

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 19 September 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	Reshaping Programme: Strengthening Communities - A Response to Audit Wales Reports on Tackling Poverty and Third Sector Working
Purpose of Report:	To advise Cabinet of the work undertaken by Cwmpas on behalf of the Council in response to four Audit Wales reports and to seek approval for a way forward aligned to the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-30 and the Reshaping Programme.
Report Owner:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring - Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Due to the corporate nature of this report, no specific Ward Member consultation has been undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report sets out the key findings and recommendations contained in reports produced by Cwmpas following a programme of engagement undertaken on behalf of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, in response to four Audit Wales Reports, focused on tackling poverty and working with the third sector. • The engagement focused on the recommendations outlined in these reports and looked at the Council's current work on tackling poverty as well as working relationships with Third Sector Organisations, Social Enterprises and Town and Community Councils to explore opportunities for development. • This report highlights the results of extensive engagement with both internal Council officers, and representatives from external organisations, namely, Third Sector, Social Enterprise and Town and Community Councils. • This report also considers the conclusions and recommendations resulting from the engagement and the Council's proposals to address them as part of the development of a new Corporate Plan and the Reshaping Programme of transformation. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet notes the findings and recommendations detailed in the Cwmpas reports attached as Appendices A and B to this report.
2. That Cabinet approves the proposed ways forward as described in the body of the report in response to the recommendations in the Cwmpas report as aligned to the recommendations in the four Audit Wales reports.
3. That Cabinet refers this report to Corporate Performance and Resources Committee, Community Liaison Committee, and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee for their information and consideration, with any views being referred back to Cabinet for consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To advise Cabinet of the work undertaken by Cwmpas on behalf of the Council, their findings and recommendations.
2. To develop an integrated response to the Audit Wales reports using the findings and recommendations produced by the programme of engagement with Cwmpas.
3. To enable the relevant Committees to have sight of the development of this body of work and to provide an opportunity to feed back their comments to Cabinet.

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2023 Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee considered a report on Strengthening Communities and work to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis. The report was also referred to Cabinet with the recommendations/considerations of the Scrutiny Committee, Governance and Audit Committee, Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee. The report set out work being undertaken by the Council and also the proposed approach to responding to four Audit Wales reports. Three reports focusing on poverty were all Wales reports and a Vale of Glamorgan specific report focused on working with the Third sector. The Committee report recognised that a significant amount of work is taking place across a number of workstreams which interconnect and would benefit from a more integrated approach, including the response to the four Audit Wales report recommendations. This would streamline some activity and enable greater clarity of focus and purpose.
- 1.2 The Audit Wales reports encourage changes in how the Council works with the community, the third sector and social enterprises. Three reports form part of Audit Wales's work on tackling poverty across Wales and one report is specific to the Vale of Glamorgan and focuses on work with the Third Sector. The reports are:
 - Time for Change – Poverty in Wales
 - A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises

- Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance
 - Working with the Third Sector (in the Vale of Glamorgan).
- 1.3** The Council was already progressing a number of actions/plans to address the recommendations within the reports. To assist further with this work the Council engaged the Cwmpas development agency to undertake a programme of engagement on its behalf, which involved discussions both internally and externally to understand more about its work with the third sector and social enterprises and opportunities for future work including specifically around tackling poverty.
- 1.4** It was recognised that this work would have multiple benefits and would assist with developing a programme of work to tackle poverty, assist with the new Corporate Plan, key elements of the Reshaping Programme and particularly the developments of relationships and opportunities with other sectors, the review of the Voluntary Sector Compact and the Town and Community Councils Charter.
- 1.5** The work undertaken by Cwmpas involved discussions with key officers within the Council, third sector partners and social enterprises in the Vale of Glamorgan as well as Town and Community Councils. The work was a combination of online interviews, focus groups and workshops. Cwmpas also undertook a thorough review of key documentation such as the Corporate Plan, Annual Delivery Plan and the PSB’s Well-being Plan.
- 1.6** Cwmpas is the UK’s largest co-operative development agency, providing business support for social businesses and co-operatives, including growth and new start businesses; social care co-ops, housing co-ops, and community-owned facilities. Their service has been developed to support public, private and third sector organisations to evaluate and embed social value and maximise their social impact.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

Methodology

- 2.1** The Cwmpas team undertook a review of the Council’s strategic documents including the Council’s Corporate Plan 2020-25, The Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2023-24 and 2024-25, the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board (PSB) Wellbeing Plan 2023-28, the Council’s Procurement Policy and Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 and documents relating to the allocation of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the projects supported.
- 2.2** A series of online interviews were undertaken with Council Officers from a variety of departments in order to understand the current work being undertaken in relation to poverty, looking at funding sources being used and any cross departmental working, as well as ideas to align poverty workstreams. Additionally, their experience of working with the Third Sector and Social Enterprise was explored, noting their suggestions on how this work could be further developed.

An online interview with members of the Ardal team was undertaken as the Vale of Glamorgan Council are part of the collaborative Ardal procurement partnership with Cardiff, Monmouthshire and Torfaen Councils. The Ardal partnership is hosted by Cardiff Council.

- 2.3** Online interviews with key representatives from a number of Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises based or working in the County were arranged and these focused on their working relationship with the Council. The interviews explored the barriers and challenges to working with the Council, as well as any opportunities to develop, and their appetite to work together with the Council to deliver services. Interviews and online focus groups were also held with Town and Community Councils exploring similar questions. All Town and Community Councils were invited to participate.
- 2.4** An online interview with the Leadership Team from Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Service was undertaken to understand their approach to the anti-poverty agenda.
- 2.5** Following the interviews Cwmpas undertook two engagement workshops which also discussed the initial findings, namely, a Social Enterprise workshop for key officers of the Council and a workshop based on Section 16 requirements for Third Sector providers in the County focusing on social care. A presentation to the Council's Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC) was also delivered by Cwmpas.
- 2.6** The research findings gathered have been analysed and compiled into a report presenting the key findings from the internal interviews and external engagement with the Third Sector and Social Enterprise (Appendix A). A separate summary report outlines the engagement activities that Cwmpas undertook with Town and Community Councils (Appendix B).

Key Findings

- 2.7** Cwmpas concluded from its review of the Council's strategic documents that there has already been a shift in priorities and actions towards a focus on tackling poverty more holistically and a greater emphasis on working with the Third Sector, Social Enterprise and community partners.
- 2.8** Internal interviews revealed that there is significant activity happening on the ground to tackle poverty, however, much of this work is funded via short term funding, which staff recognised can result in short term thinking. Staff also acknowledged that silo working exists which limited knowledge sharing, with increasing work pressures but less resources making it difficult to plan effectively for the future.

- 2.9** Examples of good practice on tackling poverty were highlighted by staff such as work being undertaken in school settings and more recently by a Senior Community Development Officer working with communities in Barry. It was also recognised that the Council had responded quickly to the cost-of-living crisis. However, rural poverty and pockets of deprivation within affluent areas were highlighted as issues which can be overlooked. There were concerns over the current asset transfer process and interviewees felt this could be strengthened to create opportunities for community ownership of assets. Officers recognised the variety of work taking place to respond to food poverty and there was positivity relating to this work.
- 2.10** Staff questioned the impact of poverty workstreams and Third Sector partnerships and projects, highlighting that they were unaware of evidence being collected for evaluation and whether this is being reviewed from a strategic perspective. There was recognition that the Council cannot 'do it all' and that now was a good time to review current working arrangements with Third Sector partners and identify areas to collaborate further with both Social Enterprise and Third Sector organisations in the future. Most departments felt they had strong, established and productive working relationships with Third Sector partners but reflected that partnership working takes time and resource to establish and embed.
- 2.11** During the internal Social Enterprise workshop, Cwmpas explored knowledge of the Social Enterprise sector and reviewed potential opportunities to collaborate with Social Enterprises. Conversations revealed a basic knowledge of Social Enterprise amongst attendees; however, officers were positive about exploring how they could work with the sector further.
- 2.12** Interviews with external organisations showed that participants considered they had strong working relationships with staff from the Council, generally these were with an individual member of staff, rather than with a wider team. It also emerged that staff were responsive and listened. It was felt that the Council engages proactively about some potential opportunities, but these engagement efforts can appear uncoordinated. Participants highlighted that Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises are out working with communities and often have ideas about how services with/or for the Council could be developed. These organisations would like the Council to develop a point of entry for these ideas. Additionally, they would like to be more involved in decision making and have greater opportunities to influence funding decisions that may affect the sector. In general, the Council appeared well regarded by those organisations spoken to which it currently engages with. However, an established approach in order to broaden the range of Third Sector and Social Enterprise organisations the Council works with is required. Some participants expressed disappointment regarding how Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) had been allocated (further information on SPF allocation below). Participants were also mainly unaware of the Voluntary Sector Compact between Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and the Council.

- 2.13** There was some discussion about the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC) meeting and opportunities to encourage the voice of the sector to be heard.
- 2.14** A Section 16 workshop was held which highlighted that Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises want to engage and work in partnership with the Council and each other, to explore service delivery ideas and provide commissioned services and are keen to have a conduit to enable this. This discussion focused on social care opportunities and was jointly hosted by Social Services.
- 2.15** The engagement work with Town and Community Councils has been reported separately, however, there was a great deal of similarity in the themes that emerged from both the internal and external engagement interviews. There was a desire to be able to influence the decision-making process further and that the community asset transfer process needs to be reviewed. This report is included as Appendix B.

