SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 25th March, 2026.

The Committee agenda is available here.

The recording of the meeting is available here.

Representing Bridgend County Borough Council – Councillors M. Lewis and H. Williams (Vice-Chair).

Representing Cardiff City and County Council – Councillor N. Mackie.

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

(a) Announcement –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be 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 11th February, 2026 be approved as a correct record,

(d) Declarations of Interest –

No declarations of interest were received.

(e) Audit of the 2024/25 Shared Regulatory Services Financial Statements (DEH) –

The report was presented to the Joint Committee by the Operational Manager – Accountancy, in conjunction with the Audit Manager, Audit Wales. The purpose of the report was to present to the Committee the findings of the Auditor General for Wales following the audit of Shared Regulatory Services Financial Statements for 2024/25 and incorporating all agreed amendments, for their consideration and approval, and to be then signed by the Auditor General for Wales.

The audit of the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts was in the final stages of completion, hence the need, as part of the recommendations to the report, for the Committee to endorse that authority be granted to the Head of Finance, Vale of Glamorgan Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to approve the final amendments to the accounts.

The key points of the report and related matters were outlined to the Committee, which included:

- Overall, Audit Wales intended to provide an unqualified opinion on the accounts, which was a 'clean' opinion and therefore a good outcome for the Joint Committee.
- There were no misstatements that remain uncorrected. This meant that all the issues identified were resolved and corrected by the Council. Any changes were summarised in the report / appendices.
- The challenges and delays around completing the Audit were highlighted. This had meant that the audit process had taken longer than anticipated, but had improved since previous years. This was being reported with the hope that the process could be put back on track going forward, with both Audit Wales and Welsh Local Authorities having been impacted by the Pandemic which had disrupted the usual Audit cycles for these. Audit Wales would be working and engaging with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and other Authorities in order to achieve this and to ensure a faster and smoother audit process. The other aspect of this which could be an issue was that the audit was protracted and therefore the total cost of the audit was higher than estimated in the bill in the Audit Plan. The total consideration of this had not yet been quantified or considered by the Audit Director but it was still important to raise the potential at this stage that there might be an additional audit invoice.
- Another recommendation raised was around related party declarations for Members and Senior Officers, and that steps were taken to gather this additional information during the audit process, and no additional declaration was required as a result of the declarations made. The various appendices / supporting documents were outlined to the Committee, with an explanation for each.

The Operational Manager – Accountancy wanted to add that regarding the delays to the account, this was an extensive piece of audit work with limited resource, and not all information being held within finance. The Operational Manager – Accountancy would be liaising with Audit Wales about the timing of this future audit as it coincided with the Council's annual budget setting process.

Councillor Drake queried around how Members could access the Declarations of Interest form, to which they were advised it would be sent again to all Members.

The Joint Committee, after considering the report, subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Shared Regulatory Services 2024/25 Statement of Accounts be approved, signed and dated by the Chair of the Committee.

(2) T H A T, as the amended Statement of Accounts were subject to final checks by Audit Wales, delegated authority be granted to the Head of Finance, Vale of Glamorgan Council, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to approve final amendments to the accounts.

(3) T H A T the Letter of Representation to Wales Audit for 2024/25 be noted, agreed, signed and dated by the Chair of the Committee.

(4) T H A T the report of the Appointed Auditor on the audit of Shared Regulatory Services for 2024/25 be noted.

(5) T H A T the response to the Audit Wales Audit Enquiries at Appendix C to the report be approved.

(6) T H A T the Shared Regulatory Services Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 be approved, signed and dated by the Chair of the Committee, the Chair of the Shared Regulatory Services Management Board and the Head of Shared Regulatory Services.

<u>Reasons for decisions</u>

(1) In order that the Statement of Accounts be approved prior to the deadline.

(2) To enable the Amended Statement of Accounts to be approved following review by Audit Wales.

(3) In order that the signed Letter of Representation be returned to Audit Wales.

(4) To ensure that the Members were aware of the results of the audit of the 2024/25 Financial Statements of Shared Regulatory Services.

(5) This was in response to Audit Wales having written to both officers and those charged with governance with a set of queries to provide assurance on fraud, legal and related parties.

(6) To enable the 2024/25 accounts to be finalised.

(f) <u>Shared Regulatory Services Overview and Update Report (DEH)</u> –

The report apprised the Joint Committee of the work of the service and progress toward completing the actions contained in the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Business Plans. The report was presented to the Committee by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, in conjunction with Operational Manager – Environmental

Protection and Licensing. They covered several key areas, achievements and challenges for SRS, including the following:

- Human Resources matters / sickness absence figures;
- The budgetary position / financial monitoring;
- Performance monitoring;
- The new Food Standards Agency (FSA) Food Standards Delivery Model;
- Restricting the promotion of “less than healthy foods”;
- Ensuring that Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils met their statutory duties on monitoring and to maintain / improve air quality;
- The latest position with the Building Safety (Wales) Bill and the current work being undertaken by SRS in this sector;
- An update on recent illegal dog breeding prosecutions;
- The latest position with the Tobacco and Vapes (Wales) Bill;
- Trading Standards impacts and outcomes, including the recent all Wales stand-alone Impacts and Outcomes report, which had been released, detailing the work of Local Authorities in Wales during the 2024-25 financial year and outlining their successes;
- Details of enforcement activity and recent cases investigated by the SRS that had resulted in prosecution.

During the course of the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised.

Councillor Mackie reflected upon the positive work of the team, particularly considering the demands on Licencing with the increase in events over the Summer in Cardiff.

Councillor Sivagnanam queried the potential significant increase in the number of establishments projected to require inspection and how this would impact upon resources and wider service delivery, to which the Head of Shared Regulatory Services advised this was a forecast but was based upon the new risk management approach as part of the requirements.

Councillor Mackie suggested that the Service raise public awareness of improvements to air quality, to which the Operational Manager – Environmental Protection and Licensing responded that there were already materials on each Council’s website, but this could be explored further. They also sought to further understand how they could potentially be funding the potential building safety work, to which they advised that preparatory funding had been made available but that further detail would be available after the upcoming election, and that Welsh Government would need to finance any hosted service adequately.

Councillor Drake shared an example of a wood mill which was causing air quality issues locally and leading to residents’ complaints, which SRS agreed to follow up outside of the meeting.

Councillor Mackie also raised around the potential impact on staff members visiting animal welfare sites, and queried how there were buyers given the conditions the animals were living in, to which the Head of Shared Regulatory Services responded that these were often complex criminal activities, and photos of puppies were often taken in homely environments and prices lower than others to attract public interest.

Councillor Drake asked for clarity around the animal services offering and to understand the breadth of services covered, to which they were advised it covered a range of areas including settings like kennels and catteries, performing animals, dangerous wild animals and that it was a broad area of work.

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

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Overview and Update Report be agreed and noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report, discussions at the meeting and following the report's consideration by the Joint Committee of the work of the service and the progress toward completing the actions contained in the SRS Business Plans.