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CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 18th October, 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, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood

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

458 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.”

459 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 20th September, 2023 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment on page 356 concerning minute number 367, Announcement, which should read as follows:

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.”

460 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

461 STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES AND WORK TO TACKLE POVERTY AND THE CURRENT COST OF LIVING CRISIS (DCR) –

The report (and accompanying slideshow) was presented by the Operational Manager - Corporate Strategy and Insight, in order to update the Committee on

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the work being undertaken to tackle poverty and the cost-of-living crisis within the Vale of Glamorgan and to set out the Council's approach to responding to three Audit Wales reports on the challenges of poverty in Wales. The report detailed the findings and recommendations from the three Audit Wales reports and the approach being taken in response to these reports. The three reports were:

- Time for Change – Poverty in Wales
- A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises
- Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance

The three reports encouraged changes in how the Council worked with the community, the third sector and social enterprises. The reports formed part of Audit Wales' work on tackling poverty across Wales.

A fourth Audit Wales report, 'Third Sector Partnership working' which was specific to the Vale sat with and was considered alongside the three reports. The Audit Wales report on third sector partnership working had previously been presented to the Committee, Cabinet and the Governance and Audit Committee.

The report detailed how the Council was undertaking an integrated and collaborative approach to how to respond to the work of Audit Wales; recognised the interconnections and reflected on the recommendations set out in the four reports to embed changes in how the Council worked and with whom. This was consistent with the Council's existing critical challenge on the cost of living within the 2023/24 Annual Delivery Plan and the work on the future transformation programme within the theme of Strengthening Communities. This included the need to build up greater community resilience and self-reliance, with the support of the Council and partners. The approach outlined in the report would also assist in developing the Council's relationship with key community-based partners, developing a new Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and a revised Town and Community Council Charter. It also provided details about the use of the cost-of-living reserve which was established as part of the 2023-24 budget demonstrating how the Council was matching the use of reserves with the Council's core priorities as set out in the Financial Strategy considered by Committee in September.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee and others:

- The Vice-Chair asked for further details on the sixth recommendation of the report, concerning what changes were being considered in terms of the relationships with key partners in this area, i.e. the new Voluntary Sector Compact with GVS and how these would strengthen the relationships with partners in the long-term and improve the focus on tackling the cost living crisis, etc. It was explained, such as in the case of the review of the GVS Compact, that such changes would benefit the wider framework of engagement with the Third Sector, by helping develop greater synergies with, and greater consistency in how, the Council engaged across the wider sector and the diverse range of other partners and organisations that it dealt with, such as social enterprises. As part of this, the Council was

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seeking feedback from Third Sector and other partners about their experiences working with the Council in order to build more sustainable relationships and to help deliver the relevant goals.

- On Councillor Carroll's comments around the omission of the impact of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Council Tax on residents, in terms of the cost-of-living crisis and related pressures on domestic budgets in the report, it was explained that other emerging pressures and challenges would be included in future progress reports on the Council's work on the cost of living crisis / tackling poverty and although not explicitly mentioned in the current report, would be something that would be raised and considered as part of the wider discussions on this piece of work.
- Councillor Dr. Johnson raised several comments and questions including the work of Public Service Board (PSB relating to social deprivation within certain areas of Barry and the employment of a Community Development Officer across those areas, the approval of only £100k for this work from the Shared Prosperity Fund (despite an original request and bid for £370k) and further details on the proposed new hub in Barry to advise people about skills and employment opportunities, referred to in the report. On the bid for monies from the Shared Prosperity Fund, it was explained that the original bid was much larger, relating to a number of posts to take forward the work across the most deprived areas, but due to the huge demand in terms of bids for this fund it had not been possible to award all the funding requested. Subsequently, the newly recruited Community Development Officer from this funding, was placed within the Regeneration Team in order to be in amongst similar officers who could provide additional support, management and expertise to assist them. Regarding the new hub, more information would be sought and circulated to Committee Members.
- Councillor Haines echoed Councillor Carroll's concern on the omission of the impact of Council Tax in the report, as well as making a number of comments and queries around the delay in this report coming to the Committee, on the need for greater definition of what resilience and self-reliance meant in terms of communities and this work, the need to reach out to public houses and similar to help tackle the shortfall of 'warm spaces' within rural communities, the ending of the previous GVS Compact and possible alternatives to Welsh Government (WG) funding to schools for Breakfast Clubs which was in the process of being withdrawn. On warm spaces, it was explained that a report was going to Cabinet imminently which would look at the use of the cost-of-living reserve to support projects such as warm spaces, and the Council was also looking to receive support from its partners in the Community Sector as well as from its own services, i.e. public libraries in terms of setting up such spaces. Despite the previous Compact ending in 2021, the Council had continued to work closely with GVS in readiness of the new Compact eventually coming into place. On the definition of community resilience, this would be addressed going forward via the Council's engagement with Third Sector and other partners, as well as formulating other key definitions such as around 'social enterprises'.
- The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources referred to a number of topics members had raised, including the close working relationship with GVS (particularly since COVID-19 and

