

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL
SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT | 2019 - 2021



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FOREWORD

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS GROUP.

As the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group, I am delighted to present the 2019 - 2021 Scrutiny Annual Report. It provides an account of the progress made in the past two municipal years, including some of the key pieces of work undertaken by the Committees along with areas under consideration going forward.

The period of time covered by this report has been unprecedented in every regard and has been exceptionally busy and challenging for Scrutiny, and it is important to share with all Members and the wider community some of the issues that we have examined and the challenges we have faced over the past two years.

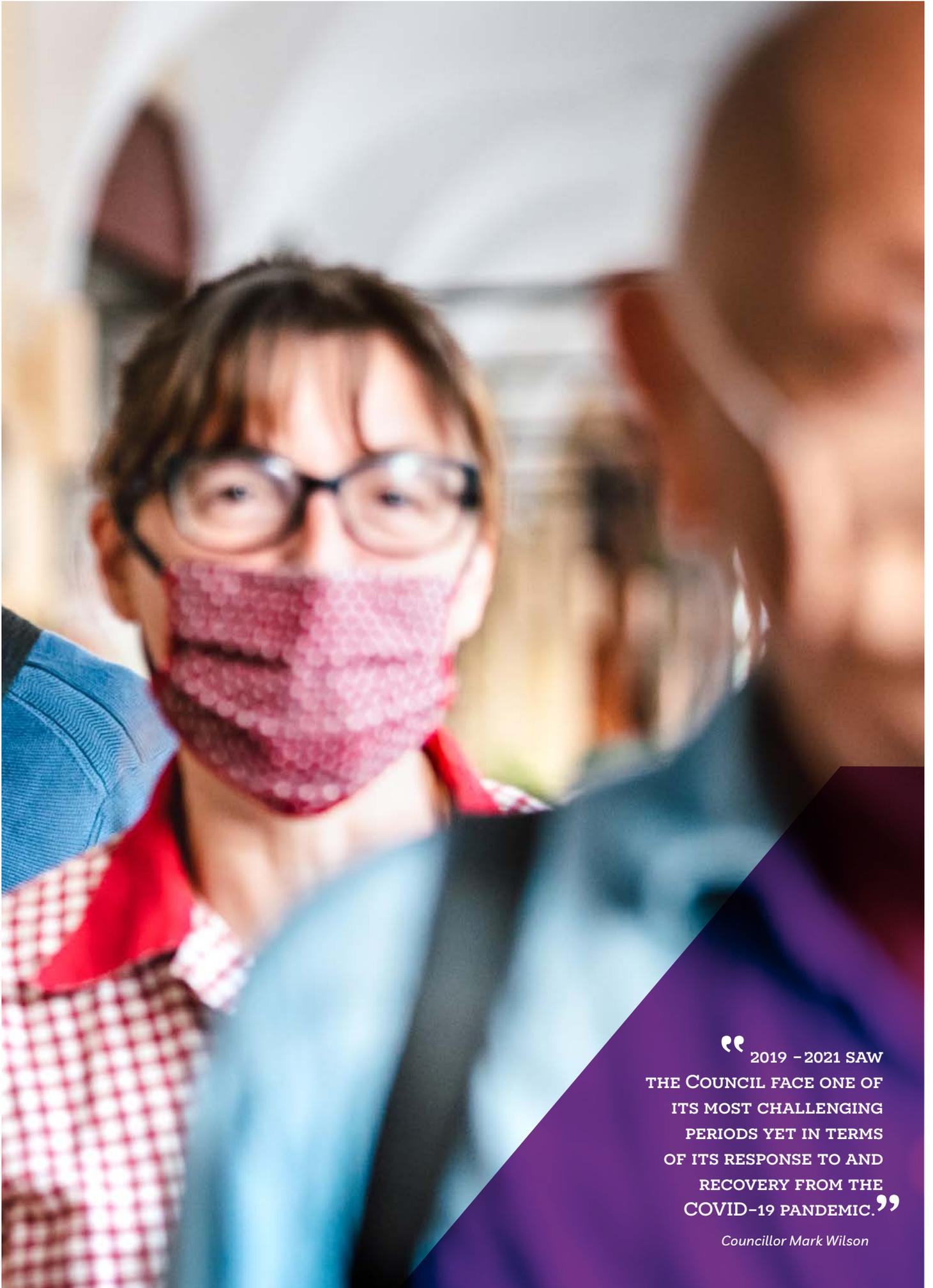
I would like to thank the Members of the Scrutiny Committees for their commitment and contributions to our work, as well as the Officers who have supported us so effectively. 2019 - 2021 saw the Council face one of its most challenging periods yet in terms of its response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite meetings having been suspended at the very start of the pandemic, Scrutiny Committees have continued to monitor performance and consider ways for improvement in order to maintain, develop and improve services for people in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Committees have also grappled with some of the major issues affecting our communities and I hope you will agree with me that we have tried to make a real difference to the formal decision-making process. By producing this report we hope to give you a flavour of the level of work undertaken and an understanding of the role played by the Scrutiny Committees.