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Allocation

- 2.16** The Shared Prosperity Fund is split into different investment priorities, with most third sector and social enterprise applications coming within the Communities and Place priority. Under this priority the Council received 123 applications in total, of which 73 were approved and awarded funds. Of these 73, 33 were social enterprises or third sector organisations, and received funding between them to the total of £689,386. Included in these numbers are the Strong Communities Grant Fund applications and awards, which have been funded through SPF this financial year.
- 2.17** Under the Supporting Local Business investment priority, the Council received over 300 applications and awarded funding to 40 projects. Of those 40, 5 were social enterprises or third sector organisations and received funding totalling £762,282.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 2.18** The report attached as Appendix A concluded that although there is significant work taking place to tackle poverty and work with the Third Sector, there is limited evidence of alignment between workstreams such as those relating to a geographical place or interventions supporting a specific demographic. Cwmpas recommends that the Council develop a Poverty Strategy, supported by a monitoring framework to review the remit and impact of the various workstreams to ensure alignment and consider longer term resourcing and investment.
- 2.19** Additionally, Cwmpas concluded that the Council works well with its current Third Sector partners, but often with the same partners. Cwmpas recommends that the Council work with GVS to update the existing Voluntary Sector Compact, adopting a less formal partnership approach to future activity. Cwmpas also feel there is an

opportunity for the Council to engage differently with the Third Sector both through the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC) membership and through a programme of proactive engagement activities. A similar approach to the Section 16 forum on engaging with the wider Third and Social Enterprise sectors is recommended to promote collaboration, ideation and capacity development.

- 2.20** The research undertaken by Cwmpas also revealed the potential for the knowledge the Council has about the Social Enterprise sector in the Vale of Glamorgan to be strengthened and reflected that there is the appetite to find out more. Cwmpas recommends the Council undertake detailed mapping of the sector to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and make-up of the sector within the County. This will help to inform a future approach to address the recommendations within the Audit Wales Report. It is further recommended that the Council should implement a series of awareness raising workshops to promote Social Enterprise amongst internal Council staff and Elected Members and develop web resources for social enterprises.
- 2.21** Cwmpas recognises the progress made in relation to the Council Section 16 responsibilities, and they recommend that within the Section 16 forum the Social Services team consider a programme which outlines procurement opportunities ahead, allows time to explore joint working between organisations to create co-produced solutions and allow the sectors voice to be heard. Cwmpas also recommend that the Council should review how procurement activities are being shaped, planned and designed.
- 2.22** Cwmpas considers that the work on community resilience and self-reliance is being undertaken through a variety of activities, particularly through the Placemaking, community mapping work and relationships with Third Sector and Town and Community Councils. The Audit Wales Report recommends that the Council should have a clearly defined definition of what community resilience and self-reliance means, and a vision to make clear what the Council needs to do and what others are best placed to do. Cwmpas concluded that at present this is not in place and recommend that the Council undertake this review, as well as implementing all of the community focused activities outlined with the current ADP, including the commitments made regarding transfer of assets and s106 monies.

The Proposed Response and Recommended Way Forward

- 2.23** In regard to the development of a Poverty Strategy, work is underway to build specific anti-poverty commitments into the development of the new Corporate Plan 2025-2030, and the Reshaping programme. This would take advantage of the current consultation and engagement work being undertaken to develop these strategies, ensuring that anti-poverty commitments are built into the future focus of the Council's activities over the next 5 years and beyond. By embedding work to tackle and prevent poverty across the wellbeing objectives, this would provide

strategic emphasis on the work as a core part of the Council's activities and enable regular monitoring and reporting to Members.

- 2.24** In response to the recommendations concerning the Council's relationship with the Third Sector, it is proposed that a new Relationship Statement is built into the Corporate Plan 2025-2030. This would replace the existing Voluntary Sector Compact which has over time become more focused on the relationship between the Council and Glamorgan Voluntary Services than a compact with the wider sector. This new statement would provide a context for our work with all community partners including community groups, town and community councils, social enterprises, and third sector organisation and set out some guiding principles. This statement would have the potential to be further developed over time and used as a standalone document where applicable. In addition, a new agreement will be developed with GVS combining elements of the existing Compact and grant agreements. Discussions regarding the current arrangements of the VSJLC will also continue to ensure that it produces the best value both for members and the wider sector. Following on from the publication of this statement as part of the Corporate Plan, work would commence on a review of the Town and Community Council Charter.
- 2.25** In response to the recommendations regarding Social Enterprises, the Council proposes to undertake further work as part of the Reshaping Programme. This will fit with a number of the Reshaping themes and will include developing a better understanding of existing organisations and opportunities, and development of information on the Council's website. The addition of web resources for Social Enterprises will be built into the review of the website already taking place through the digital transformation programme. Further work will be undertaken to assist officers across the Council to understand the benefits of working with social enterprises.
- 2.26** In response to the recommendations made in relation to the Council's Section 16 responsibilities, the Council proposes to continue a standing agenda item at the Section 16 Forum to set out the procurement opportunities that are in the schedule for the next two financial years and for the commissioning team manager to continue presenting these opportunities to the sector. The Council will continue to actively promote time for ideation and exploration of joint working opportunities through the standing agenda item at each Forum in which sector leads are encouraged to share funding and working opportunities. Further work is intended to encourage co-production through utilising this agenda item. The Council will continue to encourage a sector led Forum with a co-chair already established and all areas of the Section 16 sector given the opportunity to set agenda items and raise any issues pertinent to them. In setting up the Forum the Council have worked closely with colleagues in Cardiff Council and the forum is a standing item at the Regional Commissioning Board. The Forum has discussed work taking place in the sector across Wales and will be providing the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) with annual updates. The Council proposes to continue

this partnership working and look at future opportunities to strengthen its sharing of best practice from further afield.

- 2.27** The Council will review how procurement activities are being shaped, planned and designed focussing on the five elements in the report: Quality/cost ratios of tenders, resource required to complete the tender, scoring of social value, contract monitoring expectations, and implementing the VCSE support programme. Work is already underway on Social Value to streamline the existing framework and there have been a series of individual detailed sessions with services following on from an overview at the Council's Insight Board in July.
- 2.28** In response to the recommendations concerning a clear definition and vision for community resilience and self-reliance, the Council proposes building these into the development of the Corporate Plan 2025-2030, and the Reshaping Programme.
- 2.29** Updates on this work will be provided to Members via the Reshaping Programme and development of the Corporate Plan. In addition, Cabinet will note that the specific recommendations from regulatory reports are monitored and reported as part of performance monitoring reports, as well as to Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet on a six-monthly basis.

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

- 3.1** The proposals outlined in this report will assist the Council in contributing to the national Well-being Goals and the Council's own Well-being Objectives as detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-25 and the new draft Corporate Plan 2025-2030. The proposed approach also embeds the five ways of working through involvement and collaboration with other organisations, for example by looking to further improve the relationship with the Third Sector and other community organisations.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** The proposals outlined in this report for improved working with the third sector, social enterprises and Town and Community Councils will be critical for taking forward work on the climate and nature emergencies. To achieve net-zero we need increased community engagement and close working with all sectors to share learning and expertise.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no additional financial implications as a direct result of this report.

Employment

5.2 There are no additional employment implications as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.3 The proposals outlined in this report are consistent with the Council's work to tackle poverty, as well as engage effectively with our community partners to benefit all those living and working in the Vale of Glamorgan. These take into consideration the Council's socioeconomic duties and the developments described within this report will be the subject of assessments for equality impacts.

