

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 07 July 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Task and Finish Review Activity
Purpose of Report:	To determine Task and Finish Review activity for the Start Well Scrutiny Committee.
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 items and topics of investigatory group work (Task and Finish Review) for the new Start Well Scrutiny Committee. A range of suggestions were collated from members of the Committee at its meeting held on 19th May, 2025, with additional suggestions sent to the Chair after the meeting via email. The Director of Learning and Skills has assessed all suggestions and has proposed 5 possible reviews to be considered for progression. These align 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 are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the impact on schools having to make difficult decisions to balance budgets. Analysing the variances in school budget surpluses and deficits and identifying good practice and areas for improvement. 	

3. Creating a School Transport Policy.
 4. Review the Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases.
 5. Evaluate the running of school buildings, including new builds and identify good practice.
- The Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to priorities and agree the order in which the reviews are to be undertaken.
 - 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 6, but a lower or higher number can 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 possibly from the Co-Opted Members.
 - The Committee is also asked to determine if 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 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, 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), Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration.

Recommendations

1. That the order in which the Task and Finish Reviews (deep dive investigations) are to be undertaken is prioritised.
2. That the size, composition and membership of the Task and Review Group is agreed.

Reasons for Recommendations

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

- 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** During its meeting in May 2025, members of the Scrutiny Committee were asked to put forward suggestions for deep dive investigations 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. The relevant Director has been consulted and from the suggestions has proposed 5 areas of Task and Finish activity that could be progressed. These are shown in Section 2 of 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 19th May, 2025, with additional suggestions sent to the Chair after the meeting via email.
- 2.2** A list of all suggestions is shown at Appendix A which includes commentary as to whether each review suggestion should proceed.
- 2.3** The Director of Learning and Skills has assessed all suggestions and has proposed 5 possible reviews to be considered for progression. These align closely to current Council priorities, the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan and considered achievable within the 12- week cycle.
- 2.4** The 5 proposed suggestions are:
1. What has been the impact on schools having to make difficult decisions to balance budgets.
 2. Analysing the variances in school budget surpluses and deficits and identifying good practice and areas for improvement.
 3. Creating a School Transport Policy.
 4. Review the Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases.

5. Evaluate the running of school buildings, including new builds and identify good practice.
- 2.5** The Start Well Scrutiny Committee is therefore requested to priorities and agree the order in which the reviews are to be undertaken.
- 2.6** 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 and possibly from the Co-Opted Members.
- 2.7** The Committee is also asked to determine if representation from any interested parties outside of the organisation would have merit to 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.
- 2.8** 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.
- 2.9** 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 groups Terms of Reference 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, guidance and to answer queries.
- 2.10** 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 – 10th 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

Councillor	T&F Suggestion	Comment
Cllr A. Asbrey	School Budgets	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Staff Wellbeing.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Staff Competency Issues	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Pupil Discipline Issues.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Classroom Observation/ Learning Walks – effectiveness.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Reading – review of reading ages at Year 1.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr A. Asbrey	Reading – observe teaching.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr W. Hennessy	School budgets.	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.
Cllr H. Payne	What impact did the Council have on educational achievements for children and young people.	Topic too broad to be covered within a 12-week process.
Cllr H. Payne	School Transport.	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.
Cllr S. Hanks	Additional Learning Needs in the primary school sector.	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.
Cllr E. Goodjohn	School Transport.	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.
Cllr N. Hodges	Running of school buildings, which would also look at new builds and good practice.	Included in T&F suggestion from Director.