

Meeting of:	<b>Resources Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 09 July 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Task and Finish Review Activity
Purpose of Report:	To determine Task and Finish Review activity for the Resources Scrutiny Committee.
Report Owner:	Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Liz Whitaker, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>Director of Corporate Resources</p> <p>Director of Environment and Housing Services</p> <p>Head of Digital</p> <p>Head of HR and Organisational Development</p> <p>Operational Manager – Employee Services</p> <p>Operational Manager – Corporate Communications</p>
Policy Framework:	This report is in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit Wales (formerly Wales Audit Office) Democratic Renewal report and follows a review of the Council's scrutiny function.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report requests Members to consider items and topics of investigatory group work (Task and Finish Review) for the new Resources Scrutiny Committee.</li> <li>• A range of suggestions were collated from members of the Committee at its meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2025, with additional details on a number of these suggestions being forwarded to the Chair and Democratic Services Officer after the meeting.</li> <li>• The Director of Corporate Resources, along with the relevant Heads of Service and Officers have assessed the suggestions and provided feedback on the scope and feasibility of these, taking into consideration the work that is already being carried out by Officers. For certain topic suggestions, further work may be needed to refine the scope of the topic investigated, in order</li> </ul>	

for these to be assessed and responded to fully by Officers, and so that they are achievable within the 12-week Task and Finish Review cycle.

- Where possible, and where a topic or section of a topic has been identified as achievable in the shorter term, Officers have indicated this within their feedback. Where a topic has been identified as already having work underway to address an issue, this has also been indicated, and in some instances, a potential area of alternative focus has been suggested.
- The proposed suggestions, and a narrative regarding the feasibility scoping for each one, is attached at Appendix A. One Task and Finish Review topic has been identified as being appropriate for progression as the first topic that the Committee undertakes, this being **'The Council's Communications Strategy', as detailed in Appendix A (1)**.
- The Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to agree that this proposed topic be selected as the first Task and Finish Review's focus, with other suggested topics remaining open for further discussion. Additionally, Members will be able to suggest topics for Task and Finish Review throughout the year, if the opportunity to consider any emerging area arises.
- In addition, the Committee is requested to confirm and agree the size and membership of the first Task and Finish Review Group. The suggested number of members on a Task and Finish Review Group is 6, but a lower or higher number can be accommodated based on the wishes of the Scrutiny Committee, with the Chair decided by the "home" Scrutiny Committee. Ideally the Task and Finish Review Group would have representation from all political groups. Where practicable, political balance is encouraged. For a group of 6 participants, this would be 3 Members of the Labour Group, plus 1 Member each from Llantwit First, the Conservative Party and Plaid Cymru groups.
- The Committee is also asked to determine whether representation from any interested parties outside of the organisation would have merit.
- Once the review topic and membership has been agreed, Democratic Services will prepare a schedule of meetings, with it being envisioned for a review to be completed within 12 weeks. This will exclude the summer recess.
- It is planned that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group will include appointment of a Chair and Vice-Chair. The first meeting will also include consideration of a full scope of how the review will be completed. The Group will also be asked to consider the most appropriate time for it to meet, and any expert witnesses that it would like to call to provide evidence and guidance, and to answer queries.
- At the conclusion of the review, a subsequent report and recommendations would be fed back to the relevant Cabinet Member(s), the home Scrutiny Committee(s), and Cabinet for consideration.

## Recommendations

1. That the Scrutiny Committee agrees the topic of ‘The Council’s Communications Strategy’, as detailed in Appendix A (1) to the report, as the first Task and Finish Review topic undertaken.
2. That the size, composition and membership of the Task and Finish Review Group is agreed.

## Reasons for Recommendations

1. To agree the Task and Finish Review Group activities for the Resources Scrutiny Committee.
2. To agree the size, composition and membership of the Task and Review Group of the Resources Scrutiny Committee.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 On 10th April 2025, Cabinet agreed proposals for new Scrutiny arrangements to take effect for the 2025/26 municipal year, which were aligned to the new objectives contained within the Council’s new Corporate Plan – Vale 2030. A copy of the Cabinet report can be found in the following link:

[https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-04-10/Reshaping-Scrutiny.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-04-10/Reshaping-Scrutiny.pdf)

- 1.2 The new arrangements were subsequently agreed by Council at its meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Which included a new Committee structure as follows:

Committee Name	Corporate Plan Objective	Remits
Start Well	Giving Everyone a Good Start in Life	Schools, Schools Improvement, Post 16 Education and Training, Skills, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Youth Services, Flying Start/Families First, Play and Welsh (external policy).
Live Well	Supporting and Protecting Those Who Need Us  Creating Great Places to Live, Work and Visit	Adult Services, Children and Young People’s Services, Libraries, Arts, Culture, Leisure, Sports, Community Learning, Homelessness, Public Protection and Equalities (external policy).
Place	Creating Great Places to Live, Work and Visit  Respecting and Celebrating the Environment	Economic Development and Regeneration, Tourism, Countryside and Parks, Waste management and cleansing, Highways and Engineering, Planning, Transportation, Climate and Nature Emergency, Placemaking and Public and Private Sector Housing.

