

No.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a hybrid meeting held on 21st February, 2024.

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 A. Asbrey, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), W.A. Hennessy, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health)

825 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.”

826 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January, 2024 be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendments concerning Councillor Haines’ comments on Page 4, on the Draft Transgender Inclusion Toolkit and Guidance Document agenda item (Min No. 706 refers):

- With reference to the part of the minute where it was stated that Councillor Haines had suggested that all religious groups be consulted as stakeholders in future consultations, this should in fact read that Councillor Haines had suggested that religious groups should have been consulted as stakeholders in the consultation for this latest iteration of the Toolkit.
- Also, Councillor Haines had stated in the meeting in question that teachers had been left vulnerable by the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s lack of willingness to state what actions should be taken about single sex spaces. The Council should give advice on this as a consequence.

827 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

828 PAY POLICY 2024/25 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 8th February, 2024 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources in order that Committee consider the Council's latest iteration of its pay policy, prior to its final consideration and approval by Council on 6th March, 2024. It was also agreed by the Committee that the Director, due to his role as a Chief Officer, would then leave the meeting following this presentation and prior to the Committee discussing and considering the item.

The Council had a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 to prepare a pay policy statement for the new financial year 2024/25. The statement needed to be approved and published by 31st March, 2024. The document provided a framework for ensuring that employees were rewarded fairly and objectively, in accordance with the service needs of the Council and that there was openness and transparency in relation to the process.

Key changes and updates to this latest version of the Pay Policy (Appendix A) included:

- The National Pay Awards for Chief Officers and other staff had been completed for 2023/24. Negotiations for 2024/25 had only just started and there was no information on these nor the proposals as yet. But they would have to take into account the recently announced National Minimum Wage rates.
- The introduction of the shared cost Additional Voluntary Contribution scheme (AVC), had resulted in a reduction of National Insurance payments for the employer, with £25k savings delivered which would increase with more Council staff joining the scheme.
- Updated details on the total number of Council employees and population for the Vale of Glamorgan.
- The number and gender profile of the Council's Chief Officers, with a slight change in the gender profile due to two female staff leaving the Council who were replaced by two male members of staff.
- There had been a slight increase in the gender pay gap, the Council's median pay gap was 7.1%, nationally this was 14.3%.
- Pay ratios: with the recent pay awards for employees on Grades 1 to 11 having higher overall percentage pay award increases due to the fixed amount increases, the multiples between the salaries of staff and Chief Officers/Chief Executive was reducing.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the following questions and comments were raised in the Committee meeting:

- Councillor Carroll asked about the UK Government having now revoked its decision to impose a £95k cap on exit payments and whether the Council would now be looking to make any payments exceeding it. The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that there was no intention to do this, and instances of early redundancy

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and retirement, including the relevant payments involved, were already handled under a robust process by the Council through the relevant Committee.

- The Vice Chair referred to the slight increase in the gender pay gap and what was being done to address this. The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources explained that as at the end of 2023, the gender pay gap was 4% and was continuing to track down, despite the recent 'glitch' in the figures. The Council was also working with its various diversity networks in helping to address pay gaps based on various factors, as well as gender.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference, appended report and all the issues and implications contained therein,

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Council's Pay Policy 2024/25 as set out in the reference, appended report and as incorporated in the revised statement at Appendix A be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

829 RESHAPING - A FUTURE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME FOR THE COUNCIL (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 18th January, 2024 was presented by the Director of Corporate Resources.

The report set out proposals for the next phase of the Council's transformation programme, Reshaping. Reshaping Services was the transformational change programme launched in 2015 and which enabled the Council to mitigate the impact of austerity whilst delivering significant financial savings. With a significant financial challenge facing the Council in the medium-term, it was now time for Reshaping to be refocused and the report set out a framework and early ideas for progressing transformational change under five themes of Target Operating Model, Service Transformation, Strengthening Communities, Digital Innovation and Economic Resilience.

The report sought approval for the proposals to develop the Reshaping Programme including undertaking a process of engagement with various Council Committees, Forums and Networks and that a further report be presented in due course with a prospectus of projects.

