

## SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Representing Bridgend County Borough Council – Councillor M. Lewis and H. Williams.

Representing Cardiff City and County Council – Councillor N. Mackie (Chair).

Representing the Vale of Glamorgan Council – Councillors P. Drake and R. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chair).

(a) Announcement –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services 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”.

(b) Apology for Absence –

This was received from Councillor M. Michael (Cardiff City and County Council).

(c) Minutes –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 be approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of a declaration of interest by the Chair, Councillor Mackie, concerning Agenda Item: 7 – Shared Regulatory Services Annual Report 2023/24. The nature of her interest was that she was a leaseholder of a property that could potentially benefit from grant funding with regard to repairing fire safety issues for leaseholders that are not of their making. This was a personal, not prejudicial, interest.

(d) Declarations of Interest –

No declarations of interest were received.

(e) Overview and Update on Shared Regulatory Services (DEH) –

The report apprised the Committee of the work of the service and progress toward completing the actions contained in the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) Business

Plans. This was presented to the Committee by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, in conjunction with her colleagues, namely the three Operational Managers for the Shared Regulatory Service, and the Operational Manager – Accountancy.

They outlined to the Committee the key areas of the report, ranging from Human Resource matters (sickness absence, recruitment and retention, etc.), the financial position, forecast and context (including any relevant under – and over – spends in the relevant service areas / categories and those experienced by the Vale of Glamorgan as part of this strategic partnership with Bridgend and Cardiff Councils), Food Service and Trading Standards performance (which was generally positive for the start of the new financial year), the 2024-25 Communicable Disease Plan and performance around noise and air pollution (which included a positive set of performance figures).

The related Action Plan for the financial year was also outlined, the impending special procedures regime and public health interventions (i.e. prosecutions for non-compliance at Shisha bars, enforcement of sunbed regulations and addressing cases of ringworm at a barber shop in Bridgend, as well health and safety interventions around electrical safety at hospitality premises, etc.) the impact of the Grenfell Enquiry and tackling issues around private sector housing.

The work of SRS around animal health and welfare was outlined to the Committee, including recognition by the RSPCA of its work in this area under three categories, as well as its efforts around monitoring the 'Bluetongue Virus (BTV)' outbreak, currently restricted to parts of England only, but which required ongoing vigilance in case this should spread to parts of Wales.

Other areas covered included were SRS efforts to tackle illegal tobacco and vapes, as well as making best use of resources (as part of the audit results from two main audits).

A dual presentation was also given to the Committee, by two of the SRS Team Managers covering the Bridgend and Cardiff areas for Housing Enforcement. The presentation articulated their multi-faceted work in this area, the challenges they faced as well as the support that could be offered to persons impacted, as well as relevant case studies, and details concerning enforcement and prevention.

During the course of the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were made by the Members of the Committee.

Councillor Lewis asked what the current position was on the creation of Regulatory apprenticeships to secure the future of the professions into the medium and long term for SRS. It was explained that this had been a long-term commitment and 'journey' for SRS in order to progress this, and there had been positive developments recently, including the development of a designated qualification (Level Four Diploma in Regulatory Compliance) and the subsequent completion of the pathway template document. The Head of Service believed that discussions were now taking place between the new Medr organisation and training providers on how the Regulatory Apprenticeship would be rolled out.

On Councillor Drake's query on whether the outbreak of Ringworm mentioned in the report in the Bridgend area was on the increase, it was explained that this spate of Ringworm infections was limited to a small number of barber shops local to the area only, relating to a certain type of haircut that was being provided. SRS had offered advice and guidance on the appropriate cleaning and disinfection of hair cutting equipment used, meaning that the situation was now fully under control.

The Chair congratulated the SRS and the relevant officers and teams for their work on animal health and welfare, with the subsequent recognition and awards from the RSPCA. She asked about the risk of the BTV outbreak spreading to Wales, with the response being that the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), as well as the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO) were monitoring the situation and were in regular contact with SRS and there would be further meetings with the relevant bodies giving a further update on this shortly. It was hoped that with the onset of Autumn and Winter, and the potential for colder temperatures, the main means of transmission (via Midges) would be neutralised.

On the Chair's query regarding the new food regulations and legislation, with no additional funding nor staff available to help enact this, it was explained that consideration would be given to combining these new responsibilities with existing inspection and reprioritisation of activities.

With regard to the Chair's query on the dual presentation on housing enforcement, and the number of more extreme cases where housing enforcement was required (hoarding, disrepair, poor hygiene, etc.). It was explained that approximately two or three such extreme cases a year were dealt with. This highlighted the fact that not all such cases were so extreme and could be resolved at an earlier stage and through prevention. The relevant officers had had specialist training to engage with residents who may be experiencing issues around hoarding, etc. as well as the involvement of other voluntary agencies, and Mental Health, Social Services, and the Self Neglect Panel to also support. In many cases this approach had been successful, but some people still continued or restarted hoarding and other related behaviours.

