

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 11<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2024

REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE: 18<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2024

“146 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2030, PANEL  
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR  
2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2024 was presented by the Director of Place in conjunction with the Director of Environment and Housing.

This was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, which helped to break down the various key areas of the report for the Committee, including the Corporate Plan Development, Panel Performance Assessment (PPA), Learning from 2022 / 2023 annual self-assessment and the proposed approach for 2023 / 2024 and the Annual Performance Calendar. After each of these sections there was a pause in the presentation in order to allow questions or points of clarity to be made by Members, etc.

Following the presentation of each of the relevant sections of the report, a number of questions and comments were made by the Committee, these included the following:

Councillor Hooper queried if it would be better to move away from having a five year period for the Plan and to look at something more flexible and agile in light of emerging and unforeseen issues and events, in order that the Council could more effectively address the pressures or challenges that the Council would face as a result. It was explained that there was a set of fairly rigid guidelines which the Council had to follow in terms of preparation of the Corporate Plan, but, as much as possible, the Council tried to draft the Plan in such a way that there was a degree of flexibility and that it could be amended in light of unpredicted events that might occur in the future. In addition, the existing Plan had stood up pretty well in light of events such as the cost-of-living crisis, the war in Ukraine, the rise of inflation, Covid-19 and the impact of Brexit. It was essential that as an organisation the Council had a core plan to work to and the five-year time span for this was recognised as good practice but with the built in flexibility in order to account for as many issues and unforeseen circumstances as possible.

Councillor Ernest queried the role of so called “backbench” Elected Members as part of the Panel performance assessment. It was explained that as part of the PPA timetable, as detailed within the body of the report, there was reference to the involvement and engagement of scrutiny and the wider body of Elected Members in the PPA process as well as Full Council. This also included Members of the Governance and Audit Committee.

In relation to the learning from 2022/23 Annual Self Assessment and proposed approach for 2023/24, Councillor Hooper raised the disconnect between the previous PPA and the results of the “Let’s Talk About Life in the Vale” residents survey and the importance, wherever possible, of the self assessment being aligned as much as possible with the views expressed through the residents’ survey. This was in order that the Corporate Plan was better informed and that it provided real benefits to the residents of the Vale. It was explained that the self assessment process in conjunction with the new peer challenge / review would help the Council to get a more moderated view of its performance. It was explained that the self assessment and feedback from the residents’ survey would never fully align due to the fact that they were looking at slightly different things but with the new process and mechanism in place around external peer reviews, this would help them to align more than they had in the past.

The Chair referred to the Annual Self Assessment 2023/24 timetable and her concerns around the engagement on the self assessment with staff, members of the public and other key stakeholders during August 2024. This was because August was traditionally a holiday period for many people and she queried how Council could ensure that the engagement would remain meaningful if significant numbers of people were away. It was explained that such concerns had also been raised at the recent Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting and those concerns had been taken back to the relevant colleagues in order to address. It was also pointed out that over the year there had already been many instances of engagement with various stakeholders and there would be a number of stakeholder events during the course of July and the rest of the summer months. There would also be opportunities for engagement and consultation potentially in the Autumn period as well.

Councillor Protheroe made an operational request concerning engagement and insight which she stated was obviously critical to the formation of the Corporate Plan in order to help identify and design what service users needed. She stated that the use of surveys as part of this process was good but could be quite binary in terms of the questions that were put to people surveyed and she wanted the Council to look at how it could do more in terms of how it demonstrated to residents that it was listening to their concerns and comments as well as putting service users at the heart of what it did as a public body. She queried whether within the additional engagement and insight that was going to be undertaken that such information could be fed back to this Committee in order that it could see exactly what was happening and what was being done with the information. It was explained that these comments would be passed on to the Director of Corporate Resources in order to assist.

Councillor Ernest supported the comments and concerns raised about the month of August being used as part of the engagement process and the impact of this holiday period on response rates. He would support any recommendations about seeking the August date either being realigned in some way or other measures taken to ensure that the calendar or timetable for the process gave adequate opportunity for consultees to provide meaningful feedback. The comments would be referred to the

Director of Corporate Resources as the relevant Director involved in the consultation and engagement process.

Subsequently, it was

RECOMMENDED – That the following comments / recommendations from the Committee be referred to Cabinet for consideration:

- That the Council ensures that the self-assessment process aligns as much as possible with the views expressed through the recent resident survey Let's Talk About Life in the Vale.
- That the concerns and potential risks raised by the Committee in relation to the annual self-assessment and the related timetable for engagement be considered. As part of this, consideration should be given to a more flexible approach to the engagement timetable, such as extending the length for consultation and engagement, in order to ensure that this is meaningful and representative.

#### Reason for recommendation

To ensure that Cabinet has the opportunity to consider the Committee's comments / recommendations as part of its consideration of the report and to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in this process as well as ensuring that the consultation is sufficiently robust and effective."