

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2025

REFERENCE FROM CABINET: 6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2025

**“C285        RESHAPING SCRUTINY (EL/PR) (SCRUTINY – CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES) –**

The Leader presented the report to provide Cabinet with an overview of the principles of Reshaping Scrutiny and sought endorsement to progress the work further.

Scrutiny Committees in Councils in Wales were legislated for under the Local Government Act 2000. The Act introduced the requirement for Councils to establish Overview and Scrutiny Committees to hold the Executive to account and improve transparency and accountability in Local Government, however, the number of meetings per year and reports that Scrutiny were dealing with often hindered that accountability.

An audit of Scrutiny work over the last year highlighted that across 40 meetings held by the Committees during that period that, of the 163 items on the agenda, there were a number of items simply for noting. The Vale of Glamorgan Council had talented, intelligent Members with a wealth of experience and expertise that needed to be harnessed in order to fully tackle issues.

A further consideration was how the public were able to engage with Scrutiny and whether that was effective, or sometimes better placed as part of task and Finish work or Scrutiny enquiries. The Panel Performance Assessment also stated that there was greater value to be gained from Scrutiny in the Vale of Glamorgan.

There as a proposal as to how Scrutiny Committees could fit with the current objectives in Vale 2030 and how work would be taken forward in future, e.g. separate briefings or separate meetings to shape a Policy before it was determined.

Alongside the scheduled group Member sessions on the 12th and 13th March, the Leader said that Members were also able to attend Scrutiny Committees should they wish to do so.

This was a matter for Executive decision.

Cabinet, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RESOLVED –

(1)    T H A T the existing Scrutiny arrangements and their effectiveness in meeting desired aims, based upon feedback provided from a range of stakeholders be noted.

(2) T H A T the proposed principles and approaches identified as part of Reshaping Scrutiny in supporting the delivery of the Council's new Corporate Plan be endorsed.

(3) T H A T the hosting of further Member engagement sessions by Officers be approved to provide an overview of the proposals and offer Members the opportunity to participate in the design of any proposed changes.

(4) T H A T the scheduled group Member sessions on the 12th and 13th March, 2025 be noted.

(5) T H A T the report be referred to the Democratic Services Committee; the Governance and Audit Committee; and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

(6) T H A T a further report be presented to Cabinet on conclusion of the above and prior to consideration by Full Council.

### Reasons for decisions

(1) To enable the Council to assess whether Scrutiny Committees were fully and effectively fulfilling their functions for both Members and residents in shaping policy direction.

(2) To help ensure that Scrutiny Committees were effectively fulfilling their functions, enhancing the Council's ability to achieve its strategic goals and objectives, delivering high-quality services to residents, and to allow for the dedication of resources to continue the design of future scrutiny arrangements in collaboration with Officers and Members.

(3) To maximise opportunities for Members to participate in shaping any proposed changes and ensure they have a voice in any potential changes to the Scrutiny function.

(4) To ensure that Cabinet were aware of the upcoming group Member sessions, which were designed to provide an overview of the proposals and offer Members the opportunity to participate in the design of any proposed changes, crucial for informed decision-making and active participation.

(5) To ensure that the proposals and findings within the report were thoroughly reviewed and considered by the relevant Committees, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation and input from various perspectives, essential for informed decision-making and effective governance.

(6) To provide Cabinet with updated information and progress on the proposals, the most current insights to make informed decisions, enabling Cabinet to consider the proposed implementation and impact of any proposed changes."

Attached as Appendix: Report to Cabinet: 6<sup>th</sup> March, 2025

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|---|---|
| Meeting of:   | <b>Cabinet</b>  |
| Date of Meeting:  | <b>Thursday, 06 March 2025</b>  |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee:  | Corporate Performance and Resources   |
| Report Title:   | Reshaping Scrutiny  |
| Purpose of Report:  | To provide Cabinet with an overview of the principles of Reshaping Scrutiny and seek endorsement to progress this work further.   |
| Report Owner:   | Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources   |
| Responsible Officer:  | Rob Thomas, Chief Executive   |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation:  | <p>Cabinet<br/> Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs<br/> Group Leaders<br/> Chief Executive<br/> Director of Corporate Resources<br/> Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)<br/> Head of Finance (S151 Officer)<br/> Head of Democratic Services<br/> Senior Leadership Team<br/> Operational Manager – Corporate Strategy and Insight</p> |
| Policy Framework:   | This is a matter for Executive Decision by Cabinet.   |
| <p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This report sets out the current Scrutiny framework within Vale of Glamorgan, forming the basis of Reshaping Scrutiny, considering what Scrutiny is, what arrangements the Council has in place to discharge these functions, what feedback has been provided and how this could be improved for the future, whilst also strengthening support to the Council in delivery of its new Corporate Plan, Vale 2030.</li> <li>• This report seeks endorsement ahead of wider stakeholder input into shaping the proposal to maximise engagement opportunities with both elected members and officers and agree a collective vision for how Scrutiny could operate in the Vale of Glamorgan to maximise impact.</li> <li>• These changes are hoped to be agreed by Council on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025, with a view to appointing to these Committees at the next Annual Meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025, commencing implementation in the 2025-26 municipal year.</li> </ul> |   |

