

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 10 November 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Updated Forward Work Programme Schedule 2025/26
Purpose of Report:	To determine the Updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2025/26.
Report Owner:	Director of Corporate Resources
Responsible Officer:	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"> • An updated Forward Work Programme (FWP) Schedule for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix A, and Members of the Committee are asked to consider the contents for approval. • Updates since the Committee's approval of the FWP on 19th May 2025 are set out in Section 2 of the report. 	

Recommendations

1. That the Committee considers and agrees its Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2025/26 (Appendix A).
2. T H A T a summary of the Decision Tracking Data relevant to the Start Well Scrutiny Committee be presented to the Committee as part of the biannual Forward Work Programme Monitoring Reports.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To agree the items, topics and delivery methods that the Start Well Scrutiny Committee will consider for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal year, and to update the Forward Work Programme published on the Council's website.
2. To provide a six-monthly update to Committee Members on the data readily available, to maintain an understanding of the Committee's impact in supporting the Council within its decision-making process.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 10th April 2025, Cabinet agreed proposals for new Scrutiny arrangements to take effect 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 that included four new Scrutiny Committees.
- 1.3 As well as the four Scrutiny Committees, the Council also has a broader scrutiny function which includes the following:
 - Performance Joint Scrutiny. This is a joint forum bringing together all four home Scrutiny Committees into a singular space to monitor the Council's performance and finances against its Corporate Plan.
 - Governance and Audit Committee. The purpose of this Committee is to maintain assurance in relation the Council's finances, policies and procedures, making sure they are robust and fit for purpose. As well as keeping track of the Council's control environment and maintaining its risk register.These Committees also make recommendations to Cabinet for approval.
- 1.4 On 19th May 2025, Members of the Committee were presented with a newly structured Forward Work Programme (FWP) to align with the recently agreed Scrutiny arrangements to enable more effective scrutiny, the types of scrutiny to take place being:

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 (Committee Meetings)	Policies are in development and are seeking Scrutiny feedback and recommendations to help shape the Council’s future direction.
Briefings / For Information Reporting (Committee HUB)	Information only or update items which are for noting and where scrutiny can add limited value but the Member call-in procedure is used as required.

- 1.5** At the 19th May 2025 Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Committee recommended that the Start Well Scrutiny Committee FWP schedule for 2025/26 (Appendix A to that report) be approved and agreed the items and topics for Task and Finish review investigations.
- 1.6** The agreed FWP also set out that there would be six formal meetings of the Start Well Scrutiny Committee throughout the Municipal year, the dates of which were provided within the Appendix, and that the Committee would consider the FWP biannually in May and November.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The FWP document has been maintained by Democratic Services in consultation with service area officers in preparation for Member consideration, and the latest version of the document (at the time of report publication) is attached at Appendix A to this report. Any subsequent updates will be presented to the Committee verbally by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer present. The work programme is a proposed list of items for consideration and may be subject to change depending on prevailing circumstances.
- 2.2** The Committee has established a Task and Finish Working Group to look at ALN Resource Bases. The Group Members being: Councillors H. Payne (Chair), W. Hennessy (Vice), J. Aviet, S. Hanks, W. Gilligan and A. Asbrey. The Group has met on 4 occasions including a site visit and is working towards presenting its findings at the January 2026 Committee meeting.
- 2.3** Once the review into ALN Resource Bases has been completed, a second Task and Finish Review will commence to consider the impact on schools from making difficult financial decisions.

- 2.4** The Committee has considered four proposal service area reports since May and the Committee and wider Elected Members have been provided with Briefings / For Information Reporting on two separate topics.
- 2.5** Tracking of the Committee's decisions and subsequent impact continues to be monitored by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team. Considering the new scrutiny arrangements, it was necessary to review the method for collating and maintaining decision tracking across the scrutiny function as a whole. As such, a new automated system has been developed to record and publish Scrutiny Committee recommendations more efficiently.
- 2.6** Decision tracking data has been compiled in to a PowerBI format and is now continuously available to Members, via MemberNet, at any time. Decision Tracking can be accessed via the link below:
- https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny.aspx
- This data will be regularly updated by Democratic Officers as and when updates arise. Therefore, Members no longer need to wait for decision tacking information to be formally reported to Committee and may raise queries with Democratic Officers at any time.
- 2.7** The same decision tracking data is also readily available to members of the public via the Council's Scrutiny Webpage.
- 2.8** Now that decision tracking data is more readily available, it is proposed that the information is no longer formally reported to the Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis however, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers will provide a summary on Committee decisions within the biannual FWP reports going forward.

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

- 3.1** Scrutiny Committee FWPs are published by the Council on a biannual basis, via the [Scrutiny webpage](#), which encourages engagement / public involvement by the public in the decision-making process.
- 3.2** The [Scrutiny Public Participation Guide](#) is available on the Council's Public Participation Webpage as well as advice on the Scrutiny Request for Consideration process via the Council's [Scrutiny Committee Request for Consideration](#) webpage. These methods of engagement support the commitment set out within Vale 2030 to 'Provide residents with more meaningful and engaging opportunities to participate and have a greater say in our work.'
- 3.3** Scrutiny Committee decision tracking data is available to both Elected Members and members of the public. This supports the commitments set out within Vale

2030 to 'Improve accountability and transparency by sharing more information about how decisions are made and scrutinised, priorities set, and budgets determined' as well as 'Use digital technology more innovatively to improve services whilst ensuring that services are accessible to everyone'.

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.](#)

[Full Council Scrutiny Proposal Report – 28th April 2025.](#)

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
	Director of Corporate Resources

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
K. Riddick	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
Review of Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases	Katy Williams Head of Service for ALN and Well-being katwilliams@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Topic and Review Group Composition approved 7 th July 2025.
What has been the impact on schools having to make difficult decisions to balance budgets	Elizabeth Jones – Director of Learning and Skills	To progress upon completion of the Review of Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases

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 Presented to Committee.
Sharing of Pupil Level Attainment Data. *CHAIR'S URGENT ITEM*	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	19th May 2025 Presented to Committee.
<u>Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Spring Term 2025 and Update on a School in Statutory Follow-up.</u>	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	7th July 2025 Presented to Committee.
<u>Schools Budget and Admissions Forum Representation.</u> *ADDITIONAL ITEM*	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	7th July 2025 Presented to Committee.
<u>Consultation to create new delivery models for enhanced and sustainable specialist provision.</u>	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	8th September 2025 Presented to Committee.
<u>Presentation on budget recovery plans for school.</u> *ADDITIONAL ITEM*	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	10th November 2025
<u>Annual Shareholder Report Big Fresh Catering Company</u> *ADDITIONAL ITEM*	Tom Bowring Director of Corporate Resources	10th November 2025
<u>Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for ***** 2025/26 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.</u>	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	10th November 2025
<u>Forward Work Programme 2025-26 and Decision Tracking Update</u>	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	10th November 2025
<u>Primary and Secondary School Attendance Update</u>	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	19th January 2026
<u>School Improvement Report</u>	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	19th January 2026 (Not confirmed)
<u>Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious</u>	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	19th January 2026

Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council)		
Report of the ALN Resource Base Task and Finish Review Group	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	19 th 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	16 th March 2026
Directorate Plans 2025-26	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	16 th March 2026
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for ***** 2025/26 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Principal Improvement Partner	16 th 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

- 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 – circulated – 13th October 2025
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
Youth Justice and Early Support Service	Lance Carver Director of Social Services	For Information Report – circulated – 6th October 2025