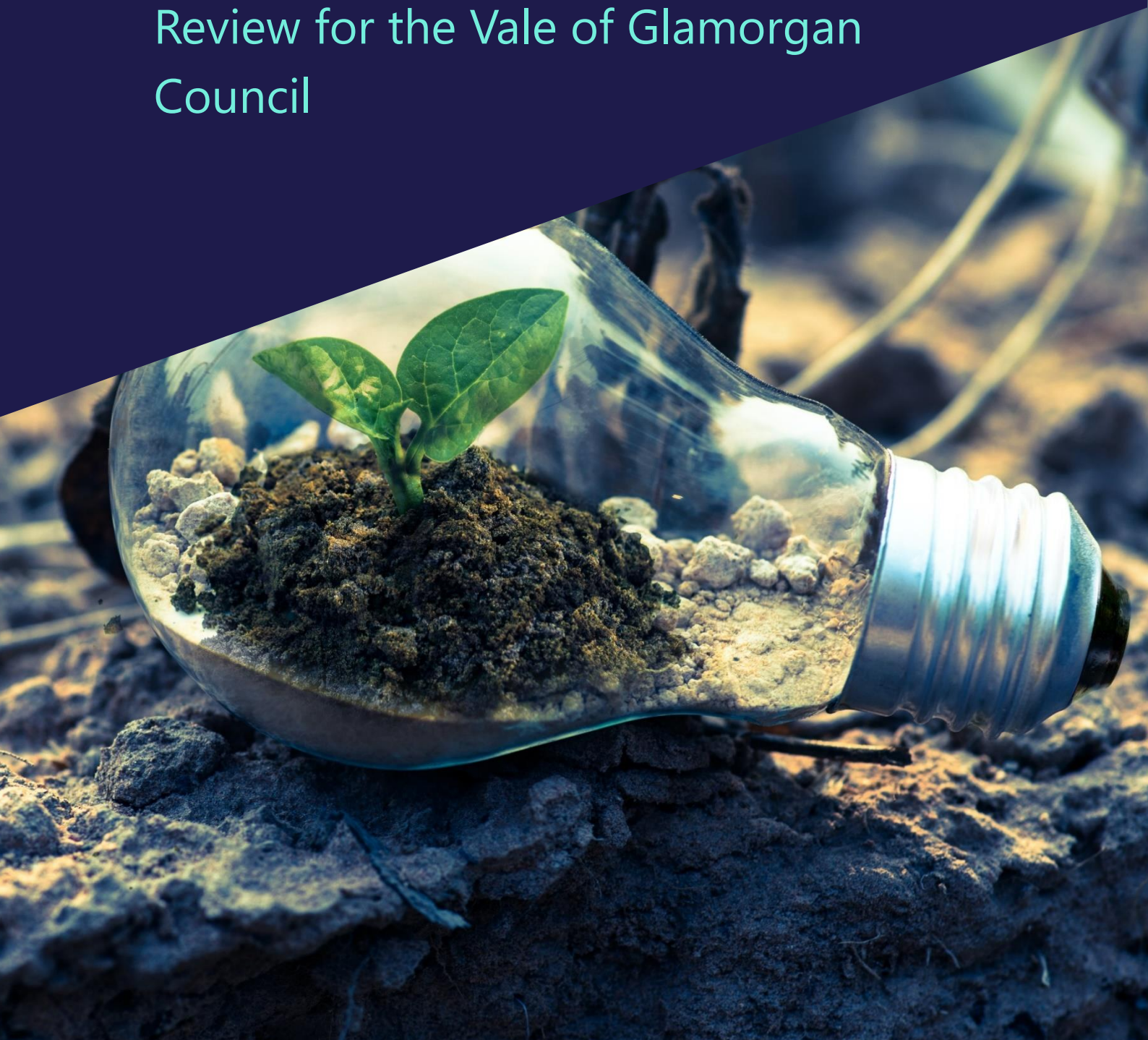
6. Background Papers

[Strengthening Communities and Tackling Poverty \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\)](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) – Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee 18th October 2023

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Audit Wales Reports: Strategic
Review for the Vale of Glamorgan
Council



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1.0 Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to highlight the themes and issues that have emerged from a range of interviews and workshops with internal staff from Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council) and with Third Sector Organisations, Social Enterprises as well as Town and Community Councils, based within the County.

This report will outline the findings of the research namely:

- The key themes that emerged from the internal staff interviews
- The main themes that emerged from the external interviews
- Provide an overview of social enterprise within the County

Based on these findings the report also makes recommendations for the Council to consider as they review:

- Their Corporate Plan and the objectives that support it
- Their response and approach to poverty
- The current Voluntary Sector Compact
- The way that they engage and work with Social Enterprises.

It should be noted that this work sits alongside a summary report that outlines the engagement activities that Cwmpas undertook with Town and Community Councils.

2.0 Context

The internal and external engagement activities, undertaken as part of this research have focussed on findings and recommendations of four Audit Wales reports, namely:

- Time for Change – Poverty in Wales (Nov 22)
- A missed Opportunity – Social Enterprise (Dec 22)
- Together we can - Community Resilience and Self-reliance (Jan 23)
- Third Sector Partnership Working – Vale of Glamorgan Council (July 2021).

The first three reports listed above are part of a series of All Wales reports on tackling poverty.

The sections below outline the main findings from each of the reports and are useful in terms of setting the scene for the research that has been undertaken by Cwmpas, the methodological approach adopted and the recommendations made.

2.1 Time for Change – Poverty in Wales

In introducing the Time for Change report, Audit Wales explain the context for their work:

“This is the first of three reviews on the challenge of alleviating and tackling poverty. In our other work we focus on two potential solutions. Firstly, how councils are working to grow and expand social enterprises to help local government deliver more services and reduce demand – in essence are we making the most of social enterprises and ensuring social value and social capital stay in communities and help people who are struggling. And secondly, given the priority placed on community resilience and self-reliance in council plans, how well are councils equipping people to be less reliant on the state and reduce demand for often overstretched services.

Our overall conclusion is that the scale of the challenge and weaknesses in current work make it difficult for Welsh and local government to deliver the systemic change required to tackle and alleviate poverty.

The impact of poverty is far reaching and increasingly more difficult for people to deal with. People in all parts of Wales continue to live in poverty and the number is estimated to be rising, with the cost-of-living crisis pushing more people into poverty. Our analysis shows that poverty is the single major challenge facing all tiers of government.”

2.2 A missed Opportunity – Social Enterprise

In the Summary section of the Report, Audit Wales highlight their main conclusions and extracts from the section as detailed below:

“Our overall conclusion is that local authorities are not effectively working with Social Enterprises to maximise their impact, make better use of resources and improve services for people and communities.

While they claim they value Social Enterprises, few local authorities have mapped their activity. Less than a third of local authorities consider themselves to have a proactive and supportive relationship with Social Enterprises and none have a dedicated strategy or policy that charts how they intend to promote and grow the sector.

We also found that most local authorities have adopted a passive leadership role, often responding to Social Enterprises that approach them but not proactively seeking to work with Social Enterprises or help stimulate new ones. This leadership vacuum has resulted in Social Enterprises often being at the fringes of local authority business.

While most local authorities provide grants for businesses and the third sector, they are not using them to specifically support Social Enterprises. Current procurement and commissioning arrangements often unintentionally discourage Social Enterprises to engage. Overly bureaucratic approaches and a lack of capacity and resources within local government also limits the potential to grow the role of Social Enterprises in delivering services. Social value – the added value that commissioning processes can deliver – does not feature as a key driver for many local authorities.

We found that most local authorities are not delivering their responsibilities under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and effectively promoting Social Enterprises. No Director of Social Services Annual Report sets out how their authority is delivering the Section 16 duty and the majority of reports make little reference to Social Enterprises. Positively, a number of authorities are working to develop micro social enterprise businesses and Regional Partnership Boards have a growing role to drive positive change. Taken together, these represent good opportunities for the future. Despite this, over three-quarters of local authorities do not have robust performance

management, reporting and evaluation systems in place to be able to judge the impact and value of the work of Social Enterprises.”

2.3 Together we can - Community Resilience and Self-reliance

Within this Report the main conclusions were:

“Overall, we conclude that local authorities face a challenging and uncertain financial future but find it difficult to empower people and communities to be more self-reliant and less dependent on services.

Importantly, recent Welsh Parliament legislation such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is mapping a new direction for public service delivery. However, we found that this has not translated into the fundamental shift with people being encouraged to do more for themselves and being less reliant on local authority services. While 19 of the 22 local authorities are prioritising community resilience, too often the work is poorly defined and the actions that underpin plans are narrowly focussed.

The growth in volunteering, community asset transfers, community hubs, emerging work on community empowerment and the work of community navigators shows the commitment of local authorities to transform how they operate. However, given the societal, financial and demographic challenges facing Wales, there is a need to scale and speed up activity.”

2.4 Third Sector Partnership Working – Vale of Glamorgan Council

The final report, is slightly older (July 2021) and relates specifically to the Vale of Glamorgan (VOG), it concluded:

“We found that the Council's arrangements support its current way of working with the third sector, but now could be strengthened to maximise opportunities to enhance the relationship to support the delivery of the Council's strategic recovery priorities.

We reached this conclusion because:

- the Council's arrangements serve it well for its current way of working with the third sector;*
- the pandemic has highlighted the importance of the third sector in helping communities and there are opportunities to enhance its role; and*

- *the Council is keen to work more collaboratively with the third sector and will need to consider how its arrangements, including its approach to funding and oversight, need to adapt to support such a shift in culture.”*

3.0 Methodology

In terms of the methodology for this research project, Cwmpas undertook the following activities between January and May 2024:

1. A review of key internal documents, including:
 - The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25
 - The Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2023-24
 - The ADP 2024-25
 - Vale of Glamorgan Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing Plan 2023-28
 - The Council's Procurement Policy and Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27
 - Documents relating to the allocation of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and the projects supported
 - Internal responses relating to the four Audit Wales reports detailed in the section above.
2. Online interviews with over 20 members of staff from the Local Authority (LA). The staff members were selected by the Corporate Strategy and Insights Team. The interviews focused on:
 - Current work being undertaken in relation to poverty
 - Funding sources being used
 - Cross Departmental working
 - Experience of working with the Third Sector and Social Enterprise
 - Suggestions on how the Council could further develop working relationships with Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprise in the County
 - Ideas to align poverty workstreams.
3. An online interview with members of the Procurement Service at Cardiff Council. The Vale of Glamorgan Council are part of the collaborative Ardal procurement partnership with Monmouthshire and Torfaen. The Ardal partnership is led by Cardiff Council.
4. Online interviews with key representatives from Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises based or working in the County (n15). The interviews focused on:
 - Their working relationship with the Council
 - Barriers and challenges
 - Opportunities
 - Appetite to deliver procured or commissioned and procured services
 - Views on to work together to deliver services.

