PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 22nd July, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available here.

The recording of the meeting is available here.

Present: Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Chair); Councillor C. Iannucci-Williams (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, C.E.A. Champion, P. Drake, V.P. Driscoll, A.M. Ernest, M.J. Hooper, J.M. Norman, I.A.N. Perry, C. Stallard and S.T. Wiliam.

Also present: M. Blackmore, G. Doyle and K. Mitchell (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representatives); O. Carroll (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale); and Councillors B.E. Brooks (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places), I.R. Buckley, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

235 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”.

236 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor E. Penn and G. Niblett (Tenant Working Group/ Panel Representative).

237 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 20th May, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

238 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

239 PLACEMAKING PLANS (DP) –

The Team Leader - Community Development from the Creative Communities Team and the Operational Manager for Regeneration, presented the report together with a presentation, which set out the background and work to date on Placemaking Plans for the Vale of Glamorgan for scrutiny and comment. The Placemaking Plans were the fruition of the agreement made previously by the Council's Cabinet to become a signatory to the Placemaking Wales Charter. Highlights of the report and the presentation included:

- An explanation / definition of Placemaking.
- An outline of the Placemaking Charter and principles.
- The collaborative work across various sectors and disciplines was discussed.
- The four Placemaking Plans developed for Cowbridge, Penarth, Llantwit Major and Barry were discussed, with a 'snapshot' for each one given in terms of the vision and objectives specific to each of the towns in question.
- Each plan had been developed in partnership with and adopted by the Town Councils concerned.
- An overview of the Placemaking process was shared with Members, highlighting what had worked well and the challenges that had been faced.
- The forms of delivery funding were highlighted such as the Welsh Government (WG) Transforming Towns Fund and others.
- The delivery of the Placemaking Plans and their funding were also outlined and the potential for future scrutiny by the Committee.

Subsequently, Members had the opportunity for discussion and questions, which included the following points raised:

Councillor Ernest commended the Placemaking Plan for Penarth and its proposals (such as greater integration of public transport) but he did have some concerns as well, i.e. the ability to sustain funding and support the costs of some of these projects, particularly in the long term; disappointment in the aspirational aspects of the plan, which had several important, positive ideas but not seemingly any larger, more ambitious projects; and issues which may be key in terms of Placemaking Plans but fall outside the immediate scope i.e. trains. On financial sustainability, this was an age-old concern and challenge for this type of project, but this was being addressed by having considerations around sustainability forming part of the business cases for the plans going forward. Only projects with ongoing funding would get supported and those schemes considered deliverable in the short to medium term. On the aspirational side of the plans, these reflected the ideas and aspirations brought forward by residents as part of the consultation process and related workshops as an effort to move away from 'off the cuff' ideas or wish lists but rather specific ideas and aspirations which could be deliverable. The Director of Place added there had been a lot of work and support given to Town Councils and local communities to develop ideas for the plans, which were live and constantly evolving, thereby providing an opportunity for new ideas and new funding streams. This did not preclude major projects or aspirations (such as the Penarth Headland Link) coming forward in any future iteration of a plan. On transport links, the plans were developed in conjunction with officers from the Council's transport section, Transport for Wales and others, with the opportunity for new projects and sources of funding to also be incorporated into the plans or adhere to Placemaking principles should they arise.

Councillor Wiliam queried whether Barry Town Council's Corporate Plan was incorporated into the Placemaking Plan, who was responsible for implementing these plans and who was on the relevant governing boards for Placemaking. On the Barry Town Corporate Plan, this would not be incorporated per se into the Placemaking Plan, as this was a standalone document, signed off by both Barry and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. The Chair suggested that the Councillor's concerns on the incorporation of the Corporate Plan and the sign off by Barry Town Council on the Placemaking aspects should be addressed outside the meeting, due to these relating specifically to the Town Council and the correction that the Barry Placemaking Plan had not been signed off as yet, but the same approach as the other three plans would be undertaken. On implementation, the Council would lead on this in conjunction with the relevant Town Councils and other stakeholders signing the relevant decisions off. Regarding the membership of the Place Boards, etc., these were made up of various structures and nobody sat on the same board. The overarching Place Board would be chaired by the Leader of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, with members of the Strategic Leadership Team on it. The Town Boards would be chaired by the Deputy Leader, with members coming from different Council Directorates. The Chief Officer / Clerk of each Town Council and a nominated Town Councillor would also form part of the board. These would own the plans, business cases and oversee the project teams, as well as report back to the Place Board.