## **Recommendations**

1. T H A T Cabinet reflects upon existing Scrutiny arrangements and their effectiveness in meeting its desired aims, based upon feedback provided from a range of stakeholders.
2. T H A T Cabinet endorses the proposed principles and approaches identified as part of Reshaping Scrutiny in supporting the delivery of the Council's new Corporate Plan.
3. T H A T Cabinet approves the hosting of further member engagement sessions by officers to provide an overview of the proposals and offer members the opportunity to participate in the design of any proposed changes.
4. T H A T Cabinet notes the scheduled group Member sessions on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March.
5. T H A T Cabinet refers this report to the Democratic Services Committee; the Governance and Audit Committee; and Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.
6. T H A T a further report be presented to Cabinet on conclusion of the above and prior to consideration by Full Council.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To enable the Council to assess whether Scrutiny Committees are fully and effectively fulfilling their functions for both members and residents in shaping policy direction.
2. To help ensure that Scrutiny Committees are effectively fulfilling their functions, enhancing the Council's ability to achieve its strategic goals and objectives, delivering high-quality services to residents, and to allow for the dedication of resources to continue the design of future scrutiny arrangements in collaboration with officers and members.
3. To maximise opportunities for members to participate in shaping any proposed changes and ensure they have a voice in any potential changes to the Scrutiny function.
4. To ensure that Cabinet are aware of the upcoming group Member sessions, which are designed to provide an overview of the proposals and offer members the opportunity to participate in the design of any proposed changes, crucial for informed decision-making and active participation.
5. To ensure that the proposals and findings within the report are thoroughly reviewed and considered by the relevant committees, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation and input from various perspectives, essential for informed decision-making and effective governance.
6. To provide Cabinet with updated information and progress on the proposals, the most current insights to make informed decisions, enabling Cabinet to consider the proposed implementation and impact of any proposed changes.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Scrutiny committees in Councils in Wales were legislated for under the Local Government Act 2000. This Act introduced the requirement for councils to establish overview and scrutiny committees to hold the executive to account and improve transparency and accountability in local government<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 In a Local context, Welsh Government guidance states that the purpose of Scrutiny is "... an essential element of the political and general governance of the council. The council and executive culture should be open to and supportive of scrutiny and scrutiny should be provided with staff and resources to enable it to effectively undertake its functions, including holding the council executive to account"<sup>2</sup>.
- 1.3 This viewpoint has been strengthened by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, a national charity with an expertise in governance and scrutiny, which states that, "'Scrutiny often ties in with decision making and to the development of major policies by the council. This makes sense, because it is only by influencing those policies that scrutiny will have an impact on the business of the council"<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.4 Within the Council's constitution, these legislative guidance's have formed the basis of the Council's purpose of Scrutiny, which is defined as "'Overview and Scrutiny Committees (in this Council, 'Scrutiny Committees') should be powerful Committees that can contribute to the development of Council policies and hold the Cabinet to account for its decisions. Another key part of the overview and scrutiny role is to review existing policies, consider proposals for new policies and suggest new policies. ... Scrutiny Committees should not shy away from the need to challenge and question decisions and make constructive criticism"<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.5 In exercising these functions, the Council currently has a structure based upon 5 Scrutiny Committees, which were last reformed in May 2016. This previous restructuring of Committees has successfully moved the Council towards providing Scrutiny based upon Corporate Plan outcomes instead of focusing upon Directorates, as was previous practice.
- 1.6 The existing Committees are:
  - Corporate Performance and Resources
  - Environment and Regeneration
  - Healthy Living and Social Care

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<sup>1</sup> Local Democracy in Wales, Welsh Government, Source: <https://www.gov.wales/local-democracy-wales-legislation-html>

<sup>2</sup> Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (WG23-23), Welsh Government, Source: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-principal-councils-in-wales.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Good Scrutiny Guide, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, Source: <https://cfigs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v5-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Section 7 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution, Source: [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Constitution/December-2023/23-12-05-Section-7.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Constitution/December-2023/23-12-05-Section-7.pdf)

- Homes and Safe Communities
- Learning and Culture

- 1.7** These Committees have a defined Terms of Reference<sup>5</sup>, which identifies the areas of interest for each Committee and considers their ways of working.
- 1.8** All Committees currently meet monthly (excluding during periods of recess), with some also utilising additional special meetings throughout the year as required.
- 1.9** Currently, these Committees consider a range of items as part of their agendas and forward work programmes. Analysis of the 2024-25 municipal year to date (May 2024 – January 2025) has highlighted that across 40 meetings held by the Committees during this period that, of the 163 items on the agenda:

- 15/163 (9%) of items related to Democratic related items, such as the Committee’s Forward Work Programming and Recommendation Tracking
- 61/163 (37%) of items related to “Corporate” items such as performance and finance, which are shared with each Committee on a cyclical basis
- 54/163 (33%) of items were identified as either being references from other Committees or Cabinet and being noted, or information updates and briefings surrounding topics from presenters
- 33/163 (20%) of items led to robust Scrutiny and considered proposals, and formed individual Committee recommendation which were shared with Cabinet for consideration

- 1.10** Whilst these figures are combined for all Committees, there is generally a +/- 8% variance with the general figures for each of the Scrutiny Committees, with the exceptions of Corporate Performance and Resources and Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees who have larger variances. A breakdown by each individual Scrutiny Committee is available in Appendix A.

