

No.

## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillor E. Goodjohn (Vice-Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, C.P. Franks, S.J. Haines, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks and N.J. Wood

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), W.A. Hennessy, N.C. Thomas and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 145 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

### 146 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Dr. I.J. Johnson and B. Loveluck-Edwards.

### 147 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2023 be approved as a correct record.

### 148 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 149 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE CALENDAR 2023/24 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources. The appended report addressed a number of areas on this topic, including:

No.

- An update for elected Members on the self-assessment process.
- An outline and update on the panel peer assessment process.
- An overview of the Annual Performance Calendar.
- A new duty on local government to undertake a piece of self-reflection on an annual basis and looking at how the Council achieved its wellbeing objectives and importantly how the Council uses its resources in terms of value for money to help deliver those objectives.
- The report also included reflections of the first year of the process, and it incorporates the views of scrutiny committees and feedback received via other Local Authorities, the WLGA and Welsh Government (WG). The Council also commissioned an internal audit on these arrangements that had provided substantial assurance on the arrangements put in place.
- Reference was made to the changes to the Director peer challenge process, as well as the scheduling of the challenge sessions for each of the five Directors with the Chief Executive and Cabinet Members and relevant scrutiny Chairs for July 2023.
- Self-assessment had to be undertaken annually; but once in every five-year electoral cycle, the Council was required to Commission an external peer challenge via a panel performance assessment, which was undertaken independently of the organisation.

Following the reference, the Chair stated that the appended report was extremely comprehensive, and it was good to see that the approach to self-assessment was now embedded in the Annual Performance Calendar. It was good and that the Council was involving all Elected Members, partners, regulators, citizens, service users in this process in order to get their perspectives on this.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and appended report of the Vale of Glamorgan Council: Annual Performance Calendar 2023/24 be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting.

150 RESPONSE TO THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK (RICHARD PENN REPORT); AND THE HARMONISATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY THRESHOLDS TO ALIGN WITH AN ALL WALES APPROACH (REF) –

The reference from Standards Committee of 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 was presented by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services. The appended report asked the Committee to consider, amongst other things, the 2 substantive

No.

recommendations, namely the draft, amended consultation responses and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's threshold for Gifts be amended in line with paragraph 1.5 of the report as follows: Gifts, material benefits or advantages – £25.00 or totalling £100.00 over a year from a single source. This would also align with other Welsh Local Authorities (the threshold was previously at £50.00 for the Council).

Following the reference / report, Councillor Carroll queried whether an appeal made following a sanction imposed by the Standards Committee should be referred back to this Committee or whether this should go to a separate Committee instead to avoid any conflicts. It was explained that the current process around this aligned with the approach adopted in civil and criminal courts, whereby if a matter was overturned on appeal or a sanction was changed on appeal, it was referred back to the Court where the sanction was given. In terms of this being heard by a separate Committee, this would not be possible as under the legislative and statutory framework, the decision-making body solely resided with the Standards Committee. If any Members of that Committee did have a potential conflict of interest in hearing such an appeal, they would of course withdraw if required. The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services would also advise the Standards Committee to follow the recommendations from the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) or challenge via the legal process. On the Councillor's follow up question in relation to the lack of power the Standards Committee had to summon witnesses, it was explained that the Committee had flagged this issue as part of the consultation, which would be considered by Welsh Government (WG).

Councillor Haines raised concerns about the relatively low threshold for Gifts, etc and that a Council or political body could compel Elected Members (who were ultimately accountable to their local electorates) to undertake training or be sanctioned (similar concerns were also referred to by Councillor Carroll). It was explained that the reference to training in the report alluded to this being part of a wider range of sanctions that should be available to the Standards Committee (and to be a 'step below' the need to issue a suspension), with the training appropriate to the breach of standards alleged (e.g. relating to the Equality Act).

