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

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillor J. Protheroe (Chair); Councillors G.D.D. Carroll, P. Drake, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks, E. Goodjohn, H.C. Hamilton, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood

Also present: Councillors A. Asbrey, J. Aviet, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), R. Sivagnanam (Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

### 63 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”.

### 64 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** Councillor E. Goodjohn be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal year.

### 65 MINUTES –

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### 66 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 67 LET’S TALK ABOUT LIFE IN THE VALE – SURVEY REPORT AND FURTHER ENGAGEMENT (REF) –

Cabinet had on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration, with the request that any views be referred back to Cabinet. The

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Director of Corporate Resources, in presenting the report, commenced by advising that the Survey responses provided the Council with a rich source of information and would be critical to the development of the Corporate Plan in the coming months. The Survey had primarily been conducted online by Data Cymru who had considered the response received with the overall margin for error of 1.6% to be very good in statistical terms. Representatives from Data Cymru were present at the meeting and provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee.

Sam Sullivan commenced by advising that Data Cymru provided a range of statistical and research services to Local Authorities. Over 4,000 responses had been received to the Survey out of a population of approximately 130,000 in the Vale, with the response rate of 3.7% and in his opinion that was considered to be a good response rate. The Vale of Glamorgan was part of a pilot for a broader national approach to running resident surveys which would go live in July 2024 for all other Councils. He took the opportunity to thank all the officers involved from the Vale for their support. It was noted that there was a wide range of topics covered in the Survey, with questions separated into 11 themes which included public service priorities, cost of living, climate change, volunteering and travel. However, the results also showed that there was more work to be done in how the Council explained its work and engaged residents in decision making which was an area where attention must be focused.

The Operational Manager for Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development also provided a PowerPoint presentation in relation to the results of the Survey and the actions for the Council going forward, advising that the headline results were generally that people were happy with the Vale as a place to live and their priorities for different services being ranked in order of preference. It was accepted that there was more work for the Council to do in response to the findings relating to questions regarding perceptions of Council services, including engaging residents in the decision-making process. It was the intention that the ideas that had been suggested within the Survey would be shaped going forward. Examples of work that needed to be undertaken were to engage more fully with users, promote the e-petition process, seek further ways and initiatives about sharing what happens at Council meetings and encouraging public participation at meetings. The Public Participation Strategy had been established as a priority over the last two years and at Cabinet the Cabinet Member had made a recommendation about undertaking a review of the action plan in response to the Survey's findings.

Councillor Franks said he was reluctant to give much credit to the Council for the responses in relation to living in the Vale or community cohesion due to his view being that the 4,000 responses were not considered to be a good response rate and that in his view, highway maintenance was a particular concern for residents. He considered that the responses advised that 21% of people were happy with the Vale which meant that 79% were not. He however, looked forward to the proposed future report to Cabinet with suggestions for new ways of engagement.

Both Councillors Carroll and Franks commented on the length of the presentation provided to the Committee, however the Chair said that she personally welcomed and enjoyed the presentation as it was important to understand the process and

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the data that had been provided. The Chair further commented that she considered it to be a very important Survey and that the data be used to its best effect.

The Cabinet Member, with permission to speak, advised that the presentation by Data Cymru detailed that it was a good response rate, they were the experts in providing data around such surveys and that, in her view, Councillor Franks should have paid more attention to the content of the report. The Survey was an opportunity to listen to the residents of the Vale and the Council would use the information provided to develop its Public Participation Strategy as it was important to learn from residents. The Cabinet Member wholeheartedly commended the presentation and the responses.

Councillor Hanks stated that she thought on the whole it was a positive Survey, although she felt it did show the need to explain more to the public the workings of the Council. Councillor Hanks drew a comparison with the Eagleswell Project where members of the public had advised her that they had not been informed about the proposals in advance and they had not been consulted on them. She said it was important that the Council listened to residents and their views and possibly considered adjusting ideas as a result.

In response, the Operational Manager for Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development advised that it was important to learn from the results of the Survey stating that there were a number of areas that needed to be progressed which the Council was seeking to prioritise.