Alongside this, there has also been a range of feedback from various areas, both internal and external, surrounding the effectiveness of the Scrutiny functions within the Council.

- 1.11** Feedback on the Council’s Scrutiny Function has been invited from the Council’s Members on an annual basis via the Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey. The results are shared with Democratic Services Committee and a subsequent improvement plan identified, led by the Scrutiny Chair and Vice Chair Group. The Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey 2024 Report<sup>6</sup> raised several areas for potential improvement surrounding the Scrutiny function from members, and improvement actions which have been reflected in the ethos of the Reshaping Scrutiny proposal. The Group also referred a report on the latest 2024 edition of the Survey to the Democratic Services Committee, on the 1st of July 2024, to

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<sup>5</sup> Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Terms of Reference, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Source: June 2021 Scrutiny Appointment, Membership, TOR and Chairs Source: [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny%20information/Terms-of-Reference/June-2021-Scrutiny-Appointment-Membership-TOR-and-Chairs.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny%20information/Terms-of-Reference/June-2021-Scrutiny-Appointment-Membership-TOR-and-Chairs.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey 24 Report, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Source: [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Democratic%20Services/2024/24-07-01/Ref-from-SCVCG-Scrutiny-Impact-Survey.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Democratic%20Services/2024/24-07-01/Ref-from-SCVCG-Scrutiny-Impact-Survey.pdf)

ensure that Members of the Committee were kept informed of progress against actions that have been agreed by the Group to enhance the effectiveness of the Council's Scrutiny Function.

**1.12** In August 2023 to December 2023, the Council undertook a significant survey, commissioning Data Cymru to speak to residents to understand what matters to them. The survey received over 4,000 responses during this period. Notable results from the Let's Talk Life in the Vale survey<sup>7</sup> related to this area including:

- 60.8% of respondents strongly or slightly disagreed that the Council takes residents views into account when making a decision
- 60.5% of respondents had attempted to influence a decision or decisions made by the Council, with only 15.8% attending a Council meeting to do so.

**1.13** During November 2024, the Council undertook a Panel Performance Assessment – as described within the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, consisting of a panel of external peers, to consider its performance and governance arrangements. Whilst the report<sup>8</sup> highlighted a number of positive areas for the Council alongside areas for improvement, there were formal recommendations surrounding Governance and using resources effectively impact upon the Scrutiny function, including:

- Reviewing and revising the cycle of formal democratic meetings and formal reporting requirements, exploring ways to better engage members in more proactive and cross chamber collaboration – in both formal and informal ways including reviewing the effectiveness of online meetings.
- Reviewing the balance between the internal corporate demands placed on members and their role as representatives of their constituents to deliver the Council's vision of place.
- Using the strong local politics as a force for good, whilst ensuring civility in public life is promoted and kept front and centre to encourage respectful and constructive debate including online and in-person meetings.
- Enhancing the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny arrangements, specifically meetings, by assessing current practices to identify opportunities for improvement to make them more effective.

**1.14** Whilst undertaking national audit fieldwork, Audit Wales have also identified areas where Scrutiny functions could be improved and have made recommendations on both a local and national basis. This includes the historic report, Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future?<sup>9</sup>, which highlighted “the need

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<sup>7</sup> Let's Talk Life in the Vale Survey Results, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Data Cymru, Source: <https://participate.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/26290/widgets/93869/documents/60145>

<sup>8</sup> Panel Performance Assessment, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Source: [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/\\_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-02-06/Panel-Performance-Assessment.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-02-06/Panel-Performance-Assessment.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? – Vale of Glamorgan Council, Audit Wales, Source: [https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-12/scrutinty\\_vog.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-12/scrutinty_vog.pdf)

to explore different and more innovative forms of scrutiny”.