The Chair asked whether Elected Members for the Vale of Glamorgan Council could participate on these boards and get involved with the plans (as some Elected Members already had as part of the process). It was explained that Members had already been involved in the Placemaking Plans and were invited to get further involved in the process, help in developing the plans and become advocates for them. Wherever possible, the relevant Members would be kept up to date on developments that impacted their wards.

Councillor Hooper asked several questions, including:

- How the Placemaking Plans could be made accessible and be conceptualised for those disengaged communities identified.
- He also referred to the use of consultants in the Placemaking process, how they were chosen, the cost to the project in using them and where they were based.
- On the areas identified for Placemaking opportunities and schemes, funding, etc., these did not appear to be guaranteed and how would this be taken forward and expectations managed.
- Also, on the Barry Island Placemaking proposal / diagram, it did not seem to include the war museum located there and had they been consulted on Placemaking.
- Finally, would the Town Boards and the other parts of Placemaking governance have proper minuting arrangements in place so that this could be open to public scrutiny.

In response, the Team Leader – Community Development from the Creative Communities Team and the Operational Manager for Regeneration answered as follows:

- On hard-to-reach communities and the language used for the Placemaking process, it was explained that the language used during the consultation part of the planning process was as accessible and palatable as possible, using bite size pieces of information and focusing on specific questions to gather information from residents for the Placemaking Plans. Due to the size and complexity of the plans they needed to be written in a particular way but there were plans to create easy read versions of these so residents could access the documents more easily and utilise different languages appropriate for different parts of the local community.
- On the use of external consultants, their funding came directly from WG and was allocated only for that purpose. The selection process was very open and involved both County Council officers and the relevant Town Councillors. This was advertised on Sell2 Wales (website) with offers coming from across the UK. The applicants were scored against published criteria and chosen based on experience, ability to deliver and an understanding of the specific towns. The consultants came from across the UK and Ireland. Regarding the supplementary question on consultant pay, this did not come from the funding provided directly for Placemaking; rather it was from a separate WG fund to cover costs on development, the use of multi-disciplinary teams / experts and fund pilot projects. A ‘global’ figure on this would be shared in due course.
- On guaranteeing the schemes, etc. involved, it had been very useful in consulting with local communities and residents, looking at their priorities and thereby managing expectations, as well as saying to them that there were no guarantees on these suggestions and schemes and it would be down to priorities, needs, funding and deliverability of the projects suggested.
- Regarding the war museum, the image used on the plan for Barry Island was a draft and had accidently omitted the museum at the location, which was simply a mistake. The museum had been consulted with regularly as part of the Placemaking process and was seen as a part of that development and aspirations going forward, as well as offering supporting to them i.e. around having security of tenure.
- On the various Placemaking boards and governance, the Barry Partnership Board did have minutes and notes from its meetings, which were available online, with details to be transferred to the Barry.com website and further communications to be shared with residents. A link to the minutes would be shared with Members. On governance, further details would be shared with Members on the various bodies and groups established. These bodies’ terms of reference were being drafted, and they would be spaces for open discussion of the various projects and ideas for Placemaking. Decisions taken at meetings would be tracked in line with other boards within the Council.

Councillor Champion suggested that as part of the board / governance structure for Placemaking, an urban designer be included to share their knowledge and advice to these bodies. He also commended the Placemaking process, in relation to Cowbridge, and the open discussion had with the external consultants involved. He also suggested that non-Council owned parts of Cowbridge should be considered for future developments. On the inclusion of an urban designer, this would be of benefit potentially for the various boards due to their responsibility in overseeing, managing the various projects and delivering these, where a designer's experience would be best placed. On the use of private, non-Council land for Placemaking, it was explained that as part of the consultation process, interest had been received from different landowners around how their land could fit into future Placemaking activities.

A Tenant Representative (G. Doyle) asked how residents were consulted on the Placemaking Plans. In response, various methods had been used, such as flyers inviting them to events and workshops, use of social media, online and hard copy surveys, stalls outside supermarkets, community events or group meetings and business forums, reaching out to people with different needs, etc., to engage in as comprehensive and wide-ranging way as possible with residents.

Councillor Wiliam asked for clarification on the difference between the Barry Partnership and Town Boards. It was explained that the Barry Partnership was independent of the Town Board and had a different purpose or remit. The Barry Partnership was also fully aware of the Placemaking Plan for Barry and the two bodies did share members and there was the potential for cross-board working.