Committee Name	Corporate Plan Objective	Remits
Resources	Being the Best Council We Can Be	Corporate Policies and Performance, Communication and Participation, Customer Relations, Finance, Procurement, Digital, Property, Human Resources, Equalities (internal policy) and Welsh (internal policy).

**1.3** During its meeting in May 2025, members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee were asked to put forward suggestions for deep dive investigations in the form of a Task and Finish Review Group. Once collated, all suggestions have been subject to a feasibility exercise to ensure that they closely align to Council priorities and corporate objectives, and to indicate some of the key work that is already being undertaken by officers regarding the topics suggested. Relevant Officers have been consulted, and have proposed one area of Task and Finish activity that could be progressed as the first Task and Finish Review undertaken by the Committee, this being 'The Council's Communications Strategy'. This is shown Appendix A to the report.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** A range of Task and Finish review suggestions were collated from Members of the Committee at its meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2025, with additional detail on a number of suggestions having been forwarded to the Chair and Democratic Services Officer after the meeting.
- 2.2** A list of all suggestions is shown at Appendix A which includes commentary as to Officers' feedback on each suggestion.
- 2.3** The Director of Corporate Resources, and the relevant heads of service and officers have assessed the suggestions, and have indicated the topics which are most achievable in the shorter term. These align closely to current Council priorities, the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan, and are considered achievable within the 12- week cycle.
- 2.4** The Resources Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to agree the first Task and Finish Review topic as being 'The Council's Communications Strategy'.
- 2.5** In addition, the Committee is 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 is between 4 and 8, but a higher number can be accommodated based on the wishes of the Scrutiny Committee. Ideally the Task and Finish Review Group should have representation from all political groups.
- 2.6** The Committee is also asked to determine whether representation from any interested parties outside of the organisation would have merit, to leverage the expertise of officers, partners, and wider stakeholders alongside evidence and insight from the residents of the Vale of Glamorgan, who will be invited and encouraged to participate as expert witnesses and share their lived experiences.
- 2.7** Once the review topic and membership has been agreed, Democratic Services will prepare a schedule of meetings, with it being envisioned for a review to be completed within 12 weeks. This will exclude the summer recess.
- 2.8** It is planned that the first meeting of the Task and Finish Review Group will include appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair. The first meeting will also include consideration of the group's Terms of Reference on how the review will be completed. The Group will also be asked

to consider the most appropriate time for it to meet, and any expert witnesses that it would like to call to provide evidence or guidance and to answer queries.

- 2.9** The proposed timeline guidance, which may be subject to change dependent upon the scope of the work, is outlined below:

Week	Stage	Stage Description
Pre	Initiation	Identification of topic based; sourced from areas such as performance, Reshaping, Corporate Plan, audit reports and Members interests
1	Start up	Appoint Members, agree meeting dates, Members ways of working and Terms of Reference
2-3	Planning and Scoping	Agree key outcomes, action points, evidence collation, including wider stakeholders
4-9	Delivery	Delivery of content of T&F receiving, challenging and sharing information to support direction of travel
10-12	Concluding Report	Production of final report by T&F Chair, including recommendations, to be considered by the commissioning Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Task and Finish review activities undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees will form a key part of them meeting their Terms of References which are aligned to the Council’s Corporate Plan – Vale 2030, which in turn, is aligned to the Wellbeing Goals for Wales.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1** None as a direct result of this report.

#### **Employment**

- 5.2** None as a direct result of this report.

## **Legal (Including Equalities)**

5.3 None as a direct result of this report.

## **6. Background Papers**

Cabinet report with new Scrutiny proposal – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2025:

[https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-04-10/Reshaping-Scrutiny.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-04-10/Reshaping-Scrutiny.pdf)