I have always stressed the importance for Scrutiny Committees to maintain an open and critical mind, to provide criticism in a constructive way and to offer genuine praise where appropriate. Going forward, Scrutiny Committees will continue to endeavour to be a “critical friend” in the delivery of the Council's priorities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank residents, local partners, key stakeholders and witnesses who have given their time to assist the Scrutiny process throughout the last two years.

COUNCILLOR MARK WILSON

Chair - Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs and
Chair - Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee



“ 2019 - 2021 SAW
THE COUNCIL FACE ONE OF
ITS MOST CHALLENGING
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RECOVERY FROM THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC.”

Councillor Mark Wilson

A NOTE ON COVID-19

On March 23rd, 2020 a National Lockdown was announced as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. In light of the restrictions put in place by both UK and Welsh Governments, and in order to ensure the safety of Councillors, Council staff members and the public, all face to face meetings of Council Committees were suspended until further notice.

While Committee meetings were suspended, Council governance regarding matters which required immediate action was undertaken via the Emergency Powers procedure. However, it was resolved that in exercising his use of Emergency Powers, the Managing Director should consult with relevant Scrutiny Committee Chairs on matters relating to policy, thus ensuring that Scrutiny Activity continued until such a time that Committee meetings could recommence.

In unprecedented circumstances and following the efforts of both Democratic and ICT Services, the Council was able to resume its schedule of Scrutiny meetings remotely with the first meeting of the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee taking place in July 2020, and all Scrutiny Committees convening remotely on a monthly basis as of September 2020.

In order to achieve this, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers identified appropriate videoconferencing platforms to meet the requirements of Scrutiny Committees, and in liaison with colleagues in ICT provided training and guidance to ensure both Councillors and members of the public were able to fully engage with the Scrutiny process, whether via a videoconferencing device or a telephone call.

Scrutiny meetings held remotely have been recorded and made available to view as soon as possible after the meeting on the Council's YouTube Channels. Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers have established a dedicated YouTube channel to house meeting recordings, making it easier for members of the public to access and view relevant meetings and safely keep up to date with the latest Scrutiny activity in the Vale.

As a result of the suspended meetings towards the end of 2019/20 and at the beginning of 2020/21, this report will account for both municipal years.



WHAT IS SCRUTINY?

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES CARRY OUT IMPORTANT WORK FOR THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL AND ITS PARTNERS.

It offers reassurance to local people, helps to develop policy, challenging the performance of the Council and its services and holds the Cabinet to account for its decisions.

Scrutiny acts as a **'critical friend'**, standing back from the day to day decision-making to look at and review outcomes for local residents.

Scrutiny Committees can make recommendations and scrutinise the policies, decisions and performance of the Cabinet. The Cabinet, in turn, consults with Scrutiny Committees on issues, and responds to Scrutiny Committee recommendations.