- 1.15** More recent reports such as the Financial Sustainability Review<sup>10</sup> also considers the Scrutiny function during the budget and financial management process, which recommended that “the Council should develop reporting arrangements to provide members with the impact of its financial position and Medium-Term Financial Plan on local communities and delivery of its well-being objectives”.
- 1.16** This is further supported by an Audit Wales report based upon Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspectives and Outcomes<sup>11</sup>, which formally recommended that “The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes”.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** Reflecting upon feedback from Members, the Public and wider stakeholders, there is clearly a desire to enhance Scrutiny to become increasingly effective and a critical friend to policy making in the Council. To achieve this would require a fundamental change in how these Committees operate, including ways of working from Members and Officers.
- 2.2** This change has come at an opportune moment, with the Council due to launch its new Corporate Plan, Vale 2030<sup>12</sup> in the next municipal year, alongside a refresh of its existing Reshaping Programme, both of which are setting the Council’s strategic direction for the future.
- 2.3** There have also been wider developments in approaches to Scrutiny function since the last review of Scrutiny Committees in 2016, including improvements in digital capabilities and changes in ways of working, which has allowed for there to be increasingly innovative ways to undertake scrutiny. This includes being largely outside of traditional, formal committee settings through mediums such as remote scrutiny, where less critical items (as agreed by the Chair) may be shared using a digital platform for Members to comment on and feed back as appropriate. Alongside this, following legislative changes because of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, there has been an increased emphasis upon Democratic Services offering research support to Scrutiny Committees.
- 2.4** This approach also creates capacity for Democratic Services Officers to further support investigative scrutiny delivered by Task and Finish Groups. Whilst this is

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<sup>10</sup> Financial Sustainability Review – Vale of Glamorgan Council, Audit Wales, Source: [https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale\\_fs\\_%20report\\_final.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale_fs_%20report_final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Use of performance information – Service User Perspective and Outcomes, Source: <https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale%20use%20of%20performance%20information%20report.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Draft Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Plan 2025-2030, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Source: [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/minutes,\\_agendas\\_and\\_reports/agendas/Scrutiny-CPR/2025/25-02-19.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/agendas/Scrutiny-CPR/2025/25-02-19.aspx)



currently undertaken periodically by the Council, due to capacity constraints, it has not been possible to embed this into an effective, systematic way of working for both members and officers.

- 2.5** The proposed approach to Scrutiny being outlined would also allow for increased integration between Committees and officers by working together and developing a further understanding of the interdependencies of each other's work and the Corporate Plan. This would seek to further embed the Five Ways of Working (as defined within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>13</sup>, a key lens of how the Council functions and operates.
- 2.6** Committee Members will also be increasingly empowered to drive the Committees' Forward Work Programmes moving forward, with a key emphasis upon forming their own recommendations to be shared with the relevant decision-making structure. This will require a fundamental change in the current delivery model and approach to Scrutiny from Members and Officers.
- 2.7** In consideration of how Scrutiny Committees could be structured in the future there are multiple potential options.
- 2.8** The below structure, a four-committee approach, has been proposed to a wide range of Members including Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs and Group Leaders. The rationale for presenting this option is, and has been, to enable discussion to be informed by illustrating how a change to the committee structure could look.

| Committee Name | Corporate Plan Objective   | Potential Remits  |
|----------------|--|---|
| Start Well     | Giving Everyone a Good Start in Life   | Children's and Young Peoples Services, Schools, Post 16, Community Education and Youth Services, Families First, Flying Start and Welsh (external)  |
| Live Well      | Supporting and Protecting Those Who Need Us<br><br>Creating Great Places to Live, Work and Visit | Adult Services, Social Care Business and Management, Arts Development, Leisure, Sports, Parks and Play, Community Safety, Crime and Disorder, Public Sector Housing, Private Sector Housing, Shared Regulatory Services (public protection) and equalities (external) |
| Place          | Creating Great Places to Live, Work and Visit<br><br>Respecting and Celebrating the Environment  | Economic development, countryside, tourism, regeneration, waste management and cleansing, highways and engineering, planning, transportation, fleet management, climate and nature emergency and placemaking.   |

<sup>13</sup> Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, Source: <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

|                |                                  |  |
|----------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Committee Name | Corporate Plan Objective         | Potential Remits   |
| Resources      | Being the Best Council We Can Be | Corporate policy and performance, communications, customer relations, finance and capital schemes, property, digital, democratic, Public Service's Board, human resources, surplus land and property, equalities (internal) and Welsh language (internal). |

**2.9** Whilst the proposed Committees' remits may appear large, it is important to note that Committees would not be required to cover all areas within a municipal year, and there will likely be areas that form part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme on a longer-term basis aligning with Directorate Plans in the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.

**2.10** Due to the integrated nature of the work of the Council, there are likely impacts of the identified remits upon most other Committees' areas of focus. However, the most appropriate "home" Committee has been found for areas of focus for the Committee based on its Corporate Plan alignment. However, these would be reviewed and assessed on an ongoing basis by Chairs and Officers to ensure that topics receive the appropriate level of Scrutiny coverage, and that opportunities to consider the integration with other areas are not missed.

**2.11** Feedback received from a range of Members to date has led to a multitude of opinions and no clear consensus has been reached to date regarding the number structure or remits of committees. Alongside the proposed structures, there is a clear need for consideration as to how the Council undertakes Scrutiny in meeting the aims of effective scrutiny, as supported by the evidence of existing practice (1.6). The primary focus of this improvement work is about maximising the impact of Scrutiny in supporting the Council's decision-making process through fewer, value adding items on agendas delivering meaningful recommendations via a range of mediums and is firmly not seeking to re-package the Council's existing arrangements in terms of the volume or types of reports being presented to Scrutiny through their current agendas.