Councillor Ernest felt that Vale of Glamorgan Councillors who were also not Town Councillors had only received limited consultation in the Placemaking process and would not be represented on the various boards. It was explained that due to the number of Elected Members and the relatively small numbers of Council officers involved in the main Placemaking project, it had been difficult to engage fully with them on this. However, an extensive consultation process had been undertaken as part of Placemaking, and many Vale of Glamorgan and Town Councillors had attended these events. There were still opportunities for Elected Members to participate in the process, with the Placemaking Plans being evolving, living documents. Elected Members had had the opportunity to get involved as much as they wanted to. Some Elected Members had chosen to support the Placemaking team at consultation events, etc., including Members of this Committee, such as Councillors Champion and Norman which were highlighted by the Operational Manager for Regeneration.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Sustainable Places welcomed the discussion on Placemaking by the Committee and had listened to the feedback and points raised. Placemaking provided the Vale of Glamorgan a unique opportunity to engage with residents, various bodies and others to develop local towns as a result. The Council would be delivering the plans in conjunction with other bodies. On the Barry Corporate Plan raised by Councillor Wiliam, this was still in draft form and under discussion. She also spoke about the progress being made with the Placemaking Plans for the various towns and the enthusiasm around these, encouraging Elected Members to take part.

Finally, the Chair asked if officers could provide details on board memberships, the consultancy budget, and proactively inform Elected Members on opportunities for engagement with this process.

Following the discussions on this report, Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the contents of the report and the Placemaking Plans be noted.

(2) T H A T the following comments made by the Place Scrutiny Committee be considered by the Place Boards:

- That the Place Boards ensure sustainability was built into the relevant business cases / plans for the Placemaking Plans (for example, considerations for ongoing maintenance costs and continued funding for these were factored in when decisions were being taken on investments within the plans);
- While the Committee recognised the need to ensure that the Placemaking Plans were deliverable, it encouraged the Boards to continue to be ambitious and aspirational for the towns they covered as part of those plans;
- That the Committee supported and encouraged the Boards' approach to making the Placemaking Plans as accessible as possible to all members of community. For example, to make easy to read versions of the Plans and to consider the use of language / languages for them.

(3) T H A T the Place Scrutiny Committee received a future report on the Placemaking Plan for Barry.

<u>Reasons for recommendations</u>

(1) Following Committee Members' consideration of the progress and scope of placemaking activity across the Vale and how it aligned with wider regeneration and corporate priorities.

(2) To enable Committee Member feedback to be considered by the Place Boards in order to help shape the development and delivery of the Placemaking Plans and ensure they reflected local priorities and needs.

(3) To ensure the Committee received a further update to be able to consider and scrutinise the progress of the Barry Placemaking Plan.

240 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (DCR) –

The report was presented to the Committee by the Project Zero Programme Manager (in conjunction with the Director of Place), the purpose of which was to advise Members of progress across the Council in responding to the climate emergency, the nature emergency, and delivering the Council's commitments as part of Project Zero including work being undertaken through the Public Services Board. This covered the six-month period from October 2024 to March 2025.

The Project Zero Programme Manager presented the key highlights from the report, including:

- The 'joined up' approach undertaken as part of the project. Project Zero encompassed work undertaken across the Council to tackle the climate and nature emergency and work towards the target as an organisation which was to be net zero by 2030, as well as the wider all-Wales target of net zero by 2050 and the broader nature and biodiversity commitments.
- Progress against the 18 Challenges which were part of the Climate Change Challenge Plan –
    - Demonstrating strong leadership - Challenges 1-4: i.e. volunteering opportunities within the County's green spaces and conservation activities and a biodiversity e-learning module, developed by Cynnal Cymru and funded by the Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) was launched for Council staff, Councillors and Public Sector Board (PSB) members.
    - Fulfil our responsibility to current and future generations - Challenges 5-12: i.e. the adoption by the Council of the Tree Strategy, Big Fresh had joined the steering group for the Welsh Government funded Welsh Veg in Schools project, and the implementation of active travel enhancements.
    - Make a difference now - Challenges 13-18: i.e. monetary and carbon savings for the residents at the Severn Avenue council housing site due to the carbon reduction measures undertaken by the Housing Team.
- In terms of the accompanying 80 steps, 57 steps were on track, 20 with slower than expected progress and 3 steps had seen no progress in the period. With 80 steps in total, it was not anticipated that there would be progress in all areas.
- Regarding resources for Project Zero, much of the work described in the report was resourced within existing capacity supported by established internal budgets, as well as Section 106 funding and external annual funding from the Welsh and UK Governments.
- Reference was made to the Public Services Board (PSB) Asset Management and Climate Emergency Group, which met quarterly and reports to the PSB, and the work it undertook, such as the launch of a Climate and Nature Emergency Charter in this period.