Councillor Franks stressed the 'independent' composition of the Committee and the support and advice provided by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services in order to help it undertake its work effectively and fairly.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference and appended report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the report be endorsed including the recommendations made both in the original report and reference from Standards Committee.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting.

151 PROJECT ZERO UPDATE REPORT (DCR) –

The report, presented by the Director of Corporate Resources, who outlined to the Committee:

- The origins of Project Zero.
- The report's responses to the feedback made by both this Committee and that of the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- How Project Zero aligned with the Annual Delivery Plan for the Council and the Public services Boards Wellbeing Plan.
- The Climate Change Challenge Plan, which included 18 challenges across three areas of work and numerous steps that were required in order to meet the net zero target for the Council.
- The report and Appendix A detailed the wide range of activity being undertaken to ensure the Council continued to deliver against commitments in the Climate Change Challenge Plan and to take forward Project Zero.
- The report also detailed the performance indicators that had been adopted under Project Zero in Appendix B.
- The report provided Members with an update regarding the finances and reserves associated with Project Zero and the approach the Board was taking with regards to the allocation of funds, as well as the links that were being made to the shared prosperity funding that had been provided by the UK Government.
- The report also updated on the approach to programme management and progress reporting for Project Zero.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were made by Members of the Committee and others.

Councillor Franks asked about the bid for consultants as part of the new Green Infrastructure Plan, tree planting, great connectivity for train links in the Vale and the £1.9m reserves that were not spent as of the 31st of March 2023. On the green infrastructure consultants, further information would be sought around the use of external advice; although this would be required due to considerations around capacity, independence and specialist skills in order to help drive and map to improve green infrastructure. On tree planting, further information would be provided to the Committee after the finalisation of the associated Tree Strategy. There had been a number of tree planting projects undertaken at Cosmeston, Pencoedre and Wenvoe. Similarly on train links, further information would be forthcoming, with work being undertaken as part of the Capital Region on integration, as well as the new interchange at Barry Docks opening shortly. On reserves, the Council had established these reserves as an additional set of resources that could be utilised by the organisation for Project Zero related projects, but they did not cover the full extent of funding or investment in such schemes, with certain projects receiving funding from Welsh Government (WG) as well. The report also outlined the new process for bids.

Councillor Carroll raised the impact of changes to recycling and whether there was any data around the amount of recycled versus non recycled waste collected by the

No.

Vale of Glamorgan Council since the roll out of changes to recycling services, as well as concerns on verges not being cut on certain roads. In response, anecdotally, the Council's Waste Management Team were seeing a reduction in the amount of contaminated recycling since the changes had been implemented. Figures surrounding the amount of recycled versus non recycled waste collected would be sought and provided to the Committee. On verges, information would be sought via the Highways Team.

The Vice Chair felt that to help innovate how Scrutiny engages with residents, greater consideration should be given to how the public can have greater involvement in the Project Zero process and how better to deliver this. Also, it would be useful for a briefing session or workshop to be held prior to September's meeting of the Committee, in order to have the latest figures from WG as part of the Council's consideration on how best to achieve its decarbonisation targets. In response, the suggestion on greater public participation would be looked into and further actions and updates would be provided on how this could be achieved (i.e., through greater use of online public participation and consultation exercises via the Project Zero Hub, etc). Also, the suggested workshop would be looked into. On carbon footprint targets for Council housing, further information would be sought via Housing and Building Services colleagues.

Councillor Haines' commented on agile, hybrid, working for Council staff and whether there was in fact a carbon reduction 'dividend' from this. He felt that the carbon output would be simply put on staff at their homes through their usage of electricity and heating there, rather than at Council locations, therefore no carbon reduction would be meaningfully achieved. It was explained that advice from the Decarbonisation Manager would be sought on how the data was captured on this area and if allowances were made for domestic carbon use or at other non-Council locations, as well as getting WG feedback on this. Although, it was also noted that agile / hybrid working could help to potentially offset overall carbon usage due to less commuting to work, and the Chair felt that this maybe an area that needed further analysis.

