoped that the provision would be opened soon. She also stated that attendance was increasing to near pre-pandemic levels in Primary schools, but this was proving more difficult in secondary schools, but noted there were differences between schools, and they were collaborating with neighboring Authorities to understand how they could improve moving forward.

The Head of Digital noted that the issue of customer communication needed to be looked at holistically and referenced several areas such as the development of the Customer Charter and simplification of language to improve customer understanding. She shared that there was a high amount of attrition within the contact centre, with a number of colleagues moving to positions within the wider Council, which did result in gaps in the workforce which were difficult to manage as the breadth of the integrated contact centre meant it was a long process to develop knowledge in the work of the Council. She noted that she wanted to reduce the average speed of answer, and that she was exploring the operating model and technology, including the careful use of artificial intelligence, to help improve performance.

The Director of Corporate Resources agreed that a larger proportion of measures would have statuses moving forward, but that this was driven by this being the first year of the Council's new Corporate Plan, and that there should be a reduction in measures which were annual or not reportable, as Senior Leadership Team had been asked to consider more appropriate measures where progress could be monitored more regularly. He further shared that Carbon reporting was a challenge in monitoring as there had been several changes including how the Council collected data and National methodology, which should stabilise over time. He shared that there had been a reduction in gas, positive increase in electricity and that work needed to be done surrounding water usage.

Councilor Franks shared that they were worried about the robustness of the Council's budget, particularly across schools, where there was a £11m deficit and ten schools received informal notice. He queried what would be the impact to pupils

of schools attempting to balance budgets and sought to understand the extent and effectiveness of support being provided to schools, and how non-recoverable deficits would be covered. He further shared that roads were in a declining state, alongside many lampposts being near the end of their life.

The Chief Executive responded that schools were responsible for their own individual budgets. He shared that informal warning notices had been issued to seven schools who the Council/Directorate? had worked with for a considerable amount of time, where there were no immediate signs of financial recovery and a very real risk to the financial sustainability of the organisation. He further noted that non-recoverable debt for schools would be the responsibility of the wider Council, and that there was a large variation across schools which needed to be explored. He reflected that the condition of roads and lampposts was due to the need to focus spending on critical areas as discussed during the meeting.

The Director of Learning and Skills added that training had been provided to Governors who were responsible alongside Headteachers for managing resources, as they were best placed to decide how budgets were managed.

The Leader shared that the schools' situation was a similar picture nationally with varying approaches and outlined other ways schools were supported including contract management, and development of in-house services. She shared that it was very worrying that there were discrepancies between schools in similar demographics, and that schools needed to be supported to deliver outcomes. She further noted that there had been significant investment in road infrastructure which should start to be visible soon.

Councilor Lloyd-Selby queried the missed 30-day target for Council Tax claims for benefits recipients, and that whilst the Council allowed claims to be backdated for 6 months, this could lead to increased hardship for people and sought to understand what steps were being taken to improve this area. The Director of Corporate Resources shared that this area was being monitored closely, that there was a backlog of claims being worked through, and that there was a budget pressure being put forward to try and increase staff in team, alongside additional temporary resources and looking at how processes could be more efficient,

Councilor Goodjohn queried what the longer-term plan was for Youth Services as there was a reliance on grant funding in this area, and how Community Focused Schools were going to be protected in supporting reducing poverty given the financial situation. He also sought to understand if there were plans to increase funding for Food Vale and Warm Spaces, to scale up the affordable homes programme and what plans were in place to support vulnerable communities in accessing buses.

The Director of Corporate Resources shared that further information surrounding Youth Services would be put forward as part of the upcoming budget work, and that there were plans to ramp up funding for projects related to food insecurity, with resources targeted in the most effective and efficient way possible in collaboration with partners such as Health. He further noted that the Council's website had been updated with a section detailing warm hubs and cost of living support, there had

been increased funding for Warm Spaces alongside increased support to Vale Food Bank and that would be a report to Cabinet outlining all this work in January.

The Chief Executive shared that there were plans to increase the scale of housing in partnership with Lovells, which would hopefully reduce the need for the use of hotel and B&B accommodation. He further noted that public transport, including buses, was of importance as it was critical for people to access services, particularly in rural areas, and the Council would be looking to expand Green Links services. He acknowledged the importance of Youth Services in supporting Vale 2030, that despite grant funding coming to an end, the Council would seek to hopefully protect the service, and that community focused work was vital and funding was targeted, not coming out of a school's mainstream budget.

Councilor Perkes agreed around the need for upscaling housing in partnership with Lovells and Cardiff Council to support people in the future, and that they were ambitious in plans to provide for people in the future.