Following the presentation, the Committee raised several queries and comments, including the following:

- The Chair raised the 3 steps which had seen no progress and why this was the case. The data on the report's appendices seemed to indicate this could be because of the current limits on funding. The Director of Place explained that, for example, with one of the steps which had not progressed, namely Review / produce Supplementary Planning Guidance to support work on Climate Change, although there had been some work already undertaken behind the scenes on this, such as looking at how far the Council could go towards influencing developers to integrate sustainability into new buildings going forward, this had experienced some delays. This was due to this linking in with the Local Development Plan (LDP) and having to wait until further progress was made with the wider LDP, such as with the housing sites that had been allocated, and the need to look at alternative sites due to deliverability. These delays also impacted upon the adoption of the Green Infrastructure Plan, an integral part of the LDP and other Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The Director reassured the Committee that the guidance in question would be progressed once the LDP had been produced and the first draff deposit version completed. On the Sustainable Urban Drainage Guidance step, this had faced delays due to the Drainage Team being extremely busy and therefore this work had not been progressed as yet but would be brought forward. It was important to note that as a SPG it was also impacted by the delay to the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP).

- Councillor Stallard referred to the hold on Project Zero reserves and sought reassurance that the reserve finances were still being held on for this project despite the pressures experienced on the Council's overall budget. The Director of Place / Project Zero Programme Manager explained that although there were no plans to use the reserve at this time, it was still being held for Project Zero and further information would be sought (such as from the Section 151 Officer) for members following the meeting.
- The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources informed the Committee of the work being undertaken by the Council in terms of sustainable drainage in its schools and housing developments, as well as the considerable work in other related areas following the Council's declaration of the climate and nature emergencies and the impact of such motions approved by Council on its policy.
- Councillor Perry cited the importance of the Council and others taking seriously the impact of building waste and demolition and not to follow the example of other Authorities but rather look to preserve and reuse existing buildings. He also commented on the lack of investment and decline in travel on public transport, which would impact the Council's efforts on active travel and to mitigate and limit private car use. These efforts required greater support, prioritisation and investment from bodies such as from Welsh Government and a greater emphasis from the Council's LDP.

Following the discussions on this report, Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report and Appendix A in relation to the challenges within the Climate Change Challenge Plan and the work of the Public Services Board be noted.

(2) T H A T the funding available in reserves and the projects awarded funding to date through a variety of routes be noted.

(3) T H A T the updates on the Public Services Board work to tackle the climate and nature emergencies be noted.

(4) T H A T the performance against the agreed Project Zero indicators for 2024/25 detailed at Appendix B to the report be noted.

(5) T H A T the relevant Performance Measures for 2025/26, at Appendix C to the report, be noted.

(6) T H A T the progress against the Carbon Management Plan be noted.

(7) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for consideration.

(8) T H A T it be recommended to Cabinet that the report be distributed to all Elected Members, members of the Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their information.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Following consideration by the Committee on how Project Zero and the related work of the Public Services Board was being taken forward.

(2) Following consideration by the Committee of the available funding and the projects awarded funding to date.

(3) Following consideration by the Committee of the Public Services Board work to tackle the climate and nature emergencies.

(4) Following consideration by the Committee of the performance against the agreed set of indicators.

(5) Following consideration by the Committee of the relevant Performance Measures for 2025/26.

(6) Following consideration by the Committee of the progress against the Carbon Management Plan.

(7) To enable Cabinet to consider the progress in delivering the Climate Change Challenge Plan.

(8) To update all Elected Members and other stakeholders on the arrangements in place to deliver Project Zero.

241 TASK AND FINISH REVIEW ACTIVITY (DCR) –

The report, presented by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, requested Members to consider items and topics of investigatory group work (Task and Finish Review) for the new Place Scrutiny Committee. A range of suggestions were collated from Members of the Committee both at its meeting held on 20th May, 2025, and with further suggestions sent to the Chair / Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer after the meeting via email. The relevant Directors and / or officers had assessed all suggestions and had proposed five possible reviews to be considered for progression. These aligned closely to current Council priorities and Corporate Plan – Vale 2030, as well as being considered achievable within the 12-week Task and Finish Review cycle.

The proposed suggestions were:

1. What the Council could do to help high streets within the Vale of Glamorgan, such as bringing empty buildings back into use, making pavements an exciting environment, etc.;
2. Looking at the results of the tenant satisfaction survey. To help in developing the relevant actions with other stakeholders, etc.;
3. A deeper look and focus into those areas that touched upon the remit of the Committee which were part of the Council's risk profile and register, where it could offer both added value and support for these, particularly those relevant areas which had been 'red' rated and therefore were of highest risk to the Council (such as climate change and the nature emergency, as well as the financial pressures and current state of budgets limiting the Council's ability to invest in key areas related to these);
4. A Task and Finish exercise about greater accessibility to beaches in the Vale of Glamorgan for people with disabilities (such as wheelchair users) and others;
5. Suggestions concerning the interlinked issues of refuse on local beaches and the wider matters around local holiday resorts.

