Agenda Item No: 7

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 19 November 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (If yes, why)	Not applicable
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Forward Work Programme 2026/27 Update.
Portfolio Holder:	Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language
Lead Officer(s):	Director of Corporate Resources

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 On 18th May 2026, Members of the Committee approved its Forward Work Programme (FWP) schedule for 2026/27 and agreed the items to be reported and topics for Task and Finish review investigations.

1.2 The FWP outlines the agreed agenda for the six formal meetings of the Scrutiny Committee throughout the Municipal year and provides details about any changes.

1.3 This report provides the agreed 6 monthly FWP update.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	**Reason for Recommendation – Why?**
1	T H A T the Forward Work Programme appended to the report be agreed, subject to any amendments or suggestions raised by Members at the meeting.	To enable the Scrutiny Committee to approve a programme of work for the forthcoming municipal year that reflects Members' priorities, ensures effective forward planning, and supports the Committee in fulfilling its Scrutiny role.

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2	T H A T the agreed Forward Work Programme be published on the Council's website for public information.	To promote openness, transparency and public engagement by providing residents, stakeholders and partner organisations with clear visibility of the Committee's planned work across the municipal year.
3	T H A T the recommendation tracking information provided in the report in relation to the Scrutiny Committee be agreed.	To agree the tracking of recommendations previously made by the Scrutiny Committee.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 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.

3.2 The new arrangements were subsequently agreed by Council at its meeting held on 28th April 2025, which included a new Committee structure resulting in four objective led Scrutiny Committees.

3.3 2025/26 Municipal Year marked the first year of the new Scrutiny arrangements and an overview of the first year was provided to the Committee at its meeting on 18th May 2026.

3.4 Also during its meeting held during May 2026, members of the Start Well Scrutiny Committee were presented with a proposed and approved its Forward Work Programme for 2026/27.

3.5 The Start Well Scrutiny Committee is one of the four Directorate Scrutiny Committees, and its remit covers the Council's Wellbeing Objectives: 3 - Giving Everyone a Good Start in Life.

3.6 The Committee considers reports from the following Council Service Areas: Schools, Schools Improvement, Post 16 Education and Training, Skills, Additional Learning Needs (ALN), Youth Services, Flying Start/Families First, Play and Welsh (external policy).

3.7 Th Forward Work Programme belongs to the Elected Members of the Scrutiny Committee and is maintained, in partnership, by the Committee Chair, the lead Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer and relevant Directors. Therefore, the administrative upkeep of the programme is absorbed within day-to-day working practices, and the Chair of each Committee is encouraged to present this report on behalf of Committee Members.

3.8 In developing the proposed Forward Work Programme for 2026/27, the Committee's planned areas of Scrutiny have been considered alongside Cabinet's Annual Strategic Forward Work Programme. As per the link below:

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2026/26-04-16/Cabinet-Annual-Strategic-Forward-Work-Programme.pdf

3.9 This approach helps to support appropriate alignment between executive decision-making and Scrutiny activity, and to identify opportunities where timely pre-decision Scrutiny may add value.

3.10 The Forward Work Programme document has been maintained by Democratic Services in consultation with Service Area Officers in preparation for Member consideration.

3.11 The latest iteration 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 circumstance.

3.12 The Council undertakes an Annual Self-Assessment to evaluate how effectively it is delivering its statutory functions, corporate objectives and governance responsibilities. Scrutiny contributes to this process by providing ongoing challenge and oversight through its consideration of performance reports, service updates and delivery plans during the municipal year. Directors play a key role within Scrutiny Committees by presenting evidence, responding to challenge and providing professional insight, which helps shape the findings and conclusions of the Self-Assessment. Annual Directorate Plans are submitted by each of the Directors, which detail each Directorate's planned in-year priority activities, performance measures and associated performance targets that will contribute to delivery of Vale 2030.

3.13 The Council's Scrutiny arrangements are also supported by a programme of member briefing sessions, which complement formal Scrutiny Committee activity by providing Elected Members with timely information and policy context on key issues. Resources, presentations and materials from these briefing sessions are available to all Elected Members via MemberNet, ensuring consistent access to information and supporting informed engagement across the wider Scrutiny function.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 **Forward Work Programme Update:**

4.1.1 Members are asked to consider and approve the updated Forward Work Programme attached at Appendix A.

4.1.2 The update shows which items have been reported to previous Committee meetings, and when future items are expected to be reported.