5. Interviews and online focus groups with Town and Community Councils.
6. An online interview with the Leadership Team from Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Service.

Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Notes were taken during the interviews.

Following the interviews Cwmpas also undertook a series of engagement events. The initial findings from the research was also discussed at each of the following events:

- A Social Enterprise workshop, for key internal members of staff.
- A workshop based on S16 for third sector providers in the County. This workshop was jointly facilitated by Cwmpas, Council staff and staff from the Ardal Partnership.
- A presentation to the Council's Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC).

The data gathered during the project was analysed using a thematic approach and the findings and recommendations of the research were presented to the Director Of Corporate Resources and members of the Strategy and Insight Team at an in person meeting on the 13th of May 2024. This final report presents the research findings in detail and sits alongside a summary report that outlines the engagement activities that Cwmpas undertook with Town and Community Councils.

4.0 Findings from the Document Review

The following section contains extracts from key documents published by the Council. The purpose of the document review was to ascertain the current approach being adopted by the LA in terms of poverty and working with the Social Enterprises and the Third Sector.

4.1 Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25

The Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25 is titled Working Together For A Brighter Future and outlines the current vision for the Vale of:

"Strong Communities with a Bright Future"

There are four wellbeing objectives contained within the plan and these are:

- To work with and for our communities
- To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
- To support people at home and in their community
- To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

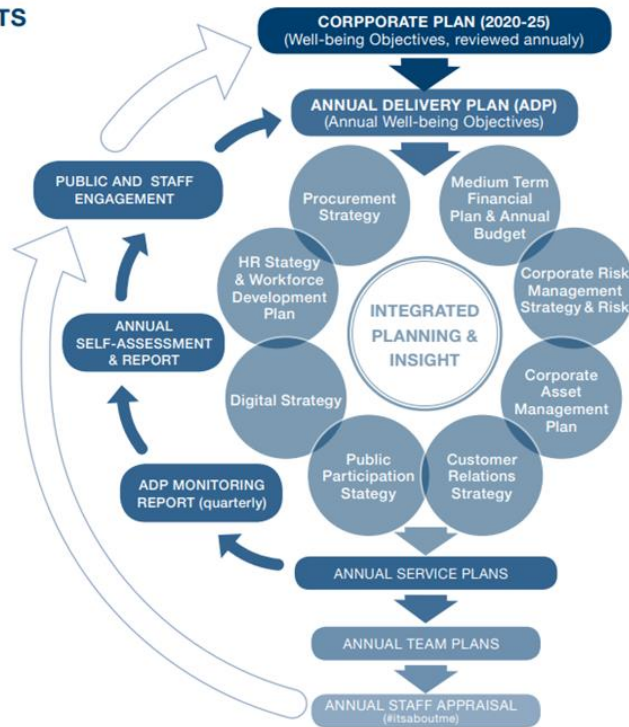
Given the above it could be expected that working to alleviate poverty, working with the Third Sector and Social Enterprises would underpin many of the above objectives, however, this is not evident when reading the current Corporate Plan which was published in 2020 with:

- Poverty only mentioned twice
- Deprivation mentioned once and deprived referenced twice
- Third Sector partnership working is mentioned on three occasions, but, these references are generic
- Social Enterprise is not mentioned.

However, in reviewing current plans it is clear that although the objectives have remained the same, the narrative and actions in relation to poverty, the Third Sector and Social Enterprise have evolved significantly.

For many Public Sector Bodies their Corporate objectives and the actions and strategies that support the delivery of the objectives tend to remain relatively static for the duration of the Corporate Plan. However, the Vale of Glamorgan Council have adopted a dynamic approach, where Wellbeing Objectives are reviewed annually, and this process is depicted in the diagram below:

HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER



Source: ADP 23-24

4.2 Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 and 2024-25

Within the 23-24 ADP the wellbeing objectives remained the same but the actions to implement them changed and reflected, to a greater extent the need to:

“Work with voluntary and community organisations to deliver and shape local services, encourage people to get more involved in their local communities and support them to seek funding.”

“Cost of Living Crisis – supporting our residents, local organisations and business in the face of rising costs in particular around energy, food and housing.”

The Cost of Living Crisis was also identified as one of three critical challenges within the ADP.

The ADP 2024-25 has evolved even further with actions relating to poverty, working with the Third Sector and community resilience activities all discussed and Social Enterprise is mentioned specifically for the first time.

Below are some example extracts from the current ADP:

Objective 1 To Work With and For Our Communities

The “We will” section includes the following :

“Progress placemaking 4 plans in Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth putting the future needs of town centres and communities at the heart of decision making and maximising the impact of a range of funding streams.”

“Engage with and strengthen our relationships with the third sector, social enterprises and town and community councils to help shape and deliver local priorities, including a review of the Town and Community Council Charter and the Voluntary Sector Compact.”

“Review the future of our building and land assets with a view to maximising their economic and community benefits and ensure the most appropriate model of ownership and service delivery is in place.”

Objective 2 To Support People at Home and in their Community

The “We will” section includes the following :

“. Develop and support initiatives in response to the cost of living crisis and the associated issues of housing, energy costs, food poverty, period poverty, debt & access to benefits, employment, and training.”

“Work in partnership through the Public Services Board to take forward work in our most deprived communities with an initial programme of engagement and community mapping.”

“Implement a Local Housing Strategy, to address current and projected housing need and to increase the supply of good quality, accessible and affordable housing.”

“Progress the expansion of ‘Your Choice’ to enhance the individual’s voice and control over their care in their own home.”

Objective 3 To Respect, Enhance and Enjoy Our Environment

The “We will” section includes the following :

“Continue to ensure Section 106 payments from developers are negotiated in areas where development is approved and ensure that we secure the necessary investment in education, sustainable transport, community facilities, arts and culture and challenge developers through legal process when developers do not deliver on commitments to the community.”

The ADP 24-25 details three critical challenges and extracts relevant to this research are:

Critical Challenge 1: Organisational Resilience (our finances, people, assets and public engagement)

“What we will be doing”:

“We will review the viability and sustainability of services in response to ongoing significant financial challenges and uncertainty. We will be using our assets more efficiently, looking in particular at the Council’s property portfolio, we will push forward our digital agenda and develop and support our workforce. We will need to take many and varied approaches, working with partners across all sectors to increase our resilience and deliver our priorities. By increasing our resilience we can continue with Project Zero and we can better support our residents through the cost of living crisis.”

Critical Challenge 2: Cost of living Crisis

“What we will be doing”:

“The Council will build on its existing services and work with partners to provide support. We will respond to the cost of living crisis including through work with schools, a range of community initiatives and administration of funding schemes. We will provide residents and our employees with advice, support, signposting and information on a range of issues including housing, debt, fuel poverty and energy costs, benefits, employment, and training and their wellbeing. We will work with partners to reduce homelessness, tackle health inequities, improve access to food and promote inclusive opportunities for play and leisure. We will continue to engage with our most deprived communities as part of the work of the PSB to tackle inequalities and poverty.”

The majority of the above extracts also align with the recommendations of the four Audit Wales Reports.

4.3 Vale of Glamorgan Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing Plan 2023-28

We recognise that the Council are already working on the development of their next Corporate Plan and that the plan will be influenced by the PSB’s Wellbeing Plan. The PSB produced its second Well-being Plan in 2023 and we consider that priorities and the narrative in relation to poverty and working with the Third Sector and Communities has evolved significantly. The plan outlines three Well-being Objectives and the steps that the PSB will take to deliver them.

The Well-being Objectives are:

- A more resilient and greener Vale
- A more active and healthier Vale
- A more equitable and connected Vale

In addition, three priority workstreams are identified where particular focus is needed:

- Responding to the climate and nature emergencies

- Becoming Age Friendly
- Working with the people who live in our communities that experience the highest levels of deprivation

The PSB has agreed 19 steps which collectively support them to deliver the Well-being Objectives and enhance the working and impact of the PSB.

Key deliverables of relevance to this research include:

- *“Develop a better understanding of and respond to the diverse needs of our communities, including those living in more rural or more deprived areas, to ensure that services and facilities are accessible in terms of design, transport, affordability and technology and are available when people need them to prevent needs escalating.*
- *Support the third sector and promote volunteering opportunities recognising the multiple benefits for individuals and our communities.*
- *Maximise opportunities to access funding and align activities to increase capacity, skills and resource to deliver priorities within Vale and the wider region.*
- *Participate in a more integrated approach to the public sector estate (buildings and land holdings) to improve service delivery and our work on climate change and nature.*
- *Tackle health inequities as part of an integrated and collaborative programme of work, ensuring greater engagement and a more targeted preventative approach to reach those most in need.*
- *Work in partnership to make the Vale more Age Friendly, ensuring older people have access to the right services, support and opportunities locally and are able to engage and participate in activities and events, influence service design and improve well-being.”*

4.4 Analysis

The review of the above documents, together with the details of the objectives and actions contained within them, has seen a shift in priorities towards focusing on tackling poverty more holistically and a greater emphasis on working with Third Sector and community partners.