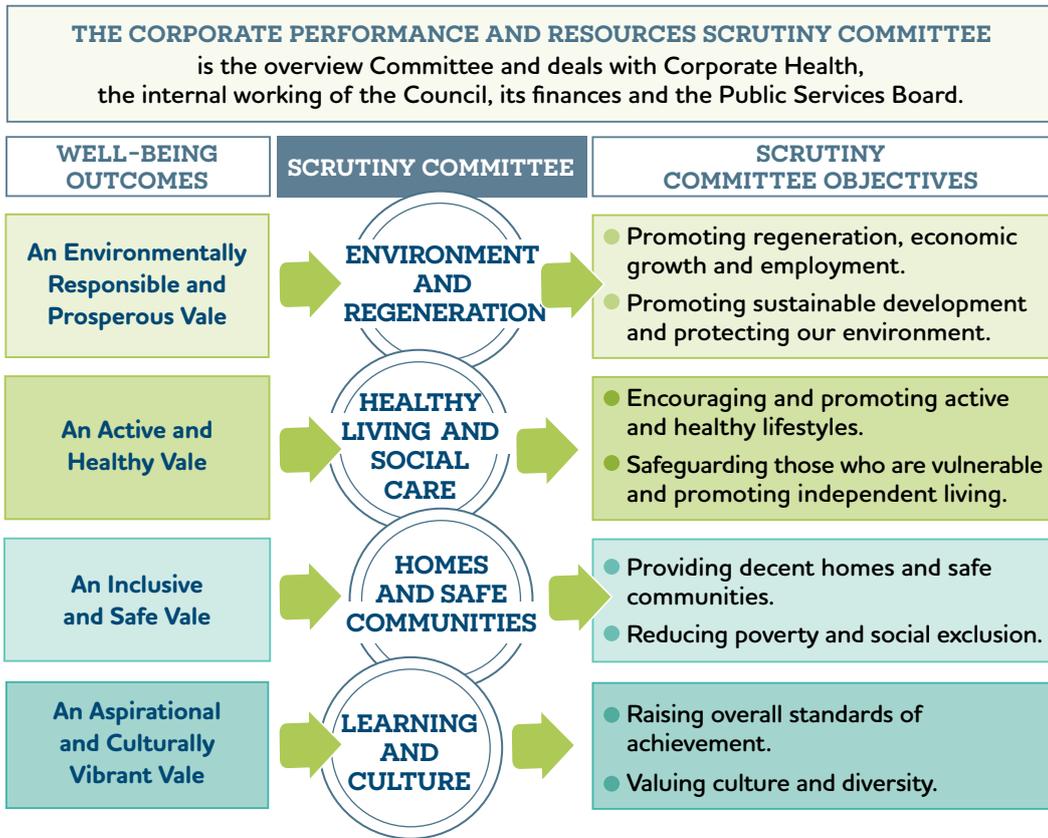
There are five Scrutiny Committees within the Vale of Glamorgan Council:

- Corporate Performance and Resources
- Environment and Regeneration
- Healthy Living and Social Care
- Homes and Safe Communities
- Learning and Culture

HOW DOES SCRUTINY WORK IN THE VALE?

2016/17 saw the introduction of a fresh and new approach to the way that Scrutiny operated within the Vale of Glamorgan. The Council agreed that the work of Scrutiny should be closely aligned to the Council's **four new Well-being Outcomes**.

Each Committee was therefore linked to one or more of the Council's Wellbeing Outcomes, as per the [Council's Corporate Plan](#), with its own individual Objectives, as shown:



These Objectives were tailored to the Committee’s remit and areas of focus, with annual Forward Work Programmes being produced (and updated quarterly) to show the matters to be considered.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN CORPORATE PLAN 2020-25

In February 2020 the Cabinet and Full Council endorsed a new Corporate Plan, the Council’s key strategic document which sets out how its vision of Strong Communities with a Bright Future will be delivered over a five-year period. All Scrutiny Committees were consulted regarding and contributed to the development of the new plan.

A new set of Well-being Objectives have been developed:

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

These Well-being Objectives reflect a more integrated and cross-cutting approach to the Council’s work and demonstrate how actions across the Council’s Directorates will contribute to multiple objectives.



A detailed Annual Delivery Plan is published each spring detailing the key activities to be undertaken in order to deliver the commitments contained in the Corporate plan, with each Scrutiny Committee contributing to the drafting process. This process in turn directly informs individual Service Plans which are also produced annually and contain annual performance measures and targets. These are also closely monitored by Scrutiny Committees.

At the first meeting of each Scrutiny Committee following the Annual Meeting a presentation is given on the Annual Delivery Plan in the context of the Corporate Plan and terms of reference of the Committee. This presentation enables Scrutiny Committee Members to identify any areas of particular focus for that Committee for the year and, as such, inform the **Work Programme** of the Committee.

Individually and collectively, each Scrutiny Committee approaches its work in the following ways:

- Striving to improve services to achieve better outcomes for residents;
- Hearing public concerns and voices;
- Adding value to the way decisions are reached;
- Acting positively as a 'critical friend'; and
- Learning from others.



WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS (WALES) ACT 2015

THE ACT REQUIRES PUBLIC BODIES IN WALES TO THINK ABOUT THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THEIR DECISIONS, TO WORK BETTER WITH PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND EACH OTHER, AND TO PREVENT PERSISTENT PROBLEMS SUCH AS POVERTY, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE BY CONSIDERING FIVE WAYS OF WORKING.

These Five Ways of Working give a framework through which public bodies must work to deliver the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales as set out by the Act.