4.1.3 The Committee are asked to approve the updated work programme for publication onto the Council's website, and also make suggestions of future report topics that they see have merit in being considered by the Scrutiny Committee.

4.2 **Committee Meetings [Proposal]:**

4.2.1 Since the Forward Work Programme was agreed in May 2026, the Scrutiny Committee has met on two occasions.

4.2.2 The Committee has considered the following subjects:

- Summary of Estyn inspection outcomes for spring term 2026 and update on schools in statutory follow.
- Update on St Athan Primary School.
- School Budget Recovery Plans.
- Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2025-26.

4.2.3 As previously indicated future agenda items are shown in Appendix A to the report as well any reports which have slipped.

4.2.4 The following changes are to be reported:

- School Improvement Work moved from July to the November meeting.
- Big Fresh Catering Company Annual Report no longer required to be reported.
- Report of the Task and Finish Review – Impact upon schools from having to make difficult budget decisions moved to January 2027.
- Additional Item for January 2027 – E-Petition requested regarding Big Fresh Catering and removal of cold meal options for schools.
- Report on School Admission Policy confirmed for January 2027.

4.3 **Recommendation Tracking:**

4.3.1 Tracking of the Committee's decisions and subsequent impact continues to be monitored and regularly updated by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team.

4.3.2 Decision tracking data has been compiled into a PowerBI format and is now continuously available to Members, via MemberNet, as well as to the Public via the Council's Scrutiny webpage. This is a new approach to improve efficiency and transparency in decision making.

4.3.3 The PowerBi link is as below:
https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny.aspx

4.4 **Task & Finish Working Groups [Investigative]:**

4.4.1 For Start Well -Review into Additional Learning Needs Resource Bases, a six monthly progress update report is scheduled for the November meeting.

4.4.2 In relation to the current/ongoing Task and Finish Review into the impact upon schools from having to make difficult budgetary decisions, that review is well underway and is due to close by the end of November. Over the course of the review since May, the Group has visited met with the Headteachers, Chair's of Governors, Business Managers for 6 primary and secondary schools, and it has

identified a number of issues which will be reported when the final report is ready for consideration.

4.5 **For Information Reporting [Committee HUB]:**

4.5.1 Below is a list of reports to be circulated as for information reports. These will also be published on the Scrutiny home page of the Council's website:

- Youth Engagement and Youth Service Update
- Governor Training Report
- Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) and Pupil Engagement Service
- Elective Home Education (EHE) Update.

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4.6 **E-Petition:**

4.6.1 In line with its remit, the Committee is asked to note that an E-Petition is currently being hosted by the Council regarding the Big Fresh Catering Company and a reduction in cold meal options. This is due to close 30th November 2026, and should it gather greater than 100 signatures, then this matter will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting scheduled for 14th January 2027. This will be in the form a formal report from the Director of Learning and Skills.

4.7 **Scrutiny Committee Visits:**

4.5.1 In addition, a programme of visits to schools was agreed for 2026/27, with suggested visits to include:

- Pencoedtre High School
- Whitmore High School.
- Llantwit Major School.

4.5.2 A dual visit to Penceodtre and Whitmore High Schools has been scheduled for Thursday, 5th November 2026

4.5.3 The visit to Llantwit Major School on the back if its Estyn Inspection in June 2026 took place on 15th October 2026.

4.5.4 Visits and a member's briefing in regard to the Flying Start has been proposed by the Vice-Chair, and these will be progressed over the next few weeks.

5.0 How evidence has been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

5.1 **Recommendation/Decision Tracking**

5.1.1 Tracking of the Committee's decisions and subsequent impact continues to be monitored and regularly updated by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Team.

5.1.2 The Forward Work Programme update has been the basis of consultation with relevant Directors and Service Officers and is closely aligned to objectives as contained in the Vale 2030 Corporate Plan.

5.1.3 At the November 2025 meeting, the Committee agreed that 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. 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's decision-making processes:

Total number of recommendations raised by the Committee over the municipal year:	13
Recommendations referred to Cabinet:	1
Recommendations labelled as Other:	12
Recommendations raised as a result of Cabinet Reference:	0
Recommendations **Accepted** by Cabinet:	PENDING
Recommendations **Partially Accepted** by Cabinet:	
Recommendations **Noted** by Cabinet:	

Next Steps

5.2 Committee members are requested to consider the Forward Work Programme biannually at the May and November Committee meetings. After which, the agreed Forward Work Programme will be published on the Council's website for public information.