5.0 Research Findings from Internal Interviews

The information below elaborates on the information and slides presented during the meeting on the 13th of May. The following themes emerged from the internal interviews:

5.1 The Council

Staff considered that externally the Local Authority (LA) is viewed as one entity but, they felt that in reality each Department is working differently. One participant considered that:

"Internally we have five Directorates all with different cultures."

Staff acknowledged that there was considerable *"silo working"* and that often *"internal knowledge sharing happens by chance."*

Employees also noted the work pressures that they are currently under, evaluating that:

- There is no time to plan
- Feeling that they are constantly *"firefighting"*
- Acknowledging that there is less time, less staff but more need.
- Recognising that short-term funding resulted in short-term thinking.

There was consensus that there is an appetite from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the Council to listen to staff views, ideas, opinions and concerns, but progress to make change often gets lost in the day job.

There was also agreement that the Council has:

"produced lots of things and is now time to reflect and adopt a whole council approach?"

A number of participants mentioned that there is a need for the key strategic direction to be driven from the centre of the organisation, and they did not feel that this was happening at the moment.

5.2 Poverty

Many interviewees perceived that many of the current workstreams relating to poverty were *"top-down interventions"* and considered that often the approach was *"doing to, not doing with."*

It was clear from the interviews that there is a lot of work being undertaken by the Council and that many of the interventions/programmes are interconnected, however, the resources/impacts/outcomes are rarely aligned.

Examples of good practice were highlighted during a number of the interviews and these included:

- Work being undertaken in school settings, often being delivered in partnership with Education and Sports Development.
- More recent work being undertaken by a Senior Community Development Officer, working with communities in Barry. Participants referred to this work as being *“informative, a fresh pair of eyes for the Council”* and *“this work is different, we are out on the ground and having conversations.”*

What is also worth noting is that many of the staff, referred to in the good practice above, rely on project or annualised funding. Staff from the one of the teams highlighted that the confirmation of the annualised funding often took place *“very late in the day.”*

Many participants also questioned:

“who is leading on the poverty agenda overall?”

5.3 Cost of Living Crisis

There was recognition that the Council has responded quickly to the immediacy of the cost of living crisis and that this was also evidenced within the current and the previous ADPs.

There was also acknowledgement of the work being planned and the work being undertaken at a PSB level.

5.4 Rural Poverty and Pockets of Deprivation

Staff highlighted that issues relating to rural poverty and pockets of deprivation, within relatively affluent areas, are regularly overlooked. Issues included:

- Lack of access to public transport
- Lack of community amenities
- Financially difficulties
- Lack of internet connectivity

5.5 Asset Transfer

The majority of interviewees felt that the asset transfer policies and practice could and should work better. Many officers accepted that communities feel frustrated with the current process and had often put time and resource into a process that had led to limited results.

Staff also recognised that community ownership of assets could result in opportunities for Third Sector Organisations, Social Enterprises and Town and

Community Councils, however, the transfer needs to be supported by robust business planning.

5.6 Departmental and Strategy Alignment

One anomaly that was discussed by staff was Community Development being undertaken by the Housing Team as well as the team within the Place Directorate. Our discussions with senior staff have outlined the reasons for this, but, maybe this is something that could be reviewed.

There are a number of recent strategies and plans that have been developed by the Housing Team such as the Community Development Strategy, Community Investment Strategy and Neighbourhood Action Plans; again there are potential links to place making and wider economic development that could be explored to align resource and activity; highlighting opportunities for Third Sector Organisations and Social Enterprise.

5.7 Role of Placemaking

A number of participants mentioned the placemaking work that was being undertaken within four towns across the County. Although much of the work is at an early stage it was recognised that poverty and community are strands of the placemaking work and that data and insight has already been gathered from a variety of groups, individuals and organisations. One interviewee commented:

“could this data and insight act as a guide to developing a response to place based poverty and also as a guide for third sector and social enterprise partnerships working?”

Cwmpas also understand that some villages in the County are taking part in Community Mapping and again it was considered by staff that these maps could provide data and insight in relation to the poverty agenda and shaping local economies.

5.8 Section 106 Monies

There was acknowledgement that there needs to be clear policies and processes on how S106 monies are allocated. Staff recognised that communities are often frustrated with the process. However, the situation does appear to be moving forward.

5.9 Food Poverty and Local Food

Officers were aware that there are a variety of different workstreams underway regarding local food production and food poverty. Respondents considered that this work overlapped with many projects and overall there was a positivity relating to the work that is taking place and the links to the Food Vale project.

5.10 Procurement

The move to be part of the Ardal Partnership which is a procurement partnership across four local authorities and led by Cardiff Council seems to be viewed positively. The team are confident they have the skills to be:

- Developing scored social value/wellbeing impact criteria within procurement
- Supporting the development of Local supply chains
- Breaking down the barriers to working with SMEs
- Rolling out the VCSE programme that they have developed in Cardiff.

Ardal are also starting to gather data and beginning to think about next steps. This work is likely to include promoting the visibility and accessibility of opportunities, analysing local spend data and developing an accessible contracts register. They also recognise the need to turn procurement policy into practice.

5.11 Impact

Interviewees questioned the impact of both the variety of poverty workstreams and that of Third Sector partnerships and projects. Some participants advised that they were unaware of evidence being collected of what is working and what is not and whether any evidence captured had not been collated and reviewed from a strategic perspective. It is worth noting that interviews were primarily held January -March 2024 and at this time information may not have been available. Examples of points raised included:

- What is the impact, on poverty, of various grant schemes that the Council operates/manages.
- How have Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) projects impacted poverty.
- How have Third Sector Organisations and Social Enterprises benefitted from SPF monies and what has been the impact and outcomes of their projects.

5.12 Perception of Partnership Working

There was recognition that the "*Council can't do it all*" and that now was a good time to review current working arrangements with Third Sector partners and identify areas to collaborate with both Social Enterprise and Third Sector organisations in the future. Most Departments felt that they had strong, established and productive working relationships with Third Sector partners, and recognised that partnership working takes time and resource to establish and embed.

5.13 Themes Emerging from the Internal Social Enterprise Workshop

During the workshop held on the 1st March 2024, Cwmpas explored knowledge of the Social Enterprise sector and reviewed potential opportunities to collaborate with Social Enterprises.

What emerged was that there was a basic knowledge of Social Enterprise amongst attendees, but very little is known about the detail of the Social Enterprise within the County, in terms of size, sector make up, finance and funding, capability and capacity and appetite to work with/contract with the LA.

What was clear however, was that officers were positive about exploring how they could work with the sector and the wider Third Sector to shape future partnership and procurement opportunities.

6.0 Research Findings from the Interviews with Third Sector Organisations and Social Enterprises

Again the information below elaborates on the information and slides presented during the meeting on the 13th of May. The following themes emerged from the interviews with Third Sector Organisations and Social Enterprises:

6.1 Relationships

Participants considered that they have strong and pragmatic working relationships with staff at the LA. Generally their relationships were with an individual member of staff, rather than with a wider team. These relationships had usually developed over a number of years.

6.2 Responsive

What also emerged was the accessibility of staff, particularly those with whom they had an established working relationship. It was considered that:

- Council Staff listened
- Staff responded, as and where able.

6.3 Opportunities

It was felt that the Council does engage proactively about some potential opportunities, but, these engagement efforts can appear uncoordinated.

It was also considered that Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises are out working with communities and often have ideas about how services with/or for the LA could be developed. These organisations would like the Council to develop a point of entry for these ideas, so that they could be discussed in more detail and supported where appropriate.

6.4 Partnership Working

The Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises interviewed considered that they were viewed as a partner by the Council, however, they:

- Would like to be more involved before decisions are made
- Be involved in funding decisions that relate to the sector; again, being able to influence before decisions are made.
- Would like funding decisions to be made in time for them to plan their resources: *"make decisions in January not mid-March!"*
- Where services are commissioned/funded, for the Council to pay for the services as soon as practicable, within the new financial year.

What was clear was that the Council was well regarded with the Third Sector Organisations and the smaller number of Social Enterprise that it works with. However, the LA does not seem to have an established approach as to how to

broaden the range of Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises beyond those that it is currently working with. The current mechanisms in place to engage with the Third Sector, more widely, do not appear to be providing insight and data relating to how the sector is evolving in the County, new businesses, growing businesses, etc.

6.5 Shared Prosperity Funding

Some Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises were disappointed about how SPF funding had been allocated. Some felt that the Third Sector in the County had not benefitted from SPF funding in the way that it was initially anticipating.

6.6 Voluntary Sector Compact

The majority of interviewees knew little, if anything, about the Voluntary Sector Compact between Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and the Council or the working arrangements contained within it. Both GVS and the Council agree that the Compact needs to be simplified and framed as a pragmatic partnership agreement or joint working arrangement.