Between May 2019 and April 2021 many of the Scrutiny Committees' Forward Work Programme Items have demonstrated their commitment to carrying out their work in accordance with the Act:

5 WAYS OF WORKING	FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS
<p>THINKING FOR THE LONG-TERM</p> <p>The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2019-24 – Homes and Safe Communities • SUPPORT FOR CARERS IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN – Healthy Living and Social Care • DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2020-25 – All Scrutiny Committees • VALE OF GLAMORGAN PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – Corporate Performance and Resources • CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY STRATEGY – All Scrutiny Committees • UPDATE ON THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN COWBRIDGE TO MEET THE INCREASED DEMAND AS A RESULT OF RECENT AND PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS – Learning and Culture • NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (NDF) 2020-2040 CONSULTATION DRAFT - RESPONSE TO WELSH GOVERNMENT – Environment and Regeneration

5 WAYS OF WORKING

TAKING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Considering how the Council's well-being objectives may impact upon other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.

TAKING A PREVENTATIVE APPROACH

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help the Council to meet its objectives.

COLLABORATING

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the Council itself) that could help the Council to meet its well-being objectives.

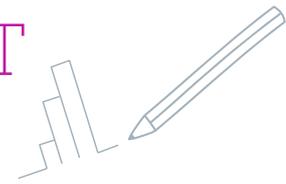
INVOLVEMENT

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the Council serves.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME ITEMS

- **HOUSING (WALES) ACT 2014 COMMENCEMENT OF SECTION 75(3) - HOMELESS INTENTIONALITY DECISIONS** – Homes and Safe Communities
 - **TELECARE SERVICES (SUPPORTED LIVING TECHNOLOGY)** – Healthy Living and Social Care
 - **DIGITAL STRATEGY - CUSTOMER AND EMPLOYEE** – Corporate Performance and Resources
 - **WELSH GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGIC EQUALITY OBJECTIVES - DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSE** – Learning and Culture
 - **WITHDRAWAL OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDING FOR FARE PAYING SCHOOL TRANSPORT SERVICES** – Environment and Regeneration
-
- **WELFARE REFORM - IMPACTS ON COUNCIL HOUSING TENANTS** – Homes and Safe Communities
 - **CARDIFF AND VALE SUICIDE AND SELF - HARM PREVENTION STRATEGY 2017-20** – Healthy Living and Social Care
 - **SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT 2018/19** – Corporate Performance and Resources
 - **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRESSION UPDATE** – Learning and Culture
 - **PENARTH CARDIFF BARRAGE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CORRIDOR WELTAG STAGE ONE AND STAGE TWO UPDATE** – Environment and Regeneration
-
- **YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN** – Homes and Safe Communities
 - **VALE, VALLEYS AND CARDIFF ADOPTION COLLABORATIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19** – Healthy Living and Social Care
 - **VALE OF GLAMORGAN PUBLIC SERVICES BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20** – Corporate Performance and Resources
 - **ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING** – Learning and Culture
 - **SECTION 106 OFF-SITE AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONTRIBUTIONS** – Environment and Regeneration / Homes and Safe Communities
-
- **DOMESTIC ABUSE, ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL CO-ORDINATOR (DAARC) PROGRESS REPORT** – Homes and Safe Communities
 - **CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING SUMMARY REPORT** – Corporate Performance and Resources
 - **SPORTS AND PLAY UPDATE REPORT** – Healthy Living and Social Care
 - **DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2020-24** – Learning and Culture
 - **CAR PARKING - GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CHARGES** – Environment and Regeneration

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF SCRUTINY



DURING THE PREVIOUS AND CURRENT MUNICIPAL YEARS OUR SCRUTINY COMMITTEES HAVE PLACED GREATER FOCUS ON MEASURING THE IMPACT OF THE WORK THEY CARRY OUT.

However, it has been important to acknowledge the challenges faced when trying to assess the impact of Scrutiny given that its positive outcomes are not always easily measured and often only become apparent over longer periods of time, and therefore cannot be easily captured via the Council's usual Quarterly Decision Tracking or Annual Reporting Procedures.

There are, however, some metrics that can be used to monitor the direct outcomes of Scrutiny, which in turn can give an indication of its impact on the decision-making processes of the Council. These have been summarised below:

VALE OF GLAMORGAN SCRUTINY SCORECARD 2019-21

- Number of Scrutiny Committee Meetings **81***
- Number of Scrutiny Committee Meetings which heard from Public Speakers **9**
- Members of the Public who have made verbal representations at Scrutiny Meetings **35**
- % of Cabinet Items with Scrutiny input **34%**
- % of Scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet **27%**

* Please note that due to the Governmental advice issued in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, Scrutiny meetings due to take place from March to July of 2020 were suspended.

WHAT MEMBERS HAVE TO SAY

In February 2020 all Members of Scrutiny Committees were asked to complete a Scrutiny Impact Questionnaire so that they could feed back on issues such as whether Scrutiny has a positive impact on the work of the Council, how their own contributions have impacted the debate and recommendations made, and how Scrutiny in the Vale could be improved.

