

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 19 May 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Forward Work Programme Schedule 2025/26
Purpose of Report:	To determine the Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2025/26 and to consider topics for Task and Finish Review Activity.
Report Owner:	Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	Gareth Davies, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Director of Learning and Skills Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources Head of Standards and Provision
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"> The report requests Members to consider the draft Annual Forward Work Programme items and topics of investigatory (Task and Finish Review) for 2025/26 and the new Start Well Scrutiny Committee. A draft Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix A, and Members of the Committee are asked to consider the contents for approval. In addition, the Committee is asked to note the remit of the Start Well Scrutiny Committee, as shown in paragraph 1.2 of this report. 	

Recommendations

1. That the Committee considers and agrees items for its Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2025/26 (Appendix A) including areas for deeper dive Task and Finish review investigations.
2. That the remit of the Start Well Scrutiny Committee, be noted.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To agree the items and topics that the Start Well Scrutiny Committee will consider for 2025/26.
2. To note the remit for the new Start Well Scrutiny Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1** On 10th April 2025, Cabinet agreed proposals for new Scrutiny arrangements to take affect for the 2025/26 municipal year and 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 28th 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).

Committee Name	Corporate Plan Objective	Remits
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.
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** A revised and reformatted Work Programme Schedule has been devised by Democratic Services and provides a breakdown of reports anticipated to be considered by the Start Well Scrutiny Committee over the forthcoming months/municipal year (May 2025 to April 2026). It is also designed to indicate topics of deep dive investigatory Task and Finish review. In addition, it outlines a new mechanism where reports for information and noting will be shared with Members electronically. The new Work Programme also indicates those topics that will be considered via Member's briefings outside of the formal Committee meeting settings.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The draft Work Programme schedule for 2025/26 attached at Appendix A, has been devised by Democratic Services in consultation with the Director of Learning and Skills.
- 2.2** To enable more effective scrutiny, the Council has defined the types of scrutiny and how these will take place within the Council. Types of scrutiny will include:

Scrutiny Type	Summary Description
Briefings	Information only or update items which are for noting and where scrutiny can add limited value N.B. Members can utilise the call-in procedure if required
Monitoring	Scrutiny Members consider performance against the Corporate Plan, considering objectives, measures and outcomes at a strategic level
Proposal	Policies are in development and are seeking Scrutiny feedback and recommendations to help shape the Council's future direction

Scrutiny Type	Summary Description
Investigative (Task and Finish)	Committees can take deeper dives into topics using a range of methods based upon the Committee's forward work programme and identified priorities

2.1 Briefings

Information only type items will be cascaded through an alternative medium, likely to be a shared folder, with a notification indicating when new material is available. This will include elements such as reports and presentations from the Council and Partner organisations which would likely not benefit from Scrutiny time but be useful information to support Members in improving their awareness of local, regional and national policy direction. This information could be accessed by all Members on a remote basis whenever they need to access the information. Additionally, sessions will be arranged, often before relevant Scrutiny sessions, to invite officers or wider partners to provide whole Member briefing sessions and presentations as appropriate. This will be facilitated by the Democratic Services team.

2.2 Monitoring

Monitoring of performance information (including objectives, measures and outcomes) would take place in Q2 and Q4 (including end of year self-assessment) only. This will be held in a single joint forum bringing together all existing Scrutiny committees. Whilst a large meeting, this will encourage cross-committee working and learning, and Members would be encouraged to focus questioning upon their "home" Committee's remits. Areas of interest within this forum could be used to shape individual Committee's forward work programmes moving forward, including the potential commissioning of investigative scrutiny.

2.3 Proposals

When a policy is still in its development stage, and where decisions have yet to be taken, there will be opportunities for the Scrutiny Committees to make individual recommendations on these areas which will in turn be fed back to Cabinet to consider as a policy develops. In turn, it is the expectation that Cabinet will provide a response to these recommendations including any rationale for accepting, partially accepting or rejecting.

2.4 Investigative

A Committee may identify an area of work which would benefit from a deeper dive to explore the issue further. These will be in addition to formal committee meetings and facilitated by Democratic Services, with topics initially identified at the start of the year when a Committee is identifying and agreeing its forward work programme. This cross-party work will have a clearly defined scope (defined using systems thinking methodology) with the Cabinet Member sighted upon and proposed to occur over a 12-week period (with the knowledge that there may need to be flexibility based upon scope).

- 2.5** Task and Finish will leverage the expertise of officers, partners, wider stakeholders alongside evidence and insight from the people of the Vale of Glamorgan. Investigative scrutiny is to hold the Cabinet and officers accountable on specific topics while proactively shaping the Council's policy direction. This approach will provide a platform for more active participation in the Council's decision-making processes for all members of the public, who will be invited and encouraged to participate as expert witnesses and share their lived experiences.
- 2.6** Reports and recommendations from these smaller groups will be fed back to the Cabinet Member, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration. This feedback loop will help the Council in shaping its future policy direction, ensuring that decisions are informed by a broad range of perspectives and expertise.
- 2.7** Groups would be brought together on a voluntary basis by Members, and anticipated to consist of 4 to 8 Members, and be as politically balanced as practicable, with the Chair decided by the "home" Scrutiny committee. This also presents the opportunity for cross-Committee working (dependent upon the nature of a topic). It is at the group's discretion as to how they operate in terms of ways of working, and to agree a meeting frequency and time. An exercise to map the skills, knowledge and experience of Elected Members will be undertaken to create an index to support this work and draw upon the talents of all Members in shaping policy.
- 2.8** 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.