5.3 The Forward Work Programme will continue to reflect the various forms of Scrutiny and be assessed on a regular basis by the Committee Chair:
Investigative (Task & 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.
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.

5.4 Committee Members are encouraged to approach the Committee Chair and/or the lead Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer with any suggestions or queries in relation to the Forward Work Programme at any time.

6.0 How does this report support the Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

6.1 Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programmes are published by the Council on a biannual basis, via the Scrutiny webpage, which encourages public involvement in the decision making process. 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. 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.'***

6.2 Scrutiny Committees are not the final decision-making authority within the Council but they can raise recommendations, and refer those on, to help improve the Council's work. As such, an interactive tool providing an overview of recommendations made during the municipal year and the status of those recommendations are readily available to both Elected Members and members of the public. This process 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.'***

7.0 How does this support the Five Ways of Working?

7.1 **Long Term** - In maintaining an annual Forward Work Programme, the Scrutiny Committees support the long term sustainability aims set out in the Council's strategic priorities and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. By scheduling key areas of work across the full municipal year, Committees ensure that oversight is not confined to short term pressures, but instead considers the enduring needs of residents, communities, and services. A year long programme provides the space for continued monitoring of corporate objectives, emerging risks, and evolving policy commitments such as those within the Vale 2030 plan. This long term approach ensures that Scrutiny activity remains aligned to the Council's vision and contributes to delivering sustainable outcomes across social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being.

7.2 **Prevention** - The structure of a comprehensive annual work programme enables Scrutiny Committees to identify issues early and respond proactively before risks escalate into more significant challenges. By routinely reviewing performance data, service updates, and strategic assessments throughout the year, Committees can highlight areas where preventative action may strengthen service resilience or protect vulnerable groups. This forward looking method supports the Council's preventative ethos, allowing time for officers, Cabinet, and partners to consider recommendations that address root causes – rather than reacting to problems once they materialise. It also helps ensure that the Council's resources are used effectively by

preventing avoidable demand on services later in the year.

7.3 **Integration** - Scrutiny work programmes are designed to reflect and reinforce the interconnected nature of the Council's well-being objectives. By mapping scheduled reports and review activities to wider strategic priorities, Scrutiny Committees help ensure that decisions and service developments are not considered in isolation, but within the broader context of corporate planning, financial strategy, and community outcomes. An integrated programme also supports alignment across Committees, avoiding duplication and strengthening a collective understanding of cross cutting themes such as equalities, climate action, safeguarding, and public participation. This helps Scrutiny play a constructive role in ensuring that the Council's planning and decision making processes remain cohesive and mutually supportive.

7.4 **Collaboration** - A maintained and published Forward Work Programme encourages collaboration between Scrutiny Members, officers, Cabinet Members, partners, and community stakeholders. By setting out work in advance, officers have clarity on when their insights and expertise will be required, enabling better-prepared reporting and improving the quality of evidence presented to Scrutiny. The programme also creates opportunities for joint work – for example, Task & Finish activity, cross-committee sessions, or engagement with external bodies where partnership approaches can add value. This collaborative ethos enhances both transparency and shared ownership of service improvement, strengthening Scrutiny's role as a constructive, collective mechanism for accountability.

7.5 **Involvement** - Publishing the Forward Work Programme for the entire municipal year promotes meaningful public involvement by providing residents and stakeholders with clear visibility of upcoming Scrutiny items. This transparency allows individuals, communities, and partner organisations to contribute insights, lived experience, or evidence at the most relevant stage of the decision-making cycle. It also supports the commitments within the Council's Public Participation Strategy by offering structured points of engagement throughout the year, rather than on an ad hoc basis. By ensuring that Scrutiny's work is accessible and planned, Committees help extend involvement beyond elected Members, enabling a broader range of voices to influence the Council's work and future direction.

Resources

8.0 Finance

8.1 There are no financial factors to consider as a direct result of this report.

9.0 Workforce

9.1 There are no workforce factors to consider as a direct result of this report.

10.0 Legal

10.1 **Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? If not, why?**
An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed because this report relates solely to the Committee's forward work programming arrangements and does not propose any changes to policy, service delivery, or operational practices that would give rise to identifiable equality impacts.