**2.12** It is proposed that the Council clearly defines types of scrutiny and how these would take place within the Council. Types of Scrutiny could include:

| Scrutiny Type | Summary Description  |
|---------------|--|
| Briefings     | Information only or update items which are for noting and where scrutiny can add limited value                                       |
| Monitoring    | Scrutiny members consider performance against the Corporate Plan, considering objectives, measures and outcomes at a strategic level |

| Scrutiny Type                   | Summary Description  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Proposal                        | Policies are in development and are seeking Scrutiny feedback and recommendations  |
| Investigative (Task and Finish) | Committees can take deeper dives into topics using a range of methods based upon the Committee's forward work programme and priorities |

### 2.13 Briefings

Information only type items would be cascaded through an alternative medium, likely to be a shared folder, with a notification indicating when new material is available. This will include elements such as reports and presentations from the Council and Partner organisations which would likely not benefit from Scrutiny but be useful information to support Members in improving their awareness of local, regional and national policy direction. This information could be accessed by all Members on a remote basis whenever they need to access the information. Additionally, sessions would be arranged, often before relevant Scrutiny sessions, to invite officers to provide whole member briefing sessions and presentations as appropriate, which would be facilitated by the Democratic Services team.

### 2.14 Monitoring

Monitoring of performance information (including objectives, measures and outcomes) would take place in Q2 and Q4 (including end of year self-assessment) only. This would be held in a single joint forum bringing together all existing Scrutiny committees into a singular space. Whilst a large meeting, this would encourage cross-committee working and learning, and members would be encouraged to focus questioning upon their "home" Committee's remit. Areas of interest within this forum could be used to shape individual Committee's forward work programmes moving forward, including the potential commissioning of investigative scrutiny by a Committee.

This would complement navigating the integrated nature of the Corporate Plan and release significant capacity from officers and members, as this is currently taken to each committee on a quarterly basis. To provide assurance, there would still be internal activity undertaken in Q1 and Q3 to support these arrangements, but these would not be reported to a formal Committee meeting.

### 2.15 Proposals

When a policy is still in its development stage, and where decisions have yet to be taken, there will be opportunities for Committees to make individual recommendations on these areas which would in turn be fed back to Cabinet to consider as a policy develops. In turn, it is the expectation that Cabinet would provide a response to these recommendations including any rationale for accepting, partially accepting or rejecting.

## 2.16 Investigative

A Committee may identify an area of work which would benefit from a deeper dive to explore the issue further. These would be in addition to formal committee meetings and coordinated by Democratic Services. These areas will have a clearly defined focus and proposed to occur over an 8–12-week period (with the knowledge that there may need to be flexibility based upon scope). Task and Finish will leverage the expertise of officers, partners, wider stakeholders alongside evidence and insight from the people of the Vale of Glamorgan. Investigate scrutiny is to hold the Cabinet and officers accountable on specific topics while proactively shaping the Council’s policy direction. This approach will provide a platform for more active participation in the Council’s decision-making processes. Reports and recommendations from these smaller groups will be fed back to the Cabinet Member, Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for consideration. This feedback loop will help the Council in shaping its future policy direction, ensuring that decisions are informed by a broad range of perspectives and expertise.

The proposed timeline guidance, which may be subject to change dependent upon the scope of the work, is outlined below:

| Week  | Stage                | Stage Description   |
|-------|----------------------|---|
| Pre   | Initiation           | Identification of topic based; sourced from areas such as performance, Reshaping, Corporate Plan, audit reports and members interests     |
| 1     | Start up             | Appoint members, agree meeting dates, members, ways of working and Terms of Reference   |
| 2-3   | Planning and Scoping | Agree key outcomes, action points, evidence collation, including wider stakeholders   |
| 4-9   | Delivery             | Delivery of content of T&F receiving, challenging and sharing information to support direction of travel                                  |
| 10-12 | Concluding Report    | Production of final report by T&F Chair, including recommendations, to be considered by the commissioning Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. |

**2.17** Whilst recommendations may not be immediately accepted or acted upon, investigative scrutiny work is often used as an evidence base for future policy making within an organisation and provides an opportunity for Scrutiny members to shape and influence the Council’s policy direction.

Whilst this type of Scrutiny is happening currently on an infrequent basis, it is anticipated that this is undertaken with increased regularity, as there are examples within Welsh Councils where Member-led Task and Finish has added value and influenced policy direction, including Flood Risk Management

(Denbighshire County Council)<sup>14</sup> and Emergency Interim Social Housing Allocations (Carmarthenshire County Council)<sup>15</sup>.