HERE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE RESPONSES RECEIVED:

Do you feel that the Scrutiny Committee has had a positive impact on the work of the Council following Scrutiny Involvement?

“...provided opportunities for public to be heard in the decision making process. Wide range of Councillors offers more global view of local discussions and their impact.”

Do you feel that the Scrutiny Committee has had a positive impact on the work of the Council following Scrutiny Involvement?

“There have been notable successes such as starting the monitoring of sand levels for which we previously had no data; discussions with officers regarding parking and parking charges have been very constructive and led to constructive solutions that were agreed by the full Council.”

Do you feel that the Scrutiny Committee has had a positive impact on the work of the Council following Scrutiny Involvement?

“The Committee was instrumental in promoting the topic of free sanitary products for school girls.”

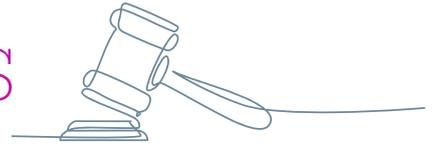
Which section/topics of the Council's work do you feel the Committee has the greatest impact upon?

“Challenging and requiring answers to questions that may be evoked by decisions or suggestions from officers or Cabinet.”

How do you feel your contributions at Scrutiny have impacted the debate and any recommendations made?

“... The installation of beach huts at Barry Island and the imminent developments at the Knap happened as a result of my call for an audit of all coastal Council owned properties in the Vale.”

MEET THE COMMITTEES



CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES

OBJECTIVES AND REMIT:

Overview Committee that deals with Corporate Health, the internal working of the Council, its finances and the Public Services Board.

Chair: Councillor Mark Wilson;

Vice-Chair: Councillor Pamela Drake (2020/21) ;

Councillors: George Carroll, Geoff Cox, Robert Crowley, Vince Driscoll, Owen Griffiths (Vice-Chair for 2019/20), Gwyn John, Ian Johnson, Ruba Sivagnanam and John Thomas

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION

OBJECTIVES:

- Promoting regeneration, economic growth and employment.
- Promoting sustainable development and protecting our environment.

REMIT:

Waste Management, Highway Maintenance, Planning (but not matters such as planning applications), Transportation and Economic Development.

Chair: Councillor Bronwen Brooks;

Vice-Chair: Councillor Ruba Sivagnanam;

Councillors: Vincent Bailey, Pamela Drake, Vince Driscoll, Gwyn John, Michael Morgan, Andrew Robertson, Leighton Rowlands and Steffan Wiliam

HEALTHY LIVING AND SOCIAL CARE

OBJECTIVES

- Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living.

REMIT:

Adult Services (such as Care Homes), Children and Young People Services (such as the Adoption Service), Leisure, Parks, Sport and Play.

Chair: Councillor Janice Charles (2020/21)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Neil Thomas;

Councillors: Julie Aviet, Owen Griffiths, Stephen Griffiths, Hunter Jarvie, Kevin Mahoney (2019/20), Rachel Nugent-Finn (Chair for 2019/20), Bob Penrose (2019/20) and John Thomas



HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

OBJECTIVES

- Providing decent homes and safe communities.
- Reducing poverty and social exclusion.

REMIT:

Council Housing and related maintenance, Private Sector Housing, Community Safety, Crime and Disorder (including Youth Offending Services) and Shared Regulatory Services functions.

Chair: Councillor Sandra Perkes, Councillor Amelia Collins (from March 2021);

Vice-Chair: Councillor Julie Aviet;

Councillors: Jonathan Bird, Bronwen Brooks, Christine Cave, Stephen Griffiths (2019/20), Sally Hanks, Rachel Nugent-Finn (2020/21) Andrew Parker and Leighton Rowlands

One representative, as a non-voting observer, from each of the following organisations:

- Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale
- four representatives from Tenant Working Group/Panel

LEARNING AND CULTURE

OBJECTIVES

- Raising overall standards of achievement.
- Valuing culture and diversity.

REMIT:

All School matters, (which includes School Improvement, Post-16 Education, Community Education), Youth Services, the Library Service, Equalities, Welsh Language and Arts Development.