In reviewing the Compact the Council should also consider that the Third Sector is wider than GVS and whilst a Compact between the two organisations may be considered appropriate, there would be merit in formally recognising the relationship between the Council and wider sectors. This reflects the comments of many of the Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises that we spoke to who wanted to engage directly with the Council and have their individual voices heard.

6.7 Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC)

Few of the interview participants were members of the VSJLC. Those that attended felt that the format needed to be modernised, to enable and encourage the voice of the sector to be heard.

Having attended and presented at one of the online VSJLC meetings, Cwmpas consider that:

- The online meeting platform may not be the best means to encourage participation in Committee meetings and enable good discussion between the Council and other sectors.
- The meetings are very formal and do not encourage feedback.

6.8 S16 Workshop

A S16 workshop was held on the 9th of April 2024. The workshop included:

- A presentation by Cwmpas on the findings of our work to date
- A context setting presentation from VoG Corporate Services and Social Care
- A review of good practice, including a presentation by Llamau

- An overview of future social care tender opportunities
- An advisory presentation from VoG Social Care Commissioners and the Ardal Procurement Team.

The workshop was attended by approximately 20 sector representatives. The workshop provided a forum for open and positive dialogue and it was felt that this event formed a good basis on which to develop the S16 workshops programme.

Our main conclusions from the event were that Third Sector organisations and Social Enterprises:

- Want to engage and work in partnership with the LA, and with each other
- Felt that an in-person event was a good way of beginning to get to know each other better and drawing out sector voice
- Wanted to explore service ideas with the Council and want a conduit to enable this
- Have the appetite to develop and provide commissioned services.

7.0 Town and Community Councils

The engagement work with Town and Community Councils has been reported separately, however, there was a great deal of similarity in the themes that emerged from both the internal and external engagement interviews. In summary the themes that emerged from the Town and Community Council interviews and focus groups were:

- They want to be engaged with at a time where they could influence and form part of the decision process
- They want the Council to review Community Asset Transfer policies and procedures and to review how S106 monies are allocated
- Some expressed disappointment about how SPF had been awarded/allocated
- They wanted to work more closely with each other and have established some mechanism to enable this
- Considered that the role of the Community Liaison Committee should be reviewed.

8.0 Interview with Swansea Council

The Audit Wales Time for Change Report highlights the comprehensive approach to tackling poverty being adopted by Swansea Council as an example of good practice. It was agreed with the VoG Council Team that Cwmpas would interview the Service Manager and team members from the tackling poverty service at Swansea Council. It should be noted that Swansea Council are currently updating their poverty strategy, but it is not anticipated that the current approach will change significantly.

Below is an overview of the approach being adopted by Swansea Council.

Swansea Council has a clear definition of poverty:

"In Swansea, we define poverty as:

- *Income below the Minimum Income Standard.*
- *Inadequate access to necessary services of good quality.*
- *Inadequate opportunity or resource to join in with social, cultural, leisure and decision making activities.*

Swansea Council is committed to reducing poverty and the impacts that poverty has upon its citizens. Poverty limits aspirations, damages relationships and ensures a loss of life chances."

The Vision for Swansea is that:

"The Council aspires to achieve a Swansea in which:

- **Income poverty** is not a barrier to doing well at school, having a healthy and vibrant life, developing skills and qualifications and having a fulfilling occupation.
- **Service poverty** is tackled through targeting resources where they have the most effect, with decisions about that made in conjunction with service users.
- **Participation** is enjoyed by all our residents, who have the opportunity and resources to join in with social, cultural and leisure activities and decision-making.
- Residents **Maximise their Income** and get the most out of the money that they have.
- Residents avoid paying the '**Poverty Premium**', the extra costs people on low incomes must pay for essentials such as fuel and transport.
- **Barriers to Employment** such as transport and childcare are removed."

The Vision is accompanied by a Tackling Poverty Strategy, A Tackling Poverty Performance Framework and a Delivery plan. It is worth noting that the documents available on the Swansea Council website are now out of date.

Tackling poverty is a Corporate priority and in practical terms Swansea have developed a tackling poverty service and this is considered to be a small but effective team, The team consider that their role is turning the Tackling Poverty Strategy into practice. The service has five teams focussing on the following areas:

- Tackling poverty (Grants, strategy, projects and programmes, partnerships)
- Employability team
- Lifelong learning service
- Local area coordinators (20 coordinators)
- Welfare rights and financial inclusion.

The team regularly monitors the impact of their activities and report the findings to the Council's Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel.

9.0 The Social Enterprise Sector within the Vale of Glamorgan

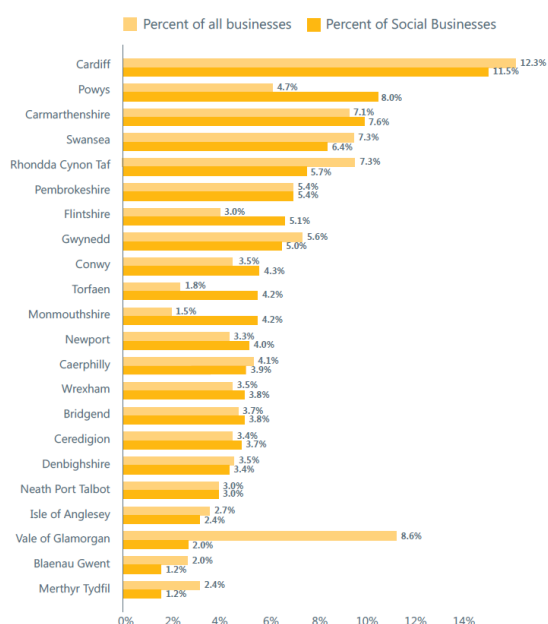
During the research it was evident that there is currently limited knowledge of the size and make up of the Social Enterprise Sector in the County.

In preparing for the Social Enterprise workshop with the Council, Cwmpas reviewed the data contained within the Social Business Wales "Mapping the Social Business Sector in Wales / Census 2022 (January 2023)". The report considered that the data for the Vale was a statistical outlier:

"given the addition of the GVS list of businesses, which was not replicated elsewhere in Wales; thus, it does not provide a comparable outline of social business activity within the area."

The "outlier" status is illustrated in the diagram below:

Figure 3.2: Geographical distribution of social businesses compared with all businesses



Source: Social Business Wales, Mapping the Social Business Sector in Wales / Census 2022 (January 2023).

Following the Social Enterprise workshop, it was agreed that Cwmpas would undertake a basic review of the current data, relating to the Vale of Glamorgan Social Enterprise data held by Cwmpas, namely:

- The data collected by Wavehill (with input from GVS) as part of the 2023 Social Business Wales Mapping (n 242)
- A list of current Social Business Wales Clients, based in the Vale (n17).

The basic review involved checking if the business was still operational, via website and recent social media posts and then checking the legal status of the business via

the regulator's website, either Companies House, the Financial Conduct Authority or the Charity Commission.

This task was not included within the original brief and therefore we have used limited time in completing the data review. Our estimates now suggest that there are approximately 100 Social Enterprises based in the County. This was not a full Social Enterprise mapping exercise and therefore we would still draw a note of caution to this figure.

10.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 Conclusion

This research has collected, collated and analysed data from a variety of sources and the findings will be able to support the Council as it responds to the four Audit Wales reports in greater detail and updates it's corporate priorities.

Our review of key strategic documents concluded that there has already been a shift in priorities and actions contained within the current ADP and the revised PSB Wellbeing Plan, towards a focus on tackling poverty more holistically and a greater emphasis on working with Third Sector, Social Enterprise and community partners.

What is also evident, is that there is a significant amount of activity happening on the ground in terms of the poverty agenda. However, much of the work that is being highlighted internally, as good practice, is funded via short term grant or project funding. To date there is limited evidence of trying to align or coordinate workstreams, such as those relating to a geographical place or interventions supporting a specific demographic e.g. older people.

Cwmpas considers that the Council would benefit from the development of a Poverty Strategy, which could be supported by a monitoring framework to review the remit and impact of the various workstreams.

The Council works well with the many different Third Sector partners, but, these are usually the same partners that it has worked with for many years. The Council **recognises that the Voluntary Sector Compact (between the Council and GVS) needs to be updated and already has ideas as to how this can change to adopt a more pragmatic partnership approach, extending also to engaging with the wider Third and Social Enterprise sectors.** There is also the opportunity to **refresh the VSJLC**, maybe making the remit less formal and trying to encourage the sector to take part. Cwmpas also feel that there is an opportunity to **consider engagement events with the wider sector, such as a Third Sector Conference or meet the buyer events** where the Council can be more in touch with the needs, capability, capacity of the sector and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The research has established that the Council knows very little about the Social Enterprise Sector in the County and hence there is little engagement, however, staff from across the Council appear to be willing to find out more.

In terms of community resilience and self-reliance the Council again is undertaking a variety of different activities, particularly through the Place Making and community mapping work, as well as the work it is undertaking with/through Third Sector Partners and Town and Community Councils. Two areas that came to the fore through the research were the current Asset Transfer policy approach and the

allocation of S106 monies. Community organisations and Town and Community Councils both felt that they would more involvement in how S106 monies were spent within their communities. In terms of Community Asset Transfer our findings suggested that Town and Community Councils and Community organisations would like the Council policy and processes in this area to be far more enabling than they are at present.

