RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 25th March, 2026.

The Committee agenda is available here.

The recording of the meeting is available here.

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.M. Ball, S. Campbell, G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks, E.J. Goodjohn, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and J.M. Norman.

767 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic Officer 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".

768 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor N.J. Wood.

769 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January, 2026 be approved as a correct record.

770 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

771 UPDATE PRESENTATION ON SCHOOL BUDGETS (DLS) –

Following a request from the Committee, a presentation was provided to the Committee on the current situation regarding deficit school budgets, by the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources and Director of Learning and Skills.

The Officers advised that school budget pressures reflected a wider national position, with the Vale of Glamorgan experiencing comparatively low funding per pupil, alongside high levels of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) expenditure. Staffing costs accounted for approximately 85% of school budgets, limiting the scope for non-staffing savings.

Officers reported that the cumulative school deficit position is projected to be £13.4m by the end of 2025/26, increasing in later years, although this represents an improvement on earlier forecasts following targeted intervention. Deficits and surpluses varied significantly between schools, including within similar phases, and this variability remains a key area of focus.

Officers advised that the issuing of informal and formal warning notices earlier in the year led to strengthened recovery planning, resulting in in-year improvements and significant projected savings over a three-year period. As a result, formal warning notices were withdrawn to enable more constructive and regular engagement with schools.

Following presentation of the report, Officers provided the following advice in response to questions and comments from Committee Members:

- The current priority was to “stem the flow” of deficits by ensuring schools operated within in-year budgets, preventing further accumulation of deficits, before addressing historic balances. All schools had now received three-year budget allocations and were required to submit spending and recovery plans by 31st May 2026.
- Support provided to schools included enhanced financial monitoring, one-to-one engagement, benchmarking of leadership and staffing costs, sharing of good practice through case studies, and a partnership-based approach with headteachers and governing bodies.
- Transformation activity included procurement initiatives, recent examples of which had delivered savings without impacting teaching and learning.
- Staffing adjustments remained the primary mechanism for long-term financial sustainability, with vacancies and voluntary measures prioritised wherever possible. Redundancies were described as a last resort, but workforce planning must reflect declining pupil numbers over the medium term.
- Projected figures included additional funding agreed within the Council’s budget. Officers also noted that ALN expenditure figures included transport costs and centrally provided support services, and further analysis could be undertaken where appropriate.
- Regarding digital and AI support, Officers advised that a number of schools were already demonstrating effective practice in reducing administrative workload, and that the Council will focus on sharing existing expertise rather than imposing additional systems.
- Officers acknowledged ongoing concerns about the national school funding formula and confirmed that the Council continues to raise these issues with Welsh Government, while managing current pressures within existing funding arrangements.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the information presented to Committee at the meeting be noted, and officers be thanked for the Presentation.

(2) T H A T Committee receives a further update in 6 months' time, particularly regarding procurement savings and the actions undertaken by the improving schools, along with the savings achieved.

Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) To ensure that the Resources Scrutiny Committee are aware of the progress in addressing the situation regarding the school budgets situation.

772 TASK AND FINISH REVIEW ON COUNTERING MISINFORMATION (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Task and Finish Review Group, Councillor Loveluck-Edwards, who advised that the Task and Finish Group was established to understand how misinformation and disinformation were spread within the Vale of Glamorgan, how they harmed communities, and how the Council could better respond. Over six months, Members attended training sessions and heard from expert witnesses to learn about the growing impact of false narratives – particularly through social media and messaging platforms – and noted real-world harms such as those experienced by organisations such as the Welsh Refugee Council.

Key recommendations included providing training for Elected Members, creating a toolkit for responding to misinformation, improving communication channels between officers and Members, establishing internal support for staff targeted by false claims, and offering media-literacy workshops for residents. The Group also encouraged collaboration with Welsh Government, schools, third-sector bodies, and local media, while exercising caution to maintain political neutrality and protect free speech.

A further recommendation was agreed by Committee, this being to include misinformation / disinformation as a formal risk on the Council's corporate risk register.

During Committee debate, the majority of Members welcomed the proposals, highlighting the benefits of improved critical thinking tools and community resilience. Councillors Carroll and Fisher raised concerns about the potential for misuse – warning that actions must not inadvertently blur the line between countering falsehoods and shutting down legitimate political disagreement. These concerns and objections were formally noted, but the Committee agreed to forward the recommendations contained within the report to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the report and recommendations contained therein be referred to Cabinet for consideration, and that a formal response be requested including agreed next steps.

(2) T H A T the topic of Mis- and Disinformation, and the potential harms associated, be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To present the findings and subsequent recommendations compiled by the Resources Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Review Group, and subsequently agreed by the Resources Scrutiny Committee, for approval by Cabinet.

(2) To enable risk mitigation to be considered formally regarding this specific topic.