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despite the ending of the Compact), the importance and diversity of social enterprises and the challenges around Council Tax and funding key cost of living and similar projects (i.e. Breakfast Clubs, when considering what services the Council needed and wished to provide, as well as the requirement to have a balanced budget, to make savings and to minimise the financial impact on residents as much as possible during the current economic climate. On Breakfast Clubs / free school meals, she outlined the work the Council had already done, i.e. payments, to families who received free school meals, over the summer holiday period.

- Finally, the Chair raised two questions concerning the recommendation from the Time for Change report calling on WG to set targets to alleviate and tackle poverty in conjunction with Local Government, and on what work was being done to help alleviate pensioners in poverty. In response, the Operational Manager - Corporate Strategy and Insight stated that she had not been party to any discussions with WG concerning target setting for alleviating poverty as yet but had attended meetings with officers from other Welsh Councils as part of the tackling poverty agenda. WG were currently undertaking work to develop a Child Poverty Strategy and further information would be sought from WG on the question of target setting and relayed back to the Committee. On support for pensioners in poverty, the Council had been addressing this through i.e. the Warm Spaces Scheme which provided a warm, secure but also social space for older persons who may also be lonely and isolated. Also, the Council had an Age Friendly Vale Officer in post currently undertaking important work in supporting older residents, and the Vale had been awarded Age Friendly status by the World Health Organisation in recognition of the work being undertaken. The Council engaged with a number of relevant services, partners and organisations, such as the 50+ Forum to provide information to older residents including, for example, information on pension credits.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the work being undertaken with regards to tackling poverty and the cost-of-living crisis and the proposed approach for future reporting of work on tackling poverty and the cost-of-living which was a critical challenge within the Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24, be noted.

(2) T H A T the approach outlined in the report for engaging with a range of stakeholders to determine how the Council could work better with the third sector and social enterprises and increase community resilience through an integrated response to the Audit Wales reports, be endorsed.

(3) T H A T the progress made in response to the recommendations in Audit Wales report 'Time for Change – Poverty in Wales' as set-out in Appendix A to the report, be noted.

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(4) T H A T the response to the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises' as set out in Appendix B to the report, be endorsed.

(5) T H A T the response to the recommendations in the Audit Wales report 'Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance' as set-out in Appendix C to the report, be endorsed.

(6) T H A T the proposal to include work to develop the above in conjunction with a new Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services, a review of the terms of reference of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee and work to revise the Town and Community Council Charter into the programme of work outlined in this report whilst recognising that the Compact, Committee and Charter have a broader focus than poverty and the cost of living, be noted.

(7) T H A T the use of the cost-of-living reserve to support those in need be noted.

(8) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet (for oversight), Governance and Audit Committee (for noting the response to the regulatory recommendations made), and Community Liaison Committee and Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee (for their comments to be referred to Cabinet for consideration) and that updates on progress are also provided at those meetings.