## APPENDIX A – Task and Finish Review Suggestions – Officer Feedback

Topic Suggestion	Officer Work Underway	Potential for T&F
<p><b>1.) Councillor Loveluck-Edwards: The Council’s Communications Strategy</b></p> <p>Looking into how communications could be improved, in terms of both promoting the successful work of services, and also regarding how the Council engages with residents’ responses to its communications, particularly online.</p>	<p><b>Officer Feedback on work underway:</b></p> <p>Work is already underway to develop a new Communications Strategy for the Council, as part of the Signaling Change Plan, in response to the Performance Panel Assessment.</p>	<p><b>Officers’ Suggestion:</b></p> <p>It would be helpful to involve Members with developing the new Communications Strategy and to test current thinking on the project. There is also a potentially important role for members to play in delivering the strategy, as advocates for the Council and its work, which could also be explored.</p> <p><b>There is potential for this to progress as the first Task and Finish Group topic that the Committee undertakes.</b></p>
<p><b>2.) Councillor Carroll: Productivity within the Authority</b></p> <p>Making use of the benefits of using AI in the Council’s work;</p> <p>The impact of home-working on the Council’s output.</p>	<p><b>Officer Feedback on Work Underway:</b></p> <p>Work is underway to introduce further use of AI (in particular Co-pilot) as part of the Digital theme of Reshaping.</p> <p>The Brilliant Basics workstream is advancing following development in recent months, and further guidance is to be delivered in the next few months.</p> <p>Service reviews are being scoped in various areas, as part of the Medium-term Financial Plan and Reshaping Programme, with the first looking at Council Tax.</p> <p>Performance management arrangements are being reviewed, associated with Vale 2030, to look at how to present information relating to the outcomes of the Council’s work with resources, and this is the purpose of the Annual Self-Assessment report.</p>	<p><b>Officers’ Suggestion:</b></p> <p>Further discussion on the focus of the Task and Finish topic, and where most value could be added, would be beneficial.</p>
<p><b>3.) Councillor Carroll: Tackling waste within the Authority</b></p>	<p><b>Officer Feedback on Work Underway:</b></p> <p>See response to 2.) above. Additionally, work is underway in procurement to target efficiencies from</p>	<p><b>Officers’ Suggestion:</b></p> <p>Any further information on specific areas which Councillor Carroll and Committee may have in mind would</p>

	contract management and retendering as part of the Medium-term Financial Plan.	be useful, in order to identify achievable scope and to inform a fuller response on feasibility from Officers.
<b>4.) Councillor Franks: Financial Cost/Benefit analysis of existing Car Parking charges across the Vale of Glamorgan.</b>	<b>Officer Feedback on Work Underway:</b>  Cost/Benefit Analyses are already undertaken when looking to introduce such fees.	<b>Officers' Suggestion:</b>  Further discussion on the focus of the Task and Finish topic, and whether this lies within the remit of Resources or Place Committee, or whether a joint Committee approach is best, would be beneficial.
<b>5.) Councillor Franks: The Council's arts policies.</b>  Whether arts policies generate additional resources, for example, whether there is a benefit in terms of generating jobs.  Understanding the positive impacts of investment in cultural services in the Vale of Glamorgan – For example, in Arts Central and Penarth Pier Pavilion.  Whether improving the cultural life of Vale of Glamorgan residents, benefits as many people as possible.	<b>Officer Feedback on Work Underway:</b>  Reports have been presented to the former Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee on the positive impact and community benefit of Library provision.	<b>Officers' Suggestion:</b>  Further capturing how arts venues impact the wellbeing of the residents' of the Vale of Glamorgan could be explored.  Further discussion on the focus of the Task and Finish topic, and whether this lies within the remit of Resources or Live Well Committee, or whether a joint Committee approach is best, would be beneficial.
<b>6.) Councillor Protheroe: Contact Centre Redesign</b>  A review of C1V, including looking at improvements to the service, including response times to residents' calls.	<b>Officer Feedback on work underway:</b>  Work is underway to embed the new digital structure and a service review is being scoped for Customer Relations looking at the structure of the team and ways of working.	<b>Officers' suggestion:</b>  Further discussion on the focus of the Task and Finish topic would be beneficial. It would be useful if this topic suggestion were to progress, that it takes place in Quarter 4.
<b>7.) Councillor Campbell: Attrition rates for Council staff</b>  Whether there is a correlation between attrition rates and recruitment methods, particularly regarding social care and school staff.	<b>Officer Feedback:</b>  The Council already review attrition/turnover rates on a regular basis, and at the present time, this is not a cause of concern.  There has also been significant work in the recruitment practices for Social Care,	<b>Officers' Suggestion:</b>  A focus of task and finish could be around how Welsh Government and the WLGA promote careers and career development in Local Government and the Public Sector.

<p>The Council's spend on agency staff, and how this may correlate with recruitment processes.</p> <p>The length of recruitment processes for certain roles.</p>	<p>which has not only reduced time to hire, but it has also reduced agency spend in that area.</p> <p>Also with Social Care, there is an agreement to cap agency worker rates across Wales, so that other Local Authorities cannot offer higher rates, which has also helped agency spend and recruitment.</p> <p>Work has also commenced on reviewing agency spend in schools, which is being undertaken by Learning and Skills with support from HR.</p> <p>The People Strategy is currently being revised, and as part of this aspects of attraction and retention are being progressed.</p>	<p>Each Local Authority undertakes a significant amount of work with the aim of promoting careers. However, further consideration could be given to how Councils are supported by Welsh Government and the WLGA in doing this.</p> <p>It could be that the task and finish group could undertake a piece of work that could be presented to those bodies, which would add value to all Local Authorities in Wales.</p> <p>Further discussion on the focus of the Task and Finish topic, and where most value could be added, would be beneficial.</p>
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