- 2.9** Members are requested to consider and approve the proposed Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix A, and to also consider areas that may require deep dive investigatory scrutiny by a Task and Finish Review group.

- 2.10** In considering areas for Task and Finish review, the Committee should note that at its meeting held on 24th March 2025, the Governance and Audit Committee suggested that the relevant Scrutiny Committee be invited to consider undertaking a deep dive investigation / Task and Finish review into the Additional Learning Needs, given the increased risk identified as part of the Corporate Risk: Quarter 3 Update report.
- 2.11** The work programme schedule is a proposed list of items for consideration and may be subject to change depending on prevailing circumstances.

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

- 3.1** Scrutiny Committee FWP's are published by the Council on a regular basis which encourages engagement / involvement by the public in the decision-making process.
- 3.2** The Scrutiny Public Participation Guide can be found at [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Public-Speaking-Guides/23-12-04-%E2%80%93-Approved-by-Council-Version.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Public-Speaking-Guides/23-12-04-%E2%80%93-Approved-by-Council-Version.pdf)

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 – 10th April 2025:

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



Start Well Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme 2025 - 26

Corporate Plan Objectives
Objective 3 - 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).

Cabinet Members	Directors
Education, Arts and the Welsh Language	Director of Learning and Skills
Social Care and Health	Director of Social Services

Democratic Services Contact	Committee Membership
Mr Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709249	Committee Membership Webpage Scrutiny Information Webpage(s)

Co-opted Membership	
M. Werrett	Church in Wales
Dr. M. Price	Roman Catholic Church
L. Barrowclough	Parent Governor – Primary Sector
G. Van der Burgt	Parent Governor – Secondary Sector

Forms of Scrutiny	
Investigative (Task and Finish)	Committees can take deeper dives into topics using a range of methods based upon the Committee's forward work programme and identified priorities.
Proposal	Policies are in development and are seeking Scrutiny feedback and recommendations to help shape the Council's future direction.
Briefings	Information only or update items which are for noting and where scrutiny can add limited value but the Member call-in procedure is used required.

Task and Finish Working Groups [Investigative]		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-party work, with a clearly defined scope, and the Cabinet Member sighted. • Brought together on a voluntary basis by 4 to 8, politically balanced (where practical) Members, with the Chair decided by the "home" Scrutiny committee. • Leverage the expertise of officers, partners, wider stakeholders alongside evidence and insight from the people of the Vale of Glamorgan who will be invited and encouraged to participate as expert witnesses and share their lived experiences. • Hold the Cabinet and officers accountable on specific topics while proactively shaping the Council's policy direction. • Reports and recommendations fed back to the Cabinet Member, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration. 		
Topic	Officer Lead	Timeframe
		<i>(max 12 week period)</i>

Live Well Committee Meetings [Proposal]		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six scheduled meetings per Municipal Year. • Opportunity for Committees to make individual recommendations on policies that are still in their development stage, and where decisions have yet to be taken. • Committee recommendations fed back to Cabinet to consider as a policy develops, with Cabinet providing a response to recommendations, including any rationale for accepting, partially accepting or rejecting. • Arena for responding to Cabinet Member Decision Call-ins and/or Committee Requests for Consideration. 		
Topic	Officer Lead	Meeting Date
Forward Work Programme 2025-26	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	19th May 2025
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for ***** 2025/26 and Update on	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	7th July 2025

Schools in Statutory Follow-up.		
Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2024-25.	Tom Bowring Director of Corporate Resources	7th July 2025
Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2024/25	Lance Carver Director of Social Services	7th July 2025
Libraries Annual Report	Trevor Baker Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	8th September 2025
Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report	Tom Bowring Director of Corporate Resources	8th September 2025
School Admission Arrangements 2027-2028	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	10th November 2025
Corporate Safeguarding	Lance Carver Director of Social Services	10th November 2025
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for ***** 2025/26 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	10th November 2025
Primary and Secondary School Attendance Update	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	19th January 2026
School Improvement Report	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	19th January 2026 (Not confirmed)
Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council)	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	19th January 2026
Vale of Glamorgan Council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) 2023-32 - Update on Annual Review report 2024-25.	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	16th March 2026
Directorate Plans 2025-26	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	16th March 2026
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for ***** 2025/26 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	16th March 2026
Outdoor Education	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	To Be Determined
Schools of Sanctuary	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	To Be Determined

CLA Education	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	To Be Determined
Update on St Athan Primary School (Initial report 3rd March 2025)	Trevor Baker Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	To Be Determined

Member Briefings		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information only reports provided to Elected Members, with a notification indicating when new material is available. Ad hoc reports and presentations from the Council and Partner organisations which would likely not benefit from Scrutiny time but be useful information to support Members in improving their awareness of local, regional and national policy direction. Member briefing sessions would be arranged, often before relevant Scrutiny Committee meetings, to invite officers or wider partners to provide whole Member briefing sessions and presentations as appropriate. 		
Topic	Officer Lead	Method and Timeframe
Curriculum for Wales update – School Improvement / Central South Consortium	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	Member briefing
Youth Engagement and Progression Update	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	For Information Report
Youth Service Update	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	For Information Report
Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) and Pupil Engagement Service	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	For Information Report
Governor Training Report	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	For Information Report
Elective Home Education (EHE) Update	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	For Information Report
Curriculum for Wales Update	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	Member briefing
Children and Young People Services Annual Placements Review	Lance Carver Director of Social Services	For Information Report