On Councillor Wood's comments regarding the Council's ambitious targets on carbon reduction and the need to focus on the essential challenges, targets and objectives in order to achieve net zero and to undertake a focused approach to help implement this, it was explained that the Board had been working to ensure that the key areas of focus for implementing Project Zero were being prioritised such as supply chains. This would be reflected in the next iteration of this report, including the refinement of RAG statuses, etc. It was also important for the Council to be a leader in the community to help drive down emissions in the County overall.

On the Chair's comments on embedding circular economy principles into the Council's activities and culture to help drive Project Zero amongst employees and their work objectives, it was explained that this would tie in with staff appraisals, collaboration with Human Resources, Organisational Development, Internal Communications Teams and Wellbeing Champions as well as volunteering work in the local community, which could all help in embedding such principles.

No.

The Vice Chair commented on the recommendation from UK Government for Local Authorities on an agreed framework for Project Zero and on whose responsibility, whether it was local government, WG, etc. to achieve and fund decarbonisation in these various areas, as well as to ensure that the Council and other relevant bodies continued to be accountable and responsible for achieving decarbonisation. The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources stated that funding for such measures were a mixture of WG funding and the Council's own reserves. It was also important to engage with local communities and groups in developing decarbonisation measures, as well as working regionally and nationally.

On Councillor Franks' query about the future funding of Project Zero by WG, the Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that WG continued to be supportive of energy saving and carbon zero schemes. On the progress of such schemes, further details would be sought and shared with the Committee in due course.

The Chair concluded the item by outlining the need to tie-in Project Zero with other areas of the Council's work, as recently seen with the new Procurement Strategy, and to ensure that social value, reusing, repurposing, recycling, remanufacturing were taken into account and to have the necessary governance in place to help drive these forward.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the progress detailed in the report and at Appendix A in relation to the challenges within the Climate Change Challenge Plan be noted.

(2) T H A T the funding available in reserves and the arrangements to approve the use of reserves to progress future schemes be noted.

(3) T H A T the performance indicators in Appendix B to the report be noted.

(4) T H A T the following comments from the Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration:

- The importance of analysing the figures surrounding the amount of recycled versus non recycled waste collected by the Vale of Glamorgan Council since the roll out of changes to recycling services in parts of the Vale.
- The need to look at the potential carbon savings (if any) of Council staff working from their home location as part of agile and hybrid working versus commuting to and working at Vale of Glamorgan Council premises.
- The importance of the prioritisation or reprioritisation of the Council's key challenges, targets and objectives in order to achieve net zero and to undertake a focused approach to help implement this. In tandem with this, it was important to embed these priorities and the related behaviours and culture in order to help support this approach within the Council.

No.

- For the Council, in conjunction with Scrutiny, to look at how they can use social media, the new Project Zero online hub and other means of engagement in order to foster greater involvement and participation of residents of the Vale of Glamorgan with Project Zero. This would include public feedback on how to improve on the work being done around the project, on its delivery, the methods being used to achieve this, as well as requests to Scrutiny to consider and scrutinise key areas of the project.
- The importance of the Council working with local communities and groups, and Welsh Government, to help achieve net zero and having the mechanisms in place to ensure the ongoing accountability and responsibility of the Vale of Glamorgan Council for achieving this goal.
- The need to tie-in Project Zero with other areas of the Council's work, as recently seen with the new Procurement Strategy, and to ensure that social value, reusing, repurposing, recycling, remanufacturing were taken into account and to have the necessary governance in place to help drive these forward.

(5) T H A T it be recommended to Cabinet that this report be distributed to all Elected Members, members of the Public Services Board and all Town and Community Councils for their information.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(4) To enable Cabinet to consider the comments of the Committee as part of its consideration of progress in delivering the Climate Change Challenge Plan.

(5) In order to update all Elected Members and other stakeholders on the arrangements in place to deliver Project Zero.