**2.18** To enable these changes, there will need to be sufficient resource and capacity for both Members and Officers. The below outlines a proposed schedule of meetings for each Committee, which would also include Task and Finish work throughout the year alongside:

| Month     | Current Calendar (General) | Proposed Calendar - Proposal/ Performance (General) | Proposed Calendar (Breakdown)         |  |  |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
|           |                            |   | Committee Meeting – Proposal Scrutiny | Performance Forum – Performance Scrutiny | Task and Finish – Investigative Scrutiny |
| May       | Yes                        | Yes   | Yes                                   |  | Yes                                      |
| June      | Yes                        | No  |                                       |  | Yes                                      |
| July      | Yes                        | Yes (x2)  | Yes                                   | Yes                                      | Yes                                      |
| August    |                            |   |                                       |  |  |
| September | Yes                        | Yes   | Yes                                   |  | Yes                                      |
| October   | Yes                        | No  |                                       |  | Yes                                      |
| November  | Yes                        | Yes   | Yes                                   |  | Yes                                      |
| December  | No                         | No  |                                       | Yes                                      | Yes                                      |
| January   | Yes                        | Yes   | Yes                                   |  | Yes                                      |
| February  | Yes                        | Budget (arrangements TBC)                           | Budget (arrangements TBC)             | Budget (arrangements TBC)                | Budget (arrangements TBC)                |
| March     | Yes                        | Yes   | Yes                                   |  | Yes                                      |
| April     | Yes                        | No  |                                       |  | Yes                                      |

**2.21** Not all members will be required to attend every Task and Finish (investigative scrutiny) meeting, with attendance depending upon the groups’ scope and membership.

**2.22** Based upon the above potential calendar of meetings, there would be a reduction of 2 meetings per year for Committees, changing from 10 meetings per year to 8 meetings (6 Committee meetings plus 2 Performance Forums). This is not a significant change from the current volume of Committee meetings (as visible in table 2.22) on a per Committee basis, when considering elements such as meeting cancellations or single item agendas which can occur. However, in doing so, it would make available capacity to support the other aspects of work, especially in light of a potential reduction in one committee overall.

**2.23** If the new Committee structure and ways of working were to be endorsed, this would lead to a reduction of Scrutiny Committee meetings per year for the Council, when considered on a whole Scrutiny basis, based upon the existing arrangements of 50 meetings (10 per year x 5 committees) being reduced to 32

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Flood Risk Management and Riparian Land Ownership Task and Finish Group, Denbighshire County Council, Source: <https://modern.gov.denbighshire.gov.uk/documents/s45895/Appendix%201%20Flood%20Risk%20Management%20and%20Riparian%20Land%20Ownership%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group.pdf?LLL=0>

<sup>15</sup> Emergency Interim Social Housing Allocations Policy, Carmarthenshire County Council Source: <https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/pzybhet3/emergency-interim-social-housing-allocations-policy-eng.pdf>

meetings (6 per year x 5 Committees plus 2 Performance meetings) releasing capacity for members and officers to invest time into investigative scrutiny and use this as a basis for forming recommendations to inform the Council's policy direction.

- 2.24** It is important to consider that any time saving is not quantified by the number of meetings, but also considers pre-meeting arrangements and Member reading time, alongside officer capacity in preparation of agendas, minutes and decision notices. Recent pan-Wales research from the Democracy and Boundary Commission supports this approach, with its conclusion that “The issue that has the biggest impact on councillor workload does not seem to relate to the nature of the ward – it relates to the various cabinet and committee responsibilities and the frequency and volume of meetings they are required to attend”<sup>16</sup>.
- 2.25** The existing Calendar of Meetings for 2025-2026 recently agreed by Cabinet will need to be changed from a Scrutiny Committee perspective to consider the removal of the dates for the existing Committee structures and replaced with any new arrangements.
- 2.26** As outlined within the report's recommendations, these will need to be further defined with the tools, techniques and infrastructure for both officers and Members to enable these changes to be implemented for the 2025-26 municipal year. This timeline would allow for sufficient time for this to be embedded as a way of working within the Council for officers and members ahead of the next Local Government election in May 2027. A timeline for the proposal is included within Appendix B.
- 2.27** It is anticipated that changes to the Committee's existing structures, calendars and delivery mediums will release capacity within the Democratic Services function to service them more effectively, including the introduction of research support.
- 2.28** The Member Development Programme has been updated to reflect training for members in Quarter 1 2025-26 surrounding the Corporate Plan and performance.
- 2.29** Whilst Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs, Group Leaders, and Cabinet have been engaged to date, it would be meaningful to involve a wider range of members to seek their feedback and views surrounding any potential changes. This ensures that there is a collaborative and collective understanding of the role and purpose of the Scrutiny function within the Council, seeking to build upon existing practice and feedback to transform to reflect the Council's new strategic

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<sup>16</sup> Research on the Workload of County Councillors in Wales, Democracy and Boundary Commission Source: [Research-on-the-workload-of-County-Councillors-in-Wales.pdf](#)

direction, as outlined within the Corporate Plan.

- 2.30** Officers will also be supported through any transition and changes in ways of working by support from Democratic Services, Senior Leadership Team and consideration as to how this can be communicated as part of management development sessions, which are delivered on a cyclical basis.
- 2.31** Work has already commenced by Democratic Services to explore what Constitutional changes would need to be made to reflect any changes made, alongside identifying existing internal and external policy documents which will also need to be updated to include any changes to Scrutiny arrangements. An overview of provisional policy changes is outlined within Appendix C.
- 2.32** This proposed approach relates to changes in the structural arrangements of Scrutiny and Committee ways of working. Further improvement work is also being considered beyond this to support the improvement in the Council's Scrutiny function.