Councillor Carroll asked the Cabinet Member if she had been surprised at the responses received. The Cabinet Member commented that it was important to recognise that some of the responses were requesting changes in areas that the Council had no responsibility for. However, the Survey did inform the Council that it needed to be more transparent in its work and to prioritise certain areas. Communication was a key aspect that needed to be progressed as well as engagement and that the Public Participation Strategy would be reviewed in light of the comments received. It was apparent that there was a gap between the perception of what people thought the Council was doing and what it actually did. Councillor Carroll stated that he had not been surprised at the responses having held discussions with local constituents and he was also aware of the Eagleswell plans which had been placed on the community without proper engagement in his view.

The Cabinet Member further stated that it was important for the Cabinet to have a robust Participation Strategy which would be kept under revision throughout its life.

The Vice-Chair commented that there were areas that needed more focus, for example residents were stating that they needed more public transport. Promoting the e-petition scheme was important as well as encouraging residents to participate in the decision-making process and make their voices heard. He stated that on the whole the Council was transparent, meetings were able to be watched online and archived for future viewing on the Council's website. He did,

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however, suggest that further work be undertaken in relation to the Council's website in making the website easier for the public to understand and having regard to it being written in a user-friendly style. He also drew attention to particular Scrutiny Committee titles, for example the title of Corporate Performance and Resources, he said was difficult for the public to understand what the remit of the Committee was from the title he found easier explanations like money and finance being far easier to understand.

Councillor Loveluck-Edwards commented that it was opportune to reassess how the Council operated and consider what information it provided to the public. The cost-of-living crisis was having a massive impact on people, but she pointed out that it was important to note that even though 70% did not respond to the Survey, the Council could not assume that they were unhappy. She also commented on the lack of engagement between 16–24 year olds and that further work needed to be undertaken in that regard. In referring to her Older People's Champion role, she was well aware that working with young people was essential and that she would be championing further work in that direction. The Operational Manager for Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development advised that measures were being put in place for young people to get more involved and to test the Council's strategies and there were certainly opportunities going forward for further initiatives and ideas to be taken forward.

Councillor Franks also suggested that it would be important for all parties to be involved in considering surveys going forward and suggested that an all-party working group be formed to further assist.

The Chair advised that she take the suggestion to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group for an all-party group to consider his request.

Following the discussion at the meeting, it was

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the results from the Vale of Glamorgan Residents survey be noted.
- (2) T H A T the following comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration:
  - (i) That the Committee supports that further work be undertaken to engage residents in the decision-making process of the Council;
  - (ii) That, when specific projects, for example Eagleswell, are to be explored, consideration to consultation within the local community be undertaken prior to decisions being made;
  - (iii) That the Council's website be reviewed and updated to ensure that it is more user friendly to the public, for example that reference to the remit of Committees be provided in a more easily accessible format for the public;
  - (iv) That the priorities identified within the Survey be progressed as soon as possible and considered in line with the review of the Public Participation Strategy;

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- (v) That the responsibilities of the Council be more easily identified to the public so that they are aware of the responsibilities and accountabilities that the Council has;
  - (vi) Initiatives be developed that show the public that the Council is listening and that the Public Participation Strategy be developed further to explain to people how they can better engage with the Council and its decision making process;
  - (vii) Further opportunities be considered to engage with 16- 24-year olds;
- (3) T H A T an update report be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in due course following further consideration of the consultation by Cabinet and the development of initiatives to promote public participation strategy.
- (4) T H A T a working group of all parties be established to further assist the public participation strategy going forward and that this be referred to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group for consideration.

#### Reason for recommendations

(1-4) Having regard to the presentation provided at the meeting, the reports within the agenda and discussions at the meeting.

#### 68 USE OF PERFORMANCE INFORMATION: SERVICE USER PERSPECTIVE AND OUTCOMES - VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL (DCR) –

The report was presented by Rachel Harries from Audit Wales, the purpose of which was to advise Members of the findings of the review undertaken by Audit Wales of the Council's Use of Performance Information, Service User Perspective and Outcomes.

As part of the Council's Annual Audit Work Programme for 2023, the Auditor General for Wales undertook a review of the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes.