10.2 Recommendations

In developing the recommendations detailed below Cwmpas has been mindful of the recommendations contained within each of the Audit Wales Reports. We also acknowledge that the recommendations made by Audit Wales tend to be sequential and that the strategic recommendations need to be in place before other activities can be enacted.

Many of our recommendations already form part of the “*We will*” actions contained within the 2024-25 ADP and we anticipate that this has been, in part, a response to the ongoing dialogue between Cwmpas and the Council. Below are the key recommendations suggested by Cwmpas:

10.2.1 Poverty

Cwmpas recommend that the Council develops a Poverty Strategy, this would allow the Council to develop a clear and holistic vision and approach in relation to addressing poverty, including the cost of living crisis. This strategic approach would allow the LA to:

- Demonstrate leadership in relation to poverty, from an SLT level
- Map all of the current activity being undertaken, including the identification of place-based and demographic interventions
- Align resources to maximise impact
- Develop intervention impact frameworks, monitoring and evaluation tools and processes
- Make the case for continuation of short term funded projects
- Identify opportunities to work with Third Sector Organisations, Social Enterprises and Community Groups.
- Consider longer term resourcing and investment.

10.2.2 Social Enterprise

Currently there is little engagement with Social Enterprise. Cwmpas recommends that the Council undertake detailed mapping of the sector to develop a comprehensive understanding of the size and make up of the sector within the County. This information will provide the Council with a solid basis on which to develop their future approach and begin to formulate the action plan and targets that are referred to within the recommendations of the Audit Wales Report.

The Council is beginning to make progress in relation to its S16 responsibilities. It is worth acknowledging however that Welsh Government are no longer funding the S16 development support, that was previously provided by Cwmpas and therefore this coordination responsibility will now fall solely to the Council. Within the S16 Forum, we recommend that the Social Services Team consider a programme which:

- Outlines the procurement opportunities ahead
- Allows time for ideation and exploration of joint working opportunities between organisations
- Explores co-produced solutions
- Allows sector voice to be heard
- Shares best practice from further afield.

Although there is now a partnership arrangement for procurement through Ardal, responsibility for procurement remains with the Council. Cwmpas recommends that the Council should review how procurement activities are being shaped, planned and designed, including the:

- Quality/cost ratios of tenders
- Resource required to complete the tender
- Scoring of social value
- Contract monitoring expectations
- Implementing the VCSE support programme.

Cwmpas also recommend implementing a series of awareness raising workshops to promote Social Enterprise amongst internal Council staff and Elected Members.

Following on from the above we recommend that the Council develop web resources for social enterprises.

10.2.3 Third Sector

Cwmpas recommend that the Council works with GVS to modernise the existing Compact. We recommend adopting a less formal Partnership approach to future activity.

We also feel that there is an opportunity for the Council to engage differently with the sector both through the VSJLC membership and through a programme of proactive engagement activities.

The S16 forum currently focusses on Social Care, we recommend that the Council considers a similar approach to engage with the wider Third and Social Enterprise Sectors to promote collaboration, ideation and capacity development.

10.2.4 Communities and Self-reliance

Again there are a wide variety of activities taking place in relation to Community Resilience and Self-reliance but the Audit Wales Report recommends that the Council should have:

- clearly defined and agreed what community resilience and self-reliance means to them; and
- a vision that makes clear what the Council needs to do and what others are best placed to do.

At present Cwmpas do not consider that the above is in place and therefore we recommend that the Council undertake this review and set a clear vision for the future. Again, as with the Poverty Strategy this vision will provide a far clearer base on which to judge what activities to pursue and which should be delivered by community, Social Enterprise and Third Sector partners.

We also recommend that the Council implement all of the community focused activities outlined within the current ADP, including the commitments made to the transfer of assets and 106 monies.

End of Report

Appendix 1

List of research Participants

Internal Participants

Phil Chappell – Operational Manager Regeneration

Iain McMillan – Head of Resource management and safeguarding

Gaynor Jones - Operational Manager - Commissioning and Finance

Tom Bowring – Director of Corporate Resources

Gemma Jones - Operational Manager accountancy

Helen Moses- Operational Manager – Corporate strategy and Insight

Andreas Pieris-Plumley – Policy Officer, Corporate Policy and Insight

Emma Reed – Head Of Neighbourhood Services And Transport

Kyle Phillips - Operational Manager Transport Services

David Knevett - Operational Manager Neighbourhood Services, Healthy Living

Karen Davies – Principal Healthy Living Officer

Farida Aslam – Senior Neighbourhood Manager

Deborah Gibbs – Principal Community Safety Officer

Martin Dacey – Lead Officer For Social Inclusion And Wellbeing

Lisa Lewis - Operational Manager – Strategy And Resources

Rob Jones - Operational Manager Corporate Communications,

Participation, Equalities & Directorate Development

Natalie Eddins - Team Manager - Commissioning

Arabella Calder – Senior Community Development Officer

Rhys Jones – Youth Engagement Manager

Lorna Cross – Operational Manager Property

Lucy Butler – Senior Planner

Penny fuller – Senior Regeneration officer

Sarah Cutting - Senior Community Development Officer

Participants for other Public Sector Organisations

Steve Robinson, Cardiff City Council (Ardal Partnership)

John Paxton, Cardiff City Council (Ardal Partnership)

Samantha Harry, Cardiff City Council (Ardal Partnership)

Food Vale, Cardiff and Vale Public Health Team, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

Town and Community Councils

Barry Town Council

Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council

Llantwit Major Town Council

Penarth Town Council

Dinas Powys Community Council

Llandough Community Council

St Athan Community Council

Sully and Lavernock Community Council

Wick Community Council

Third Sector Organisations

Glamorgan Voluntary Service

Benthyg Cymru

Llamau

Cowbridge Charter Trust

Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern

Vale of Glamorgan Citizen's Advice

Cardiff and Vale Action for mental health

Hafod Housing Association

Age Connects Cardiff and the Vale

Action for Children

Platfform

Cartrefi Cymru.

Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Advocacy and Independent visitor services

Autistic Minds

St Johns Wales

Vale Plus

Advocacy Matters

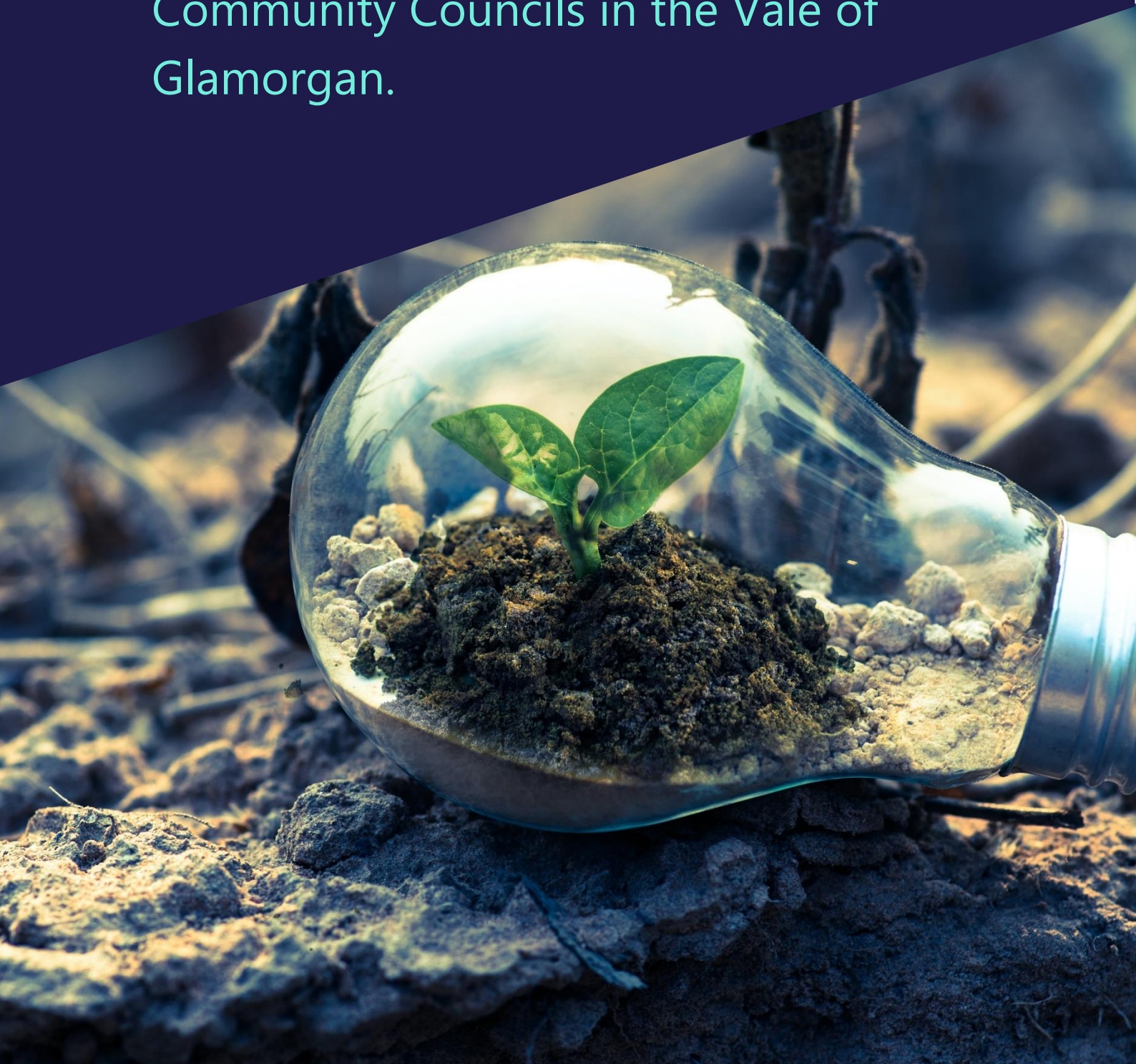
Sight Cymru

MHA Communities (Penarth and District)

ewmpas

For economic and
social change

Engagement Report for Town and
Community Councils in the Vale of
Glamorgan.