(9) T H A T the report be circulated to all Elected Members and the Public Services Board for information.

Reasons for recommendations

(1-7) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(8) To ensure all relevant Committees are aware of the proposed approach and have the opportunity to shape the programme of work.

(9) To ensure all Elected Members and the Public Services Board are aware of the Audit Wales reports and proposed approach.

462 1ST AND 2ND QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2023/24 AND UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2023/24 (DCR) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report in order to update Members on the progress on Scrutiny recommendations and to consider the updated Forward Work Programme together with any slippage for 2023/24.

Also outlined was how Members of the Committee could review and be involved with the Forward Work Programme and the various ways in which additional issues could be considered for inclusion in the Scrutiny Work Programme with topics coming from a number of sources, ranging from individual Councillors,

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Performance or budget monitoring information through to local residents and service users. Tied in with this was the proposed re- launch of the Scrutiny topic suggestion form that existed on the Council's website.

The Committee were informed that an initial report on the approved Task and Finish Group subject, put forward by the Committee concerning the new Procurement Policy and Strategy, would be presented to them in the near future, setting out the Group's terms of reference, scope and confirming its membership.

Finally, at the meeting of the Committee on 24th May 2023 regarding the 4th Quarter Scrutiny Recommendation Tracking 2022/23 and Proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule 2023/24 (minute no. 59 refers), a Committee Member asked if the background paper on the Scrutiny and Cabinet Roles and Responsibilities from 2017 was still fit for purpose taking into consideration this 'relaunch' and if there was capacity for the Committee to look at ensuring that it aligned with what Scrutiny was trying to achieve. It was explained that this would be looked into and reported back to the Committee. It was subsequently established that this was an upload error, with this document having been updated in 2021. The relevant updated document / link had now been added to the report.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and questions were raised by the Committee:

- Councillor Dr. Johnson referred to two key reports that remained outstanding on the Work Programme, namely the Unacceptable Actions and the Oracle implementation project reports, which, due to their importance and the fact that the Committee had requested these, should have been received much sooner. Even where reports requested by the Committee had been provided, i.e. the Leisure Services Financial Update, these had taken some time to be shared with the Committee. It was therefore important that Democratic Services and colleagues in the relevant Directorates prioritised and adequately resourced the drafting of reports that the Committee had requested as part of the Committee's remit to be involved with the Work Programme. The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer explained that they were reliant on colleagues in the relevant Directorates to provide reports requested by the Committee, but delays could occur due to capacity and resourcing issues that colleagues maybe facing, as well as other factors such as legal considerations. He appreciated the length of time involved in waiting for the reports in question to come to the Committee and would chase these up. On the Oracle report, the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer explained that the delay in providing this report was due to a number of factors, including the delays with the system going live and legal considerations, but these had now been resolved. Recently, the Project Manager had been re-engaged to conduct a comprehensive 'lessons learned' exercise, which was being worked through at the moment. The aim was to report back on this to Committee, if possible, before Christmas.
- On Councillor Franks' query as to whether the recently announced budget cuts by Welsh Government and their potential impact on education and other services provided by the Vale and other Welsh Councils could be

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incorporated into the Work Programme in terms of a separate report, it was explained that this would be incorporated into planned and scheduled financial reports that would be coming through to Cabinet in the near future and shared with this Committee and others.

- The Chair and Vice-Chair wished to add that the Committee did have a considerable amount of statutory reports from Cabinet and Finance that it was required to consider and scrutinise, as part of its remit, but it was vitally important that the Committee was not purely 'reactive' and that it was able to request reports from officers in addition to statutory ones, and that further reports should be provided in order to 'deep dive' into specific areas of concern or interest highlighted by the committee following the consideration of Cabinet and / or statutory reports, if requested and in a timely manner.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A to D to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2023/24 attached at Appendix E to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2) For public information.