The purpose of the Review was to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under Section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and Section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The review had been carried out across all Welsh authorities with a focus on seeking assurance that the performance information the Council provided to senior officers and Elected Members enabled them to understand the service user perspective and the outcome of its activities; that the information formed part of the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources and its application of the sustainable development principle and identified opportunities for the Council to strengthen its arrangements.

The findings of the review were attached at Appendix A to the report, which concluded that the Council had identified that it needed to engage more with service users but had not determined how this would shape the information provided to senior leaders to ensure it was appropriate and relevant.

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Two recommendations had been made to strengthen the Council's approach.

- R1: Information on the perspective of the service user – The Council should strengthen the information it provides to its senior leaders to enable them to understand how well services and policies are meeting the needs of service users.
- R2: Outcomes information – The Council should strengthen the information provided to senior leaders to help them evaluate whether the Council is delivering its objectives and intended outcomes.

In response to the recommendations, the Director of Corporate Resources referred to the immediate action that had been taken where an action plan had been developed which would be progressed by the Council. This was attached at Appendix B to the report.

In line with the Council's performance monitoring arrangements, progress against regulatory improvement areas would be monitored via the Strategic Insight Board Insight Tracker. All Scrutiny Committees would continue to be informed of progress against the regulatory improvement areas through quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. This would be supplemented with a 6 monthly and annual review of regulatory progress, which would be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet for final oversight. Progress would also be monitored by Audit Wales as part of the Council's Annual Audit Work Programme.

Councillor Goodjohn stated that he was pleased to hear the progress that was being taken forward, however enquired as to what comparisons had been undertaken with other Local Authorities. The Auditor advised that work had been undertaken similarly to the report presented this evening with the 22 Local Authorities and a national study report would also be produced in the coming months. Useful discussions had been held at the All-Wales Policy Meetings with it being further discussed about focusing more and more on better outcomes. The Auditor advised that every Authority had received recommendations with some Authorities having received more recommendations than others. The Vale had only received two recommendations. Following a response to a query Committee was informed that all the Local Authorities reports were available on the Auditor for Wales's website.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently.

**RECOMMENDED –**

(1) T H A T the findings arising from the review of the Council's Use of Performance Information: Service User Perspective and Outcomes (attached at Appendix A to the report) and the response to the review findings and Audit Wales' recommendations (attached at Appendix B to the report) be noted.

(1) T H A T, the report be referred to the Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter to Cabinet for their oversight and endorsement of the proposed Council actions (Appendix B) to address the recommendations.

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Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.

69 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2023/24  
AND PROPOSED ANNUAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE  
2024/25 (DCR) -

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report the purpose of which was to advise Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the proposed Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25:

- 2nd Quarter Recommendation Tracking July – September 2023 (Appendix A).
- 3rd Quarter Recommendation Tracking October – December 2023 (Appendix B)
- 4th Quarter Recommendation Tracking Jan to March 2024 (Appendix C).
- Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 (Appendix D).
- Proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25 (Appendix E).

The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer also drew Members' attention to the progress that had been made in relation to supporting Members with effective scrutiny highlighting the areas of work referenced at paragraphs 2.10 to 2.18 of the report. Having regard to the workshops that had been undertaken with Members regarding the tools to support effective scrutiny it was noted that a detailed report was to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group at its next meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2024.

In referring to the Forward Work Programme Committee was requested for a number of reasons to approve amendments to the programme it being noted that the Sickness Report to requested to be slipped to July 2024, the Safeguarding Annual Report be slipped to September 2024 and the Mid-term Safeguarding report to be presented instead to the meeting in January 2025.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently,

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions as listed in Appendices A - C to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 attached at Appendix D to the report, in the context of the Corporate Performance and

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Resources Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 content, be noted.

(3) T H A T the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25, attached at Appendix E to the report, be approved subject to the amendments noted at the meeting as above, and that the amended Annual Forward Work Programme be uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report to maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations

(2) To align with section 7.6 of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities Protocol.

(3) For public information and having regard to the suggested changes agreed at the meeting.