Purpose of this report

The purpose of this short report is to highlight the themes and issues that emerged from a small number of engagement sessions with town and community councils, within the Vale of Glamorgan and to propose recommendations for next steps, as the Vale of Glamorgan Council (the Council) looks to review the existing town and community council charter.

Wider context

This report and its findings forms part of a wider engagement piece of work that Cwmpas have undertaken with the Council. The internal and external engagement activities have focussed on four Audit Wales reports, namely:

- Time for Change – Poverty in Wales (Nov 22)
- A missed Opportunity – Social Enterprise (Dec 22)
- Together we can - Community resilience and self-reliance (Jan 23)
- Third Sector Partnership Working – Vale of Glamorgan Council (July 2021).

To date engagement activities have included:

- Online interviews with senior internal staff, across a variety of Departments
- A social enterprise workshop, again with key members of staff
- Online interviews with third sector organisations and social enterprises
- Online interviews and focus groups with town and community councils
- A workshop based on S16 for third sector providers in the County
- A presentation to the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (VSJLC).

The current town and community council charter

The current charter between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the town and community councils was published in 2019. Prior to the publication of the charter the Council undertook a variety of engagement activities with town and community councils to ensure that their views were incorporated into the revised document.

The charter is:

“designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other’s opinions, honesty and our common priority of putting citizens at the centre.”

The charter covers a variety of different areas:

- Recognition
- Local Governance (including the Community Liaison Committee)
- Consultation
- Information and Communication
- Joint working and engagement
- Land Use Planning
- Practical Support
- Capacity
- Ethics
- Financial arrangements
- Delegating responsibility for service provision
- Sustainability
- Community Strategy
- Local Elections
- Action Plan
- Monitoring and review

There are 4 town councils and 22 community councils within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Methodology

In order to obtain the views of town and community councillors, clerks and town and community council staff, emails were sent from the Corporate Services team at the Council offering the opportunity to take part in two online focus groups, which would be facilitated by Cwmpas. It was also agreed that the 4 town councils would be offered the opportunity to take part in individual online interviews. Follow up/reminder emails were also sent by the Council team.

All together we undertook:

2 early evening online focus groups

3 individual online interviews.

We had a total of 15 participants from 9 of the town and community councils. The town and community councils which took part are listed below:

- Barry Town Council
- Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council
- Llantwit Major Town Council
- Penarth Town Council
- Dinas Powys
- Llandough
- St Athan
- Sully and Lavernock
- Wick

The participants comprised town council staff, clerks and town and community councillors. It is also worth noting that two of the participants were also Ward Councillors.

Notes were taken during the interviews and focus groups. The notes were analysed using a thematic methodological approach to identify the key themes and issues that participants raised.

Findings

The themes and issues identified in the data analysis, are outlined in the sections below:

The current charter

There was consensus that there was limited knowledge amongst town and community council staff and councillors about the specific contents of the current charter. It was also considered that there was little awareness amongst Council officers of the charter and the commitments made within it. There was a perception that the document and the processes associated with it, had remained static since it was launched.

It is worth noting that some of the focus group participants had been involved in the revision of the charter, which they had found to be a positive experience.

Participant comments included:

"Just a piece of paper that is not followed."

"Not worth the paper it is written on".

"The theory into practice hasn't worked."

"Nothing has changed."

"Do officers know about the charter?"

Interactions with officers and Departments

Larger town councils considered that they had a good, day to day, working relationship with Council staff.

Smaller town and community councils felt that they relied on established and often strong working relationships with individual officers. There was also agreement that some Departments of the Council *"just don't want to know"*.

It was also felt that, despite the commitments within the charter, that the relationship/partnership between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the town and community councils was not equal and that a top down approach, in relation to decision making, still existed.

There was a perception the LA officers felt that *"town and community councils were a pain and were just there to hassle them"*.

A number of participants indicated that responses to letters and email/telephone enquiries were very slow and sometimes non-existent.

Unappreciated

It was felt that the role and local knowledge of town and community staff and councillors was under appreciated and that many town and community councillors were doing good work in maintaining community assets.

Participants also emphasised that many town and community councils are struggling to attract local councillors and clerks.

It was felt that many of the organisations lack the capacity and skills needed to meet what is expected of them. Conversely they saw the Council as an organisation with a depth of skills, capacity and resource.

Inform and engage

All participants made clear the role that they want/expect to play in local decision making, however they considered that:

- They were not kept informed of activities in their area, e.g. roadworks.
- Many felt that town and community councils were only engaged when decisions had already been made.
- They would welcome the opportunity to engage in decision making for their local communities.
- They would like to be involved in strategic decision making.

Place making/shaping

Many felt that the place making/place shaping agenda represented a real opportunity to work together. Those that had already been involved in discussions/meetings considered that the engagement had been positive and that progress was being made. However concerns were raised about the expectations and the resources required in place making, one participant added *"it seems to be lots of extra work with little or no time to do this work"*.

The following concerns were also raised:

"There needs to be realistic expectations of what town and community councils can achieve based on resources and time."

"It is difficult for the councils that are not involved in place shaping."

"If it's not Barry forget it".

"Too much effort."

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF)

The Councils approach to SPF was also discussed and some participants had attended the pre-application events that the Council had organised. Some had applied, unsuccessfully, for SPF funding and felt very disheartened by the process. However, it is not clear if the applications were specifically on the part of the town and community councils or community organisations.

Community Asset transfer

There was significant debate about the Vale of Glamorgan's Community Asset Transfer policy and approach. One of the town and community councillors noted that:

"The policy reads well but the experience in reality is different. Lots of effort, resource and expense".

One of the larger town councils also indicated that it had incurred £2000 of costs on consultants as part of a community asset transfer process, which actually didn't go ahead.

Generally the participants agreed that they:

- Would like to see more work/support in relation to potential sports club assets transfers
- Would like to see the policies/ plans around asset transfer reviewed.

Overall though the views of those that had been involved in discussions relating to the transfer of community assets was that it was a negative experience that could be resource heavy. Quotes included that

"It was a demoralising experience."

"Bogged down in bureaucracy."

"The Vale need to take the initiative too."

"Lots of opportunity (or a way for the Council to dump assets?)."

Section 106

The process and monies associated with S106 practices and procedures also sparked significant debate. The general feeling was that planning comments submitted by town and community councils are not taken seriously and that they have very little influence over planning decisions. It was also considered that the engagement and communication during the planning process is poor and that the process can be time consuming.

"The council do not listen; it's our community."

There were questions about:

- How can town and community councils influence where S106 monies are spent? and
- Is the community infrastructure levy being used properly?

On a positive note, participants recognised that there was a new Council officer in post and that things were improving.

Working with each other

Interestingly the town and community council clerks have established a clerks forum to support each other within their roles.

Two other themes that were raised during the interviews and the focus groups were consultation documents and the community liaison committee:

Consultation documents

Participants emphasised that generally consultation documents are very long. They asked if there was a way that these could be summarised and written in plain English

Community Liaison Committee

Some participants also raised the subject of the Community Liaison Committee, They felt that:

- The meetings were not regular enough; and
- Needed to attract a wider audience.

Opportunities

Everyone felt that moving forward there were opportunities to work more closely and more productively together. Participants considered that areas of opportunity included:

- Exploring how town and community councils could work more closely with Council officers to develop their knowledge, skills and capacity.
- Opportunities to collaborate on projects and events.
- Opportunities to raise awareness of the commitments in the current charter amongst both the Council staff and town and community councils.

Recommendations

Following this review Cwmpas considers that it is currently not the right time to review the Town and Community Council Charter. However, there are opportunities to promote awareness of the current Charter, both internally and externally. External awareness raising could include engagement events with Town and Community Councils around key themes, such as Community Asset Transfer and S106 monies; which were both raised during this research. It could also include basic activities such

as providing Town and Community Councils with an up to date list of contact details for key Council staff.

Cwmpas feels that undertaking these outreach activities, in the near future, would provide insight and act as a positive base, on which to conduct a wider consultation and review exercise of the Town and Community Council Charter in the medium term future.

End of Report

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