Following the presentation of the reference and report, the following questions and comments were raised in the Committee meeting:

- Councillor Carroll felt there was a general 'lack of focus' to the report, and therefore, there was the need to have the main focus of the report and

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Programme to be outlined more clearly which should include a strong emphasis on protecting, prioritising and ensuring the effective delivery of services and addressing residents' concerns. It was explained that the key focus for the Council was to be responsive to residents' needs and to be more sustainable in delivering services to them as part of this Reshaping exercise.

- Councillor Franks appreciated the need for the Strategy in light of the current financial challenges faced by the Council but also felt that it was too 'vague', with a lack of detail on proposal, financial information, a timetable and targets. He asked how the Council would know whether the Strategy had been a success or not, if there was both the officer capacity to achieve this and the funding in terms of Reshaping and potential asset transfers. The Chair and the Director of Corporate Resources both stressed that this report was just the initial framework and a means of garnering feedback on the direction of travel for Reshaping going forward and therefore lacked specific details on finances, schemes, etc. A timetable would be provided by summer recess. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) would be looking at the priorities and how to take Reshaping forward and what the Council had to deliver. On Community Asset Transfers, the Council had learnt lessons from the previous iterations of Reshaping and would be more proactive in reaching out to community groups.
- On Community Asset Transfers, the Chair felt that a transfer guide should be produced for community groups and to have experienced Elected Members involved with the related steering groups in order to bolster the process.
- Councillor Loveluck-Edwards noted that the Strategy was a 'living' document, but with the drive for Reshaping a constant. The Director of Corporate Resources stated that Reshaping was an ongoing 'learning' process in order to improve its protection of priority Council services due to the limitations on public sector finance.
- Councillor Haines suggested that the report would probably have been better coming to the Committee at a later date, once there had been more information and detail available. He referred to asset transfers and that this had seen mixed results and success, with communities potentially ending up paying twice for the same service. He also suggested that Council staff who regularly used their motor vehicles could help to spot issues connected with the Vale's roads and highways, in order to plan maintenance more effectively and not have to rely on just residents reporting these in. This suggestion would be looked at and further details would be provided on Reshaping in due course.
- Councillor Dr Johnson referred to the ongoing nature of the Reshaping process and that in reality this was 'code for cuts' in non-statutory services rather than transforming these for the better. It was therefore important to see with this iteration of Reshaping innovative ideas for Council services going forward and clear outputs and outcomes, in order that services were improved rather than simply pared back. There was also a 'mismatch' in that while certain Council services were being cut back due to a lack of funding etc. (i.e. care) other areas were still seemingly reasonably well-funded i.e. the Barry Marina development. The Chair agreed there was a disconnect in this area but this maybe due to considerations and other

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criteria applied to such funding, but the council still needed to look at new ways of improving funding for services. The Director of Corporate Resources added that there would be specific criteria for what success looked like for Reshaping going forward. The Vale Public Services Board (PSB) continued to work to address issues around poverty, not through focusing on making savings, and their efforts would ultimately help to mitigate higher levels of spending in future by proactively addressing these areas of need. Therefore, work around services, support and funding continued but in a different guise.

- Councillor Carroll stated that the Council was not approaching income generation correctly and not looking sufficiently at new avenues i.e. removing the staff at Cosmeston Park was short sighted and their expertise could be used to develop the services and facilities more fully there instead. This could ultimately lead to this being self-sustaining and provide a net benefit to the Council. Also, there was insufficient prominence given in the Digital Strategy to the use of digital technology such as Artificial Intelligence (A.I.). It was explained that this feedback on additional commercial opportunities would be shared with the relevant Council officers. A.I. and greater use of automation, etc. had already been included in the Digital Strategy as a direct result of Councillor Carroll's feedback at a previous Committee.
- The Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources felt the discussions on this item this evening had been a good start in discussing this Strategy and would be part of a wider consultation and collaboration with partners. The Council had had to make tens of millions of pounds in savings over the last decade, and Reshaping would provide a framework of making savings but in a positive, constructive way and therefore avoid a 'salami-slicing' approach to this. Going forward, more detailed plans around Reshaping would be drawn up in order to flesh out what success would look like for this Strategy. On commercial opportunities, these could be beneficial but needed to be considered carefully before entering into such arrangements. The Council had already had successes with Reshaping, such as universal school meals, its work with community groups and sports clubs and seeking to expand this. It remained important to work both with and for local communities within the Vale and to understand their diversity of needs and their lived experiences.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the reference, appended report and all the issues and implications contained therein,