Chair: Councillor Stephen Griffiths (2020/21)

Vice-Chair: Councillor Rhiannon Birch;

Councillors: Andrew Davies (2019/20), Nic Hodges, Hunter Jarvie, Gordon Kemp (Chair for 2019/20) Jayne Norman, Andrew Parker, Sandra Perkes, Leighton Rowlands (2020/21) and Neil Thomas

Also invited to attend as co-opted Members:

- Roman Catholic Church
- Church in Wales
- Parent Governor-Secondary Sector
- Parent Governor-Primary Sector

Also invited to attend as non-voting observers:

- Headteachers
- Primary/ Secondary/ Special
- Welsh Medium Education
- Free Churches
- Vale Youth Forum

KEY AREAS OF SCRUTINY ACTIVITY 2019 - 21

RE-USE AND RECYCLE SHOP

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Environment and Regeneration

ACTIVITY: Members were advised by Officers that the idea of opening a re-use and recycle shop was being investigated as a social enterprise, and it was recommended by Committee that a site visit to a facility set up by another Local Authority be organised.

In February 2020, a site visit was arranged for Members and the Operational Manager for Neighbourhood Services to the 'Tip Treasure' re-use and recycle shop in Swansea. This proved to be very informative and gave Members and the Officer an opportunity to observe the running of the shop and speak with staff members in order to gain useful insights regarding the practicalities of setting up and running a similar operation in the Vale.

OUTCOME: It was confirmed at the [October 2020 Committee meeting](#) that, following the site visit, the Vale of Glamorgan had been successful in applying for a £358k bid from Welsh Government to set up a re-use shop on the Atlantic Trading Estate, providing numerous community benefits to residents of the Vale of Glamorgan and helping the Council to make further progress towards achieving its Well-being Objectives.



CAR PARKING IN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Corporate Performance and Resources + Environment and Regeneration

ACTIVITY: A report on this matter was referred to both Scrutiny Committees by Cabinet in April 2019 and garnered a high amount of interest, with 10 public speakers and 9 Councillors requesting permission to address the Committees, which made a number of recommendations which were referred back to Cabinet. When the matter was considered again in July 2019, Cabinet resolved that the recommendations be fed into a comprehensive and in-depth review of the topic.

OUTCOME: In February of 2020 a set of [Guiding Principles and Charging for Car Parking in the Vale](#) were brought to Cabinet which had been formed with consideration given to the views fed back by both Scrutiny Committees. The revised proposals were considered at the next meetings of each Committee, and it was agreed that they were much improved upon.

The revised proposals departed considerably from those which had been put forward previously, demonstrating that the Scrutiny function affords Vale of Glamorgan residents the opportunity to directly address Members, make their views known and to shape local policies that matter to them.

LEISURE CENTRE CHANGING ROOM REFURBISHMENT WORKS

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Healthy Living and Social Care

ACTIVITY: The Committee had previously (July 2017) formed a Leisure Management Contract Members Working Group which was created to monitor the quality of service provided at Legacy Leisure Sites around the time that the Leisure Centres began a major refurbishment project of their changing room facilities. The aim was to ensure that services remained available to the public whilst the works took place to improve the facilities for residents.

OUTCOME: The works in Barry and Penarth wet and dry changing rooms came to a conclusion in February 2020 when the rooms reopened to the public. The [February 2020 meeting](#) of the Scrutiny Committee took place at Penarth Leisure Centre and was preceded by a tour of the facilities with the aim of demonstrating to Members in person the positive aims and impact of the service for inspiring cross-generational health benefits.

DOMESTIC ABUSE, ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL CO-ORDINATOR (DAARC) SERVICE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Homes and Safe Communities

- ACTIVITY:** The DAARC service launched in April 2018, with the aim of:
- Reducing the number of Domestic Abuse Public Protection Notices (DA PPNs) escalated from standard and medium risk to high risk;
 - Decrease the number of repeat DA PPNs;
 - Decrease the number of inappropriate referrals of DA PPNs to services within the pathway;
 - Decrease the number of duplicate referrals from DA PPNs to services within the pathway;
 - Improve the experience of the pathway for victims;
 - Improve the safety and outcomes for victims; and
 - Improve communication in the pathway where multiple agencies are involved with one client.

An update report was brought to the Committee in December 2019 which showed there had been a reduction in inappropriate referrals across the pathway, a reduction in duplicate referrals and, crucially, the provision of early intervention services for those victims of domestic abuse who are assessed as being standard or medium risk where previously they would have had to wait until their situation escalated to high risk before getting the support they needed.

- OUTCOME:** The Committee scrutinised the future of funding for the service, the need to focus on other areas of abuse and the pilot scheme's effectiveness. Through the efforts of the committee, the DAARC project was provided with details of Tenant groups that had been set up to offer help and support to families who had domestic abuse occur within their families, in order to liaise with them and coordinate their efforts. Moreover, during their consideration of the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals 2021/22 in December 2020, the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee recommended to Cabinet (via the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee) that they consider the ongoing value and importance of the DAARC service when looking at cost pressures ahead of setting the revenue budget.



PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES IN COWBRIDGE

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Learning and Culture

ACTIVITY: The matter was initially considered by Committee in **December 2019** as part of the consultation process for a proposal which would see the establishment of a new 2,006 place 3 - 19 all through school from September 2022, through the amalgamation of Y Bont Faen Primary School and Cowbridge Comprehensive School. Eleven members of the public registered to speak on the issue, five representing the interests of Y Bont Faen who objected to the discontinuation of the school, and six representing the interests of Cowbridge Comprehensive who were in support of adopting an all-through school model. Three written representations were also submitted by members of the public. The comments made by the public speakers sparked an in-depth discussion amongst Members and Officers, and comments made by all parties fed into a consultation report which was subsequently provided to Cabinet.

OUTCOME: On the basis of the strong opinions expressed by both sides during the consideration of the initial proposal, a **revised proposal** regarding a new preferred way forward was brought to the Committee in October 2020. The new proposal no longer saw the discontinuation of Y Bont Faen Primary School, but continued with the suggested all-through model for Cowbridge Comprehensive, and it was *noted during the meeting* that the strong response of the public during the Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the initial consultation had been taken on board and had informed the new proposal, demonstrating that Scrutiny arrangements in the Vale of Glamorgan enable residents to engage with and have a say on matters in a real way.

ONGOING TASK AND FINISH WORK



THE COST OF SCHOOLING

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Learning and Culture

ACTIVITY: During their meeting in September 2019, the Committee agreed that a Task and Finish Group should be formed in order to review the affordability of education. In **January 2020** the Group convened for the first time and agreed the topics which they wished to review which included: the cost of school uniform; costs incurred through lessons (e.g. stationary, cooking equipment, revision materials); the cost and accessibility of School Proms or Leavers' events; the impact of these issues on pupils' social wellbeing and mental health. In **March 2020** the Group attended Pencoedtre High School, where pupils who sat on the School Council kindly met with the Group Members in order to share their own experiences and views regarding the various costs associated with schooling, and the impact these had on them and their fellow pupils.

Following a hiatus due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Group met again in March 2021 and agreed that in light of the impact of the pandemic on schooling arrangements, they wished to add some further topics to their remit as it would be remiss of them not to consider the costs or implications for parents relating to school closures and home schooling.

OUTCOME: The Group's work continues, with plans to hear reports from officers regarding Period Poverty and Digital Exclusion during the pandemic before the end of the municipal year 2020/21, and an invitation to be extended to parents affected by the affordability of education to attend a future meeting in order to share their experiences with Members. This work will inform a final report to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee which will contain recommendations regarding how schools can best mitigate the effects of schooling costs on families, with these recommendations forming a set of guidelines to be circulated to schools subject to approval by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet thereafter.



HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PROVISION WITHIN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: Homes and Safe Communities

ACTIVITY: The Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee identified, on the 14th October 2020, that housing and homelessness provision as part of the recovery from COVID-19 should be reviewed by the Committee and consideration be given to setting up a Task and Finish Work Group in order to achieve this. A report on setting up this group, its membership, setting out its proposed scope and timescales was presented to the Committee at their meeting on the 10th February, 2021 and subsequently approved. As part of this, the Group would consider the key areas of current and future housing and homelessness provision and policies – allocation priorities, governance, resources, house building strategy, emerging legislative and funding challenges or developments – and to offer recommendations on how to approach, implement or to improve on these.

OUTCOME: The Task and Finish Group will be meeting in early 2021 (April) in order to look at and assess the above areas of interest (including its scope) and will receive contributions from various external witnesses and Council Officers, for instance representatives from Shelter Cymru and Pobl as well as Officers from Housing, Legal, Finance and any other relevant service lines in order to produce report(s) to be referred back to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and for any recommendations or comments approved to be referred on to Cabinet.



SUPPORT FOR SCRUTINY

Scrutiny is supported by officers from Democratic and Scrutiny Services, who are tasked with looking after the democratic process within the Vale. The team ensures that all Councillors have all the necessary information and evidence they need in order to properly consider any topic or area of interest.

PROGRESS REPORT

AUDIT WALES UPDATE

In 2018/19, in response to the Audit Wales (formerly the Wales Audit Office/WAO) report **Overview and Scrutiny - Fit for the Future?** Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers developed an Action Plan to progress the proposals set out in the report.