From the above suggestions, the following were proposals that could be looked at straight away, whereas the others, for various reasons outlined in Appendix A to the report, would need to be looked at a later date (such as the review on what the Council could do to help high streets within the Vale of Glamorgan.) The more immediate Task and Finish items were:

- A Task and Finish exercise about greater accessibility to beaches in the Vale of Glamorgan for people with disabilities (such as wheelchair users) and others;
- A Task and Finish exercise based on the results of the tenant satisfaction survey and in order to help in developing the relevant actions with other stakeholders, etc. (Suggested by Housing Officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Council following discussions very early on around topics for investigation).

The Scrutiny Committee was therefore requested to prioritise and agree the order in which the reviews were to be undertaken.

In addition, the Committee was requested to confirm and agree the size and membership of the Task and Review Group. The suggested number of members on a Task and Finish Review Group was six, but a lower or higher number could be accommodated based on the wishes of the Scrutiny Committee. Ideally the Task and Finish Review Group would have representation from all political groups and from the Co-Opted Members, those being the Tenant Representatives and the Representative from Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale.

Members were also advised of the proposed timetable and framework for Task and Finish meetings, as detailed in the report.

Following the above update, the Chair, in consultation with the Committee, agreed that the first Task and Finish Review should be around greater accessibility to beaches in the Vale of Glamorgan for people with disabilities and others. It was felt that this would be an important and beneficial piece of work to get the Task and Finish Reviews started, to help local residents and others in accessing the Vale's beaches and would be something achievable within the report's suggested timeline for these reviews, as well as helping the Committee to understand the new process around Task and Finish.

The second review to be considered would be concerning the interlinked issues of refuse on local beaches and the wider matters around local holiday resorts. Councillor Ernest felt such issues, particularly around refuse left on the Vale's beaches, was of considerable concern and cost to the Council in terms of keeping local beaches clean and tidy, as well as the use of volunteers, etc. as part of this effort. Councillors Ernest and Wiliam expressed their interest in participating in this once the first Task and Finish Review had been completed.

A potential third option would be around the results of the tenant satisfaction survey and to help in developing the subsequent actions. However, it was agreed that this and the other remaining suggestions would come back to the Committee as part of a further report once the initial two priorities / reviews had been undertaken.

On Councillor Perry's query concerning the scope of the initial Task and Finish Review, the Chair stated that the scoping, etc. would be decided upon at the initial meeting(s) of the Task and Finish Group, following the decision on the priority and membership of the initial review tonight.

Several Members of the Committee volunteered to join the initial review:

- Councillor G.M. Ball (Labour)
- Councillor C.E.A. Champion (Conservative)
- Councillor P. Drake (Labour)
- Councillor A.M. Ernest (Conservative)
- Councillor Iannucci-Williams (Labour)
- Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Labour)
- Councillor J.M. Norman (Llantwit First Independent)
- Councillor C. Stallard (Labour)
- K. Mitchell (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel)

Following the discussions on this report, Committee

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the following Task and Finish Reviews (deep dive investigations) be prioritised and undertaken initially (in order of priority) by the Committee:

Priority Number	Task and Finish Review topic
1	A review on greater accessibility to beaches in the Vale of Glamorgan for people with disabilities (such as wheelchair users) and others.

2	To review the interlinked issues of refuse on local beaches and the wider matters around local holiday resorts.

(2) T H A T, following discussions at the meeting, the Committee agreed the size, composition and membership of the Task and Review Group for the first review / priority (the review on greater accessibility to beaches in the Vale of Glamorgan) as follows:

- Councillor G.M. Ball (Labour)
- Councillor C.E.A. Champion (Conservative)
- Councillor P. Drake (Labour)
- Councillor A.M. Ernest (Conservative)
- Councillor Iannucci-Williams (Labour)
- Councillor S. Lloyd-Selby (Labour)
- Councillor J.M. Norman (Llantwit First Independent)
- Councillor C. Stallard (Labour)
- K. Mitchell (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

Reasons for recommendations

(1) In order to agree and prioritise the Task and Finish Review Group activities for the Place Scrutiny Committee. Subsequent priorities for Task and Finish Reviews would come back to the Committee as part of a further report once the initial two priorities had been undertaken.

(2) In order to agree the size, composition and membership of the Task and Finish Review Group of the Place Scrutiny Committee for the first review / priority to be undertaken.