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the reference and appended report for Reshaping - A Future Transformation Programme for the Council be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

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830 DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN 2024-25 POST CONSULTATION (DCR) -

The purpose of the report was to enable the Committee to consider the draft Annual Delivery Plan 2024-25 post consultation. This was presented by the Operational Manager - Corporate Strategy and Insight.

The report set out how the draft Annual Delivery Plan (The Plan) 2024-25 (attached at Appendix A to the report) had been developed, the outcome of the consultation and the subsequent changes to the Plan. The Annual Delivery Plan for 2024-25 was aligned to the Council's four Well-being Objectives set out in the Corporate Plan 2020-2025. The Plan detailed the activities that would be undertaken in 2024-25 to deliver these objectives.

The Plan also detailed three critical challenges (associated with the four Well-being Objectives) which would continue to be a key focus for the organisation in 2024-25. These were: organisational resilience, cost of living and the climate and nature emergencies.

The commitments within the Annual Delivery Plan would be reflected in Annual Service Plans together with a suite of performance measures which would detail how different Council services would contribute to the delivery of the four Well-being Objectives. Work had commenced to develop the service plans which would be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committees in March together with proposed service improvement targets for 2024-25.

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

- The Chair was pleased to see that the report demonstrated clearly that the Scrutiny and consultation process was working and had set out the responses and changes made as part of this process.
- The Vice-Chair welcomed the explicit inclusion of communication within the organisational resilience challenge as part of the Annual Delivery Plan and additional target in order to engage with the public and build trust. However, within the consultation itself, there was only one response on communication highlighting this as a critical challenge; but there appeared to be a much more general response indicating the Council needed to do a better job at communicating. On the changes to the targets, these were much closer to the 'smart targets' idea raised at Committee previously, and were much clearer and easier to understand. Going forward, there could be improvement in having higher level set targets. Overall, there had been significant improvement to the Annual Delivery Plan.
- Councillor Dr Johnson echoed the comments made on the improvements to the document and the highlighting and tracking of changes that had been made. However, on the majority of objectives and actions there were still no real targets and therefore no adequate way of measuring and assessing success. In effect Councillor Dr Johnson felt the Council was 'marking its own homework' through this system of self-reporting. Also, on communication and engagement, there had been a low response rate to

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the consultation and with the older population making up a significant number of the respondents. This was a dry topic and therefore it was important that the Council looked at other ways to improve and bolster the facilitation of the consultation process and to make it more representative of the overall local population. The Chair explained that the consultation process had been extended by ten days, had been through various bodies and committees and it was important for Elected Members to also encourage participation in such surveys within their wards. The views of the 3,000 respondents who replied to the Let's Talk survey were all important to the Council and had been considered as part of the development of the Annual Delivery Plan. The Operational Manager – Corporate Strategy and Insight explained that on targets, etc., these would be addressed through the Service Plans and Performance Targets to deliver the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Delivery Plan, to be shared with Committee in the near future. The comments raised about the current process would also be taken onboard for the new Corporate Plan. On the consultation feedback, various feedback had been considered in addition to this, including the Let's Talk Survey and service planning sessions.

- Councillor Carroll suggested that to increase levels of participation in consultation(s) undertaken by the council, the survey process should be simple and easy to use, citing the issues he and several constituents had faced with the replacement Local Development Plan consultation process. This feedback would be passed back to the officers network in order to address such issues that may be creating barriers to public participation.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the updated draft Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix A), the consultation feedback report (Appendix B) and the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C) be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report, as well as the discussions at the meeting.