773 CORPORATE RESOURCES DIRECTORATE PLAN 2026/27 (OUTLINING YEAR 2 ACTIVITIES, PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND ASSOCIATED PERFORMANCE TARGETS) TO DELIVER VALE 2030, THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN 2025-30 (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, who advised the following in response to questions and Comments from the Committee:

- The new Corporate Landlord model being introduced to centralise responsibility for the Council's physical assets. The previous model was highly devolved, with individual Service Directorates being responsible for the maintenance, acquisition and operation of their assets. Corporate Landlord would bring these together within a single Service Area. The new approach was more strategic, ensuring best value for money and maximising efficiency. The approach would help to enhance the condition and suitability of these assets. Officers were looking to make £85k in savings through the introduction of the Corporate Landlord model across the next 12 months.
- Volunteers working within assets which would move into the Corporate Landlord model would continue to be supported, as part of commitments to strengthening communities within the re-shaping programme, including those on Management Committees of Community Centres, for example.
- A consultation was underway with staff within scope of transferring into the new Corporate Landlord Service. The Annual Corporate Asset Management Plan would contain further information for Committee on the activities underway and areas of focus for the new Service and an update report would be presented to Cabinet, which could also be relayed to Committee Members as either a briefing or report.
- Action 1 in the Plan looked to strengthen the Council's relationships and work with Town and Community Councils, building on ongoing support and guidance provided to their Clerks by the Monitoring Officer, and recent positive partnerships with Town Councils regarding placemaking.
- All recommendations from the Committee's Task and Finish review on Procurement had been considered, and several addressed previously, with any outstanding being included within the Plan.

- Performance reporting methodology were discussed, the Director advised that how actions were prioritised and how exemptions were presented could be reflected on.
- Directorate Risks – Corporate Resources managed half of the Council's corporate risks.
  Two Directorate-specific risks were identified: Capacity to respond to changing legislation (e.g. post-Senedd election), and the internal capacity to deliver transformation at the required pace. Committee Members questioned whether having only two Directorate risks was sufficient and requested a review. The Director advised that while they were confident that this was a robust assessment, it could be looked at again prior to Cabinet consideration.
- Amazon web translation was being adopted for Welsh language translation to assist with savings. This was being done in a considered way to ensure the quality of the translation and would be evaluated over the next 12 months.
- The trend in use of the Mayor's budget in recent years and underspends identified had informed savings that would be made within the Mayoral office.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the Corporate Resources Directorate Plan (Appendix A to the report) and associated measures and performance targets for 2026/27 contained within it be endorsed, and this endorsement be referred to Cabinet, alongside the views of the Committee, for their consideration and endorsement of the Plan.

(2) T H A T officers and Cabinet consider and review how the prioritisation of actions and performance exceptions can be best presented in performance reports.

(3) T H A T officers and Cabinet reconsider whether the number of Directorate risks for the Corporate Resources Directorate should be expanded.

(4) T H A T the Resources Scrutiny Committee be provided with an update on how the Corporate Landlord model is implemented and embedded, alongside the planned update report to Cabinet.

<u>Reasons for recommendations</u>

(1) To ensure that the planned activities, associated measures and performance targets for the Corporate Resources Directorate as detailed in the Plan were relevant, and together with the other four Directorate Plans, become the main means through which performance against Vale 2030 was monitored and measured during 2026/2027.

(2&3) To reflect the views and suggestions of the Resources Scrutiny Committee regarding the Corporate Resources Directorate Plan and advise Cabinet of such.

(4) To ensure the Resources Scrutiny Committee are aware of the progress of the new Service implementation.

774 QUARTER 3 REVENUE MONITORING 2025/26 (REF) –

The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer presented an update on the Council's Quarter 3 Revenue Monitoring position for 2025/26, covering expenditure to 31st December and projections to year-end. Members were advised that the Council was forecasting an unplanned use of reserves of £3.1m, with £2m of this being met from the Budget Risk Reserve. Significant financial pressures continued within Children's and Adult Services, including the Council's own care homes, as well as within school transport, highways maintenance, and areas where savings delivery remained challenging.

The position on school budgets had improved slightly, though overall deficits remained high. The Committee noted that the projected cumulative school deficit had reduced from earlier levels, although the final outturn was still subject to year-end adjustments and any final Welsh Government grants. Members were reminded that work was ongoing with schools – particularly those in significant deficit – to support recovery planning.

It was further reported that reserves were projected to reduce significantly during the year, partly due to the requirement to underwrite school deficits on the Council's balance sheet. An update was also provided on highways pressures, including overspends driven by road maintenance costs. Councillor Carroll requested an appraisal comparing the cost-effectiveness of insourcing versus the Council's current position of contracting out road maintenance activities.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and appended report be noted, and that the following recommendation be referred back to Cabinet:

- That an appraisal of insourcing versus outsourcing pothole repair services be provided to the Resources Scrutiny Committee.

<u>Reason for recommendation</u>
To advise Cabinet of the views of this Committee regarding the year end Revenue Monitoring position, and to enable Scrutiny to compare the status quo with bringing the relevant activities in-house.

775 CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST DECEMBER 2025 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet and report on Capital Monitoring report were presented by the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer. Following their presentation, the Officer advised the following in response to questions from Committee Members:

- Future proposals for recently acquired regeneration assets, including the former Wilko site in Barry, were under development and would be reported to Members once proposals are sufficiently progressed. Funding arrangements would depend on scheme scope and approval, and would be reported as proposals were developed.

- Capital slippage continued to be closely monitored to ensure effective re-profiling of the programme and prudent management of financing and borrowing requirements.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and appended report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the reference and appended report, and to discussions at the meeting.