10.2 **Monitoring Officer Comments:** The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the contents of this report and confirmed that the preparation and approval of the Scrutiny Committee's Forward Work Programme is consistent with the Council's constitutional arrangements. The report does not raise any issues of unlawfulness and adheres to the established decision-making framework. The Monitoring Officer is also satisfied that the Forward Work Programme supports the principles of good governance, including accountability, transparency and sound decision-making, as expected of statutory officers under established governance standards.

11.0 Key Contacts

12.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Service Area Officer:	**Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer:**
Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709249	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709249

Appendix

Appendix A – Start Well Scrutiny Committee Draft Forward Work Programme 2026/27.

Background Documents

Index of resource hyperlinks embedded within the report:
https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2026/26-04-16/Cabinet-Annual-Strategic-Forward-Work-Programme.pdf

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2026/26-04-16/Directorate-Plans-2026-27.pdf

https://participate.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/petitions

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/Scrutiny/Scrutiny.aspx

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Public-Speaking-Guides/25-06-17-Scrutiny-Participation-Guide-Updated.pdf

https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/Public-Participation-at-Council-Meetings.aspx

https://valeofglamorgancouncil-customerportal.achieveservice.com/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-a7564af5-14e1-40ee-87d9-2a3bc3dc5bef/AF-Stage-b1f7ae81-4534-405f-befa-27d62c1bb5be/definition.json&redirectlink=/en&cancelRedirectLink=/en&consentMessage=yes&noLoginPrompt=1

APPENDIX A

Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Forward Work Programme 2026 - 27

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

Committee Membership	Democratic Services Contact
Chair: Stephen Haines **Vice-Chair:** William Hennessy Committee Membership Webpage Scrutiny Information Webpage(s)	Mr Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer gjdavies@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk 01446 709249
Co-opted Membership	
M. Werrett	Church in Wales
Dr. M. Price	Roman Catholic Church
Vacancy	Parent Governor – Primary Sector
K. Riddick	Parent Governor – Secondary Sector

Non-Voting Observers
G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education) R. Davies (Vale Youth Council) P. Bond (Vale Youth Council) Vacant (Secondary) Vacant (Primary) Vacant (Special) Vacant (Headteachers) Vacant (Free Churches)

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]

- 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
Impact upon schools from having to make difficult budget decisions.	Matthew Curtis Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	Final report to be considered by the Scrutiny Committee by November 2026. More likely January 2027.

Start Well Committee Meetings [Proposal]		
• 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 2026-27	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	Presented to Committee -18th May 2026
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Spring Term 2026/27 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	Presented to Committee - 6th July 2026
School Improvement Work	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	~~6th July 2026 –~~ Scheduled for 9th November 2026.
Update on St Athan Primary School (Initial report 3rd March 2025)	Matthew Curtis Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	Presented to Committee - 6th July 2026
Llantwit Major School – Challenges update position.	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	6th July 2026 – Scrutiny visit to the school on 15th October 2026.
Update on School Budget Recovery Plans	Matthew Curtis Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	Presented to Committee - 14th September 2026
Welsh Language Standards Annual Monitoring Report 2025-2026	Tom Bowring Director of Corporate Resources	Presented to Committee - 14th September 2026
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Summer Term 2026/27 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	9th November 2026

~~**Annual Shareholder Report Big Fresh Catering Company**. – previous report 10th November 2025.~~	Matthew Curtis Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	~~9th November 2026~~ No longer a requirement to report to Committee. Terms of Reference changed by Full Council 13th July 2026.
Forward Work Programme 2026-27	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer	9th November 2026
Report of the Task and Finish Review – Impact upon schools from having to make difficult budget decisions.	Gareth Davies Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.	~~9th November 2026~~ – pushed back to 18th January 2027.
School Admission Arrangements 2028-2029	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	~~9th November 2026 or~~ 18th January 2027
School Improvement Work 2025-26	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	9th November 2026 – additional item added.
Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2025-2026 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council)	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	18th January 2027
Learning and Skills Directorate Plans 2027-28	Elizabeth Jones Director of Learning and Skills	15th March 2027
Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Autumn Term 2026/27 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.	Carys Pritchard Lead Officer for School Improvement	15th March 2027
Update on the Proposal to Create New Delivery Models for Enhanced and Sustainable Specialist Provision (EAWL) (REF)	Matthew Curtis Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources	To Be Determined

For Information Reporting/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.
- Information reports will also be provided to the public via the Council's Scrutiny Webpage.

Topic	Officer Lead	Method and Timeframe
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 Lead Officer for School Improvement	Member briefing