Between May 2019 and April 2021 actions have been delegated to responsible Officers, who have been meeting monthly to discuss progress, which has subsequently been reported to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group for their consideration, feedback and endorsement. Some key achievements relating to the proposals can be seen below:

PROPOSAL	ACHIEVEMENT
<p>1. SKILLS AND DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>The Council should further consider the skills and training that Scrutiny Members may need to better prepare them for current and future challenges and develop and deliver an appropriate training programme.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Officers included questions relating to Members' training needs in the Scrutiny Impact Questionnaire and, on the basis of responses, have implemented an Action Plan which has been approved by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and will aim to address these needs.</p>
<p>2. FORM AND GOVERNANCE:</p> <p>The Council's Scrutiny Committees should ensure that where appropriate Cabinet Members rather than Council officers are held to account for the efficient exercise of Executive functions in accordance with statutory guidance.</p>	<p>The Leader, Deputy Leader and Managing Director of the Council have agreed to biannual meetings taking place between Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs collectively, to facilitate discussion regarding the relationship and expectations between Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs, and to allow both the Cabinet and Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes to be developed and agreed prior to formal meetings taking place.</p>

PROPOSAL	ACHIEVEMENT
<p>3. FUNCTION:</p> <p>The Council should review the type of scrutiny support required to enable the scrutiny function to respond to current and future challenges.</p>	<p>Two additional Officers have joined Democratic and Scrutiny Services since May 2019: an Assistant Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer recruited in August 2019, and a Cabinet and Committee Services Officer recruited in November 2019. This recruitment exercise has enabled a full complement of staff to be in post and has released capacity within the team to support Scrutiny and Elected Member development activity.</p>
<p>4. FUNCTION:</p> <p>The Council should explore different and more innovative methods for undertaking scrutiny activity.</p>	<p>As of September 2020 all Scrutiny Committees have been meeting remotely, allowing Members and the public to engage in Scrutiny activity safely while the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing.</p>
<p>5. FUNCTION:</p> <p>The Council should consider how its scrutiny activity can focus on those areas where it would have most value.</p>	<p>The format of Scrutiny Forward Work Programmes has been updated to better align with that of the Cabinet and to advise Members of each report's origin, purpose and actual impact. The new Work Programme template was approved by the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group in March 2020 and taken to all Committees in the first meeting of the following municipal year.</p>
<p>6. FUNCTION:</p> <p>The Council should be more innovative in how it engages the public in its scrutiny activity.</p>	<p>Officers have devised and implemented a Public Engagement Action plan with projects due to launch in the new municipal year such as a Scrutiny Newsletter, an e-petition facility, and online submission forms allowing members of the public to submit comments or questions relating to Scrutiny agenda items, or request that topics be considered by Committee. Officers are also continuing talks with the Council's Communications team regarding how public engagement with Scrutiny can be further promoted via Social Media channels.</p>
<p>7. EVALUATION:</p> <p>The Council should strengthen its evaluation of the impact and outcomes of its scrutiny activity and to learn from this in order to shape the future work of its scrutiny function.</p>	<p>As demonstrated by the Vale of Glamorgan Scrutiny Report Card contained within this report, Scrutiny Officers have undertaken analysis of the outcomes from reports presented during the current and previous municipal year. These outcomes are analysed per Scrutiny Committee and the information deduced from this exercise will feed in to the annual process for identifying areas of focus for each Committee.</p>

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AT MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN IN PLACE SINCE FEBRUARY 2016.

These are designed to enhance and increase opportunities for public participation in the Council's democratic processes. These arrangements have been updated to reflect the procedures in place while meetings are taking place remotely, with members of the public being able to participate via videoconferencing platforms or telephone calls.

It is also acknowledged that there is a need to increase the promotion of the process through publicity and Officers from Democratic and Scrutiny Services have been working with the Communications Unit on this aspect. As part of Officers' response to the proposals made by Audit Wales, a Public Engagement Action Plan is being implemented and actions are being progressed to better engage the public in Scrutiny activity (*see page 17, Function 6*).

A Guide to Public Speaking at Scrutiny meetings has been made available to members of the public via the Council's website and can be found here: www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/Public-Participation-at-Council-Meetings.aspx

The above link can also be used to access forms which members of the public can complete and submit in order to register to speak at Scrutiny meetings regarding specific agenda items.

In the coming municipal year, Vale of Glamorgan residents will also be able to submit comments or questions regarding Scrutiny agenda items, or suggest topics for consideration by Scrutiny Committees by completing and submitting forms which will be accessible via the same link.

The Vale of Glamorgan is also developing a new protocol for public engagement which will be launched in the new municipal year.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Should you wish to find out more about the work of Scrutiny, you can do so at:
www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/scrutiny/scrutiny.aspx

Please look at our website to see the dates, times and venues of forthcoming Scrutiny meetings:
www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/council/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/minutes,_agendas_and_reports.aspx

Alternatively you can contact Democratic and Scrutiny Services using the details below:

☎ 01446 709413 | 709856

✉ democratic@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