#### 152 HYBRID MEETING PLATFORM UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 was presented by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services. Highlights included:

- The report outlined the considerable work undertaken by a number of Council officers in terms of regression testing and related areas of support around this project and in conjunction with the existing supplier.
- In addition, the Committee were made aware of the data gathering efforts of the Council as part of this exercise, liaising with other Local Authorities, looking at what was available in the marketplace, speaking with suppliers and using that information to help inform the functional requirements list (referred to in the report appendix).
- The report also set out the current position of the existing hybrid platform supplier, Civico, and the preferred way forward in implementing the hybrid platform for Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings, i.e. to enter into a performance assessment / proof of concept agreement with an alternative

No.

supplier on a short-term basis (up to 12 months) with the option to extend at the discretion of the Council as detailed in the Report. This would also take into account practical and resource implications, as well as Welsh translation requirements.

- In the meantime, the Council would continue with its current arrangements, which accorded with existing legislation.
- A linked Part II Report was to follow in this meeting relating to commercially sensitive data and issues around this topic.

Following the report, Councillor Carroll voiced his concerns around Civico and the related technical and other issues, with the system appearing to not be fit for purpose, the potential 'breach of contract' around this and the lengthy timescales involved, as well as referring to more 'viable' alternatives for hybrid meeting platforms being used by other Local Authorities, such as Cardiff Council. It was explained that significant parts of the Councillor's queries and comments would have to be addressed when the Part II report was presented due to them falling into areas of commercial sensitivity. On the reference to the hybrid platform used by Cardiff Council, this Authority had in fact recently changed their hybrid provider. With regard to the Recommendation relating to the publication of a VEAT Notice (Voluntary Ex ante Transparency Notice) it had been established that a Framework agreement was in place, which would negate the need for the VEAT Notice and assist with speeding up the process. A Gantt chart had now been provided to the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services which set out timescales, including a 'soft launch' of a new system, as part of a step by step, 'proof-of-concept' approach in the near future, with Members being updated on this in due course.

Councillor Haines was disappointed there was no timeline included in the report, as well as details on the point when the current system was no longer considered as fit for purpose. He considered that a more comprehensive report should also be provided to this Committee and possibly Governance and Audit Committee, including 'lessons' learned as part of this process, which was also echoed by the Chair and Councillor Franks. It was agreed that such a report would be produced and that further discussions on this would be held in Part II.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the report on the hybrid meeting platform update be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference, report and discussions at the meeting.

153 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

**RESOLVED – T H A T** under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business



No.

on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

154 HYBRID MEETING PLATFORM UPDATE (REF) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 13 AND 14) –

The reference from Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 was presented.

The reference and appended report were discussed by the Committee and a number of matters and questions were raised. It was agreed that a recommendation be sent back to Cabinet regarding the proposed investment, as detailed in the report, for a dedicated 500Mbps broadband link to be installed in the Council Chamber's Audio / Visual Room and to reconsider its necessity.

Also, the Committee asked to receive a 'reflections' report in order to have an overview of the work undertaken for the Hybrid Meeting Platform and highlighting key aspects of this project.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T Cabinet is asked to consider, with reference to the Council's ICT Department, whether the proposed investment, as detailed in the report, for a dedicated 500Mbps broadband link to be installed in the Council Chamber's Audio / Visual Room (in order to allow the hybrid and streaming systems to be completely separated from the Council's internal network), is required.

(2) T H A T a comprehensive reflections report is produced for the Committee's consideration, outlining the timeline of the Hybrid Meeting Platform Project (including Civico), the financial and legal aspects, the successes and challenges, as well as the lessons learnt from the Project.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) For Cabinet to consider the necessity of the proposed investment as part of the Hybrid Meeting Platform Project.

(2) For Committee to be provided with a greater overview and understanding of the Project and to ensure that a comprehensive reflections piece is provided for the Council in order to assist it with similar undertakings in the future.