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

- 3.1** This proposal has considered the Sustainable Development Principle in several ways; and will support the Council in meeting the overall Well-being Objectives by proposing involved policy making.
- 3.2** Revisions to Scrutiny are based on a range of feedback and strategic drivers, with the proposal forming a longer-term view for how Scrutiny can operate within the Council in the future, based upon the principles of prevention of issues for both the public through better policy making, and for Committee through improved forward planning and committee functioning. The proposals also integrated with a range of other policy making initiatives within the Council such as the Corporate Plan and Reshaping programme and considers key interdependencies with areas such as finance and performance. The proposal has involved several stakeholders (both member and officer) during the design process to help maximise its impact, whilst also encouraging cross departmental collaboration.
- 3.3** The work of the Reshaping Scrutiny will contribute to the (currently being finalised for approval) Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030, notably Wellbeing Objective Five: Being the best Council we can be.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** There are no direct climate and nature implications because of this report. However, Scrutiny Committees play a key role in considering these emergencies as a part of their work.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 5.1** This proposal will be delivered within existing base budget, and no additional funding is being sought.

### **Employment**

- 5.2** This proposal will be delivered using the existing workforce, who will be supported with the skills to facilitate the Council to deliver this initiative.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3** Local Government Measure (Wales) Measure 2009 and 2011 – These changes impact a range of areas within this legislation, most notable surrounding Member development, public participation and political balance. These areas have all been considered in shaping the work to date.
- 5.4** Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – The approach outlined considers a range of elements which form part of the Act, most notably it seeks to address the Peer Panel Assessments (required as part of Part 6), which particularly focused upon Section 89 of the Act and the Duty to keep performance under review Section 89 of the Act requires a council to keep under review the extent to which it is fulfilling the ‘performance requirements’ that is, the extent to which:-
- it is exercising its functions effectively;
  - it is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
  - its governance is effective for securing the above.
- 5.5** Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – As outlined within the report, this approach seeks to further support the Council in its implementation of the Act and robustly considers the Five Ways of Working.
- 5.6** Equalities Act 2010 /Public Sector Equality Duty/Socioeconomic duty – Opportunities for increasing representation through encouraging a diversity of voices are a fundamental aspect of this approach.



## 6. Background Papers

Local Democracy in Wales, Welsh Government

<https://www.gov.wales/local-democracy-wales-legislation-html>

Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (WG23-23), Welsh Government

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-principal-councils-in-wales.pdf>

The Good Scrutiny Guide, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

<https://cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CfPS-Good-Scrutiny-Guide-v5-WEB-SINGLE-PAGES.pdf>

Section 7 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Constitution/December-2023/23-12-05-Section-7.pdf>

Overview and Scrutiny Committees – Terms of Reference, Vale of Glamorgan Council,

Source: June 2021 Scrutiny Appointment, Membership, TOR and Chairs

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny%20Information/Terms-of-Reference/June-2021-Scrutiny-Appointment-Membership-TOR-and-Chairs.pdf>

Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey 24 Report, Vale of Glamorgan Council

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Democratic%20Services/2024/24-07-01/Ref-from-SCVCG-Scrutiny-Impact-Survey.pdf>

Let's Talk Life in the Vale Survey Results, Vale of Glamorgan Council and Data Cymru

<https://participate.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/26290/widgets/93869/documents/60145>

Panel Performance Assessment, Vale of Glamorgan Council

<https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Cabinet/2025/25-02-06/Panel-Performance-Assessment.pdf>

Overview and Scrutiny – Fit for the Future? – Vale of Glamorgan Council, Audit Wales

[https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-12/scrutinty\\_vog.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/2020-12/scrutinty_vog.pdf)

Financial Sustainability Review – Vale of Glamorgan Council, Audit Wales

[https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale fs %20report final.pdf](https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale_fs_%20report_final.pdf)

Use of performance information – Service User Perspective and Outcomes

<https://www.audit.wales/sites/default/files/publications/vale%20use%20of%20performance%20information%20report.pdf>

Draft Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Plan 2025-2030, Vale of Glamorgan Council  
[https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny-CRP/2025/25-02-19/Draft-Corporate-Plan.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Scrutiny-CRP/2025/25-02-19/Draft-Corporate-Plan.pdf)

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/about-us/future-generations-act/>

Report of the Flood Risk Management and Riparian Land Ownership Task and Finish Group, Denbighshire County Council

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/documents/s45895/Appendix%201%20Flood%20Risk%20Management%20and%20Riparian%20Land%20Ownership%20Task%20and%20Finish%20Group.pdf?LLL=0>

Emergency Interim Social Housing Allocations Policy, Carmarthenshire County Council

<https://www.carmarthenshire.gov.wales/media/pzybhet3/emergency-interim-social-housing-allocations-policy-eng.pdf>