The Vice-Chair and the Committee wished to commend SRS on the extensive and challenging work it undertook and to forward the Committee's thanks to the teams involved.

There being no further questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted and agreed.
- (2) T H A T the 2024-25 Communicable Disease Plan be approved.
- (3) T H A T the Head of Shared Regulatory Services be authorised to make administrative amendments to the Communicable Disease Plan 2024-25, should the need arise.

### Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To ensure that the Shared Regulatory Service has robust arrangements in place to deliver its obligations in respect of Communicable Disease.
- (3) To authorise minor changes to be made, should the need arise, during the lifetime of the Communicable Disease Plan, without the need for it to be brought back to the Joint Committee.

### (f) Shared Regulatory Services Food and Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan 2024/25 (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Operational Manager Shared Regulatory Services, apprised the Committee of the work of the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) in respect of Food and Feed law.

The partner Councils of SRS had a duty, delegated to the Joint Committee, to enforce the Food Safety Act 1990; the Official Food and Feed Controls (Wales) Regulations 2009 and a wide variety of other food / feed legislation including the Food Hygiene (Wales) Regulations 2006. Due to this, there was a requirement to produce a Food Safety Service Plan setting out the arrangements to discharge these duties and the Food and Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan to inform residents, businesses and other stakeholders in the region of the arrangements the Councils had currently in place to regulate food safety.

The Plan was ultimately there to describe how SRS and the partner Councils would ensure the safety and quality of the food chain and to minimise the risk to both human and animal health as part of this. This was done through an inspection programme, dealing with complaints, providing advice and education, undertaking sampling and enforcement, when necessary, as well undertaking a risk-based approach.

The challenges around fully implementing the Plan were highlighted, such as the service operating in deficit, due to the shortfall of 6.5 FTEs needed to meet the demands placed on the Food Safety service and deliver the full Food Safety programme in accordance with the Food Law code of Practice and participate in all surveys with other Local Authorities. Due to this, contractors were used to help fill this gap, with funds from a vacant post used to pay for these thereby ensuring that the requirements under the Food Law Code of Practice were met.

In terms of performance, the previous year had been positive such as clearing the backlog of inspections which had emerged due to COVID-19 and a number of successful prosecutions.

The Chair and the Committee highlighted the work that SRS officers had undertaken to get to the current level of inspections following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee, after considering the report, subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the 2024/25 Food and Feed Law Enforcement Plan be approved.
- (2) T H A T the Head of the Shared Regulatory Services be authorised to make administrative amendments to the 2024/25 Food and Feed Law Enforcement Service Plan should the need arise.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) In order that the partner Local Authorities can set out their Enforcement Plan and subsequently can discharge their statutory responsibilities under the relevant legislation.
- (2) To enable the Head of the Shared Regulatory Services to update the Plan should any changes in law or best practice be introduced during the period in question.

(g) Review of the Shared Regulatory Services – Compliance and Enforcement Policy (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, advised the Joint Committee of updates relating to the Shared Regulatory Services Compliance and Enforcement Policy. The Policy had been in place since 2016 to set the standards that would be applied when dealing with issues of non-compliance with public protection law. The Policy was last reviewed in 2023 to ensure that it remained up-to-date and fit for purpose.

A draft revised Policy had been prepared to reflect new areas of enforcement and to fully reflect the compliance and enforcement options available in the context of private sector housing, the two new annexes were:

- The new Annex 4 set out the full range of enforcement options available when dealing with non-compliance in the private rented sector; and
- The new Annex 5 provided details on the principle and the options available when formal action was taken in cases of noncompliance with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

The Committee, after considering the report, subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the revised Shared Regulatory Services Compliance and Enforcement Policy and accompanying Annexes, to be used by Shared Regulatory Services, be approved.
- (2) T H A T the adoption of the revised Policy by the respective Councils for those functions undertaken by the Shared Service on their behalf be recommended and endorsed.
- (3) T H A T the Head of Shared Regulatory Services be authorised to make minor administrative amendments and updates to the revised Compliance and Enforcement Policy once implemented, should the need arise.

Reasons for decisions

- (1) To ensure that the Policy continues to reflect the full remit of the Shared Service and remains current, relevant, and fit for purpose.
- (2) To ensure that the revised Policy will be adopted by each of the three partner Local Authorities.
- (3) To ensure that during the lifetime of the revised Policy (i.e. prior to its next full review), minor updates and amendments can be incorporated without the need to seek approval on each occasion from the Joint Committee.