Councilor William sought to understand what plans were on the horizon to increase the number of people transitioning to Welsh secondary education and wanted to understand the progress being made in developing an immersion unit. The Director of Learning and Skills responded they were collaborating with the secondary school alongside primary schools to understand what reasons were, including Additional Learning Needs, with many parents moving their children due to being nervous around potentially insufficient provision, which they were currently further developing. She also shared that there was a lot of collaboration between secondary and primary Schools who had developed good working relationships.

Councilor Protheroe felt there should be a procurement officer dedicated to schools to support collaborative spending and identified saving and requested that the Learning and Skills Director bring a report to Resources Scrutiny Committee highlighting the savings that had been realised and collaborative contracts that had been put in place by the school's procurement officer since they were appointed. She also noted the role of transport which impacted the rural community to meet the community's needs and recommended that the Council's review of Community Transport and the G1 Service take place with Community Councils' and residents' input, so the Council could co-design the service to meet the needs of both young and old residents living in the rural vale.

The Chief Executive shared that any opportunities to co-design would be welcomed, and the Director of Learning and Skills noted that through work with business managers schools had identified opportunities for economies of scale, savings and rationalisation.

The Director of Corporate Resources presented the section considering the use of resources, which focused upon people, finances, Reshaping, assets, engagement and partnership working through the lenses of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity. He shared that work was underway to finalise the People Strategy, and staff continued to be engaged through development sessions. He noted that progress was being made as part of office rationalisation, that there several community asset transfers being completed, there was a big focus upon digital

transformation and a new target operating model alongside the Let's Talk survey being finalised with 2,700 responses and results due to be available imminently.

Councillor Dr. Johnson queried the engagement results included in the reporting such as the public attitudes to Council, percentage who agreed that the Council was working for the good of local people and percentage who agreed that the Council was getting to grips with the Climate Crisis, as to where the information came from and how this could be compared to previous years, to which the Director of Corporate Resources responded that these were taken from the previous Let's Talk Life in the Vale survey and would be able to be compared as the questions had been asked again. He noted that this was statistically valid and that survey approach supported by Data Cymru had been undertaken by other Councils, with the opportunity to benchmark when information was available.

Councillor Dr. Johnson indicated he hoped that there would be an increase in the positive responses to survey questions, and that due to this being a quantitative survey, he would be interested to see the variation between different demographics, with this triangulated alongside qualitative information provided from other areas such as focus groups. He also reflected that during the self-assessment session there was a gap between how the Council perceived its performance and how the public perceived it, which needed to be addressed.

The Director of Corporate Resources agreed around the need for further triangulation and reflected that the Annual Director's of Social Services Report reported higher satisfaction with the Council, and that during the Let's Talk Life in the Vale survey, they did engage with different forums and groups to understand their views. He further added that it was important to bring service user and resident voice in reporting against the self-assessment, a statutory process.

The Leader reflected that the question was the same as at the start of this session, considering whether it was better to bring people together to consider something or to be considered in specific groups. She reflected that this was likely a situation where the Council was being judged against what people thought it should deliver against what the Council did deliver through an agreed budget, which would be a continuing discussion with residents and that it's all subjective in terms of views, and that people's perceptions were what the Council had to work with. She noted the need to increase engagement and discussions with residents, and detailed positive engagement during the soft plastic trial, which led to others asking when it would be implemented in their area.

Councillor Thomas queried if it was possible to triangulate if respondents to the survey were users who had direct experience of the Council's services, as they may have a different view which may be more accurate.

The Director of Corporate Resources responded that there were different perspectives asked for in the survey to try and look at both sides, and that he would seek to consider this information alongside other datasets to make comparisons.

Councillor Goodjohn asked where the Brilliant Basics Charter would be rolled out next, and what lessons had been learned to date, to which the Director of Corporate

Resources responded it had now been launched across the Council and that it had been developed through Management Development Sessions, who had in turn been given the tools and permission to deliver Brilliant Basics. He further noted that work was being undertaken with benefits and housing, making sure information was clear and accessible, and that case studies and good news stories were being shared through communication channels.

The Chief Executive presented how effective the Council felt its governance was, drawing out that 94% of internal audit reports were with an opinion of either substantial or reasonable assurance, and that external audit was monitored via a regulatory tracker, with 19 local and national actions, with 18 actions being on track. He shared that there were 12 Corporate Risks, with the highest risk being Additional Learning Needs with others also scoring highly. He further reflected that Members were aware of reviewing Scrutiny since the Performance Panel Assessment, including the introduction of a Scrutiny hub, new meeting formats and noted the external audit scheduled for next year.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Q2 performance report and progress towards achieving the Year 1 commitments, as aligned to the Council's well-being objectives in Vale 2030, be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure the Council was effectively assessing its performance in line with the performance requirements outlined in the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 that it maximised its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales and to consider the progress being made towards achieving its Year 1 commitments in Vale 2030 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.