Research on the Workload of County Councillors in Wales, Democracy and Boundary Commission Source: <https://d34hss7hg6i3n.cloudfront.net/reviews/Research-on-the-workload-of-County-Councillors-in-Wales.pdf>

## 7. Appendix A – Existing Scrutiny Committee Analysis

### Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee Analysis

| Item                              | Item Type |     | Variation from All Committee Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Performance/Finance               | 9         | 26% | (+6%)                                |
| Member Briefing/Noting/References | 11        | 32% | (-1%)                                |
| Cyclical – Forward Work Programme | 3         | 9%  | (-)                                  |
| Proposal - Recommendations Made   | 11        | 32% | (+12%)                               |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>34</b> |     |                                      |

### Environment and Regeneration

| Item                              | Item Type |     | Variation from All Committee Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Performance/Finance               | 13        | 41% | (+4%)                                |
| Member Briefing/Noting/References | 7         | 22% | (-11%)                               |
| Cyclical – Forward Work Programme | 4         | 13% | (+4%)                                |
| Proposal - Recommendations Made   | 8         | 25% | (+5%)                                |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>32</b> |     |                                      |

### Homes and Safe

| Item                              | Item Type |     | Variation from All Committee Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Performance/Finance               | 13        | 42% | (+5%)                                |
| Member Briefing/Noting/References | 10        | 32% | (-1%)                                |
| Cyclical – Forward Work Programme | 3         | 10% | (+1%)                                |
| Proposal - Recommendations Made   | 5         | 16% | (-4%)                                |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>31</b> |     |                                      |

### Learning and Culture

| Item                              | Item Type |     | Variation from All Committee Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Performance/Finance               | 13        | 38% | (+1%)                                |
| Member Briefing/Noting/References | 14        | 41% | (+8%)                                |
| Cyclical – Forward Work Programme | 3         | 9%  | (-)                                  |
| Proposal - Recommendations Made   | 4         | 12% | (-8%)                                |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>34</b> |     |                                      |

Healthy Living and Social Care

| Item                              | Item Type |     | Variation from All Committee Average |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Performance/Finance               | 13        | 41% | (+4%)                                |
| Member Briefing/Noting/References | 12        | 38% | (+5%)                                |
| Cyclical – Forward Work Programme | 2         | 6%  | (-3%)                                |
| Proposal - Recommendations Made   | 5         | 16% | (-4%)                                |
| <b>Grand Total</b>                | <b>32</b> |     |                                      |

**8. Appendix B – Timeline for Potential Implementation**

| Meeting                             | Meeting Date                  |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Cabinet                             | 06/03/2025                    |
| Group members session               | 12/03/2025 – 13/03/2025 (TBC) |
| Democratic Services Committee       | 21/3/25                       |
| Governance and Audit Committee      | 24/3/25                       |
| Corporate Performance and Resources | 26/3/25                       |
| Business Cabinet                    | 27/03/25                      |
| Cabinet                             | 03/04/25                      |
| Council                             | 28/04/25                      |
| Annual Meeting                      | 07/05/25                      |



### 9. Appendix C – Provisional Constitutional and Policy Changes

#### Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution

| Section  | Update   |
|--|--|
| Section 3 – Getting Information and Getting Involved | Sections 3.1.3, 3.2.1, and 3.3.2(d) to be updated to reflect new arrangements. |
| Section 7 – Overview and Scrutiny Committees         | Whole section re-writes  |
| Section 14 – Responsibility for Functions – Summary  | References to new Committee names and structures                               |
| Section 15 – Access to information procedure rules   | Section to be reviewed to reflect arrangements                                 |
| Section 20 – Guides to Public Speaking at Committees | Section updates to include all mediums of proposed approach                    |
| Section 22 – Protocol on Member/Officer Relations    | Update to include roles and responsibilities                                   |
| Section 25 – Member role descriptions                | Update to include Task and Finish  |

#### Policy Updates

- Public Participation Guide
- Scrutiny Participation Guide
- Multi Location Meeting Policy
- Cabinet Clearance Guidance [Internal]
- Emergency Powers
- Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities

#### Other updates

- Cabinet Forward Work Programme
- Scrutiny Committees Forward Work Programmes
- Scrutiny Committees Recommendation Trackers
- Cabinet Report templates (Part I and Part II)

#### Website updates – Public

- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny.aspx)

- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny\\_committees.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny_committees.aspx)
- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/minutes, agendas and reports/minutes, agendas and reports.aspx#committees](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes_agendas_and_reports/minutes_agendas_and_reports.aspx#committees)
- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/The-Vale-of-Glamorgan-Council.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/The-Vale-of-Glamorgan-Council.aspx)
- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/Scrutiny-Committee-Public-Request-for-Consideration.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/Scrutiny-Committee-Public-Request-for-Consideration.aspx)
- [https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our\\_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/Scrutiny-and-Task-and-Finish-Reviews.aspx](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/Scrutiny-and-Task-and-Finish-Reviews.aspx)
- YouTube sub-channels
- Internal intranet websites