

No.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 20th November, 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, R. Fisher, C.P. Franks, S.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson and N.J. Wood.

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

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”.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors H.C. Hamilton and B. Loveluck-Edwards.

MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 2nd October, 2024 and the meeting held on 23rd October, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Dr. Johnson, in referring to Agenda Item 4 – Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update (Ref) – stated that although not central to the report, he wished to declare that he was a member of Barry Football Club in relation to Jenner Park for transparency purposes and able to remain in the meeting.

Councillor Franks, in referring to Agenda Item 4 – Corporate Asset Management Plan Annual Update (Ref) – advised that although Seel Park was not on the agenda for consideration, for transparency purposes he declared that he was a trustee of Seel Park and had dispensation to speak but not vote on the matter.

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CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 18th July, 2024 as contained within the agenda was presented. Cabinet had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration. The Operational Manager Property advised that the report provided the Committee with details of the progress made to the 2023-24 Plan against the objectives and additional targets contained within the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2023 to 2028. The report also provided an overview of the work that had been undertaken in relation to property assets and key strategic property projects, notably office accommodation changes. New workstreams and projects had been established to respond to the specific requirements associated with the Reshaping Programme and the emerging budgetary position. The Corporate Asset Management Plan (CAMP) set out the methodology for managing the Council's land and property assets to ensure that they were suitable and sufficient to facilitate the delivery of Council services.

The Plan, which set out a series of objectives with actions and targets associated with each were referred to as below:

Objective 1: To ensure an efficient, effective, and sustainable use of land and buildings to deliver fit for purpose property to support the Council's service delivery;

Objective 2: To identify and pursue opportunities to generate capital receipts and income opportunities from the disposal or lease surplus property;

Objective 3: To ensure that Premises Managers / Duty Holders manage Council assets so that they comply with appropriate statutory, regulatory, and corporate standards, and are maintained to an appropriate level;

Objective 4: To work in partnership and collaborate with other public sector bodies within the Vale of Glamorgan to achieve efficiencies and enhance service delivery.

Appendix A to the report provided Committee with an update to the 2023/24 year in relation to each of the actions' targets associated with the four objectives of the CAMP. The Operational Manager for Property, in presenting to Committee, stated that the way the Council managed its land and property assets had a direct impact on the services it provided and the CAMP sought to ensure that the Council achieved the optimum use of its property assets whilst supporting service delivery across the Council. It was further noted that it was not just about saving money, but also about ensuring that the Council achieved maximum efficiency from its assets and had the right assets in the right place at the right time in order to appropriately support service provision.

Councillor Franks, in commenting on the report, said that he could not see that much progress had been made and enquired in particular about what other schemes the Council was currently pursuing under the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process. The Operational Manager Property advised that the CAT process could take some time as the Council also had to have consultations with applicants with a number of discussions ongoing. The CAT process / guidance was available on the website although it was accepted that this was a long process there were justified reasons

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why it was important that discussions took place, in particular working with service colleagues to ensure that all the financial implications that were required were reported to Cabinet as appropriate. The process also required any community groups to provide a Stage 2 application if they were invited to do so which could take some time to complete. The Council also undertook the work within the resources and capacity that was available. The officer advised that both the CAT Group and the Council did their best to adhere to the timescales as outlined within the guidance, however, as some CATs were complex this would also have an impact. A review of the process was currently being undertaken by Welsh Government and further updates would be provided to Members as appropriate.

Councillor Dr. Johnson enquired as to how much of the savings that were highlighted within the report the Operational Manager could see happening, in particular with reference to the Dock Offices asset and the Colcot. The Operational Manager said that the Docks Office saving had been slightly delayed, but the Council was working with the Levelling UP Fund (LUF). With regard to the Colcot savings these were currently being reviewed as part of the budget setting process and the Director of Resources advised that he would provide the detailed information to Councillor Dr. Johnson as soon as possible. Currently the department was also working closely with the Social Services Department regarding their relocation to other spaces, even possibly the Civic Offices in due course, it being noted that no action would be taken without Social Services colleagues being involved.

Councillor Hanks enquired as to how much of the Dock Offices was currently occupied, with the Operational Manager advising that it was below 50% occupancy, and that work was being undertaken to move the remaining staff across to the Civic and other locations. It was noted that at the moment the HR department had been decanted within the Civic Offices to accommodate this space and they would be the last ones then to be decamped back as appropriate. It was anticipated that savings in respect of the Dock Offices could be made with future proposals being for a partner to work with the Council when everyone had been decanted.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Cabinet reference and report be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider that where any small parcel of Council land surplus to use and of minimal market value could be earmarked for the benefit of Community organisations to use for growing etc.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having considered the reference and following discussions at the meeting.

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CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN (REF) –

The Carbon Management Plan 2024 – 2030 had been referred to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Principal Energy and Decarbonisation Officer presented the report and provided a presentation for Members advising that this was the Council's third Carbon Management Plan, and it was aligned to the five ways of working. The Carbon Management Plan 2024 – 2030 set out the corporate carbon emissions for 2022/23 and activity required to ensure carbon emissions were reduced across all corporate Council activities.

The Plan had been produced collaboratively with key Council service areas and contained actions required by those same service areas to ensure targets were owned by those having direct responsibility for the service area.

Councillor Carroll enquired as to whether the Council would be receiving the £50m proposed to decarbonise across all activities and if the Council did not receive the funding, he asked how the Council envisaged it would raise the money.

The Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer informed Committee that there was no answer to this particular issue at this stage. The £50m highlighted the scale of the issue and the challenge working with suppliers would entail, it was further noted that it was not just a challenge for the Vale Council but for all Local Authorities in Wales. Councillor Carroll said that the reason he posed the question was that the Council had committed itself to be carbon neutral by 2030, and asked whether it be wiser to refocus to 2050? The Operational Manager said that it was important for the Council not to take its eye off the ball and that the Council would continue to aim for 2030 as intended. The Council regularly tried to obtain grants where possible although it acknowledged that it would be a challenge.

The Chair stated that as part of the Committee's Task and Finish Group work looking at economic principles, face to face meetings had been held with buyers of the Council and she had been extremely impressed with the Housing Team who were working to make the Council properties energy efficient and she wished to offer her thanks to them formally.

Councillor Dr. Johnson said that the target was ambitious and that it was disappointing that the Council was not entirely sure that as much progress could be made by 2030. The Council he said did not appear to be approaching the target at any quick pace although he recognised that it was the lack of funding that was important in this situation. He enquired how the Council was going to prioritise the projects that it was proposing to go ahead with and how it would set about securing more funding to implement the work. He also said, in his view, the two pie charts did not appear to align and asked for further clarification. In response the officer advised that for Scope 1, this was what the Council was directly responsible for, Scope 2 the Council was not inherently responsible for and for Scope 3 this was the grid and energy that sat within the Council buildings. The Head of Service again commented that the Council was trying to prioritise its resources as best as it could, with Councillor Dr. Johnson stating that the Future Generations funding was actually an issue for Welsh Government and UK Parliament.

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Councillor Hanks enquired how many pool cars the Vale used, with the officer advising that 10% of the fleet were electric and that grant applications had been made in September for further electric vans.

Councillor Goodjohn said that he considered that the Council was in a good position in relation to its capital funding although revenue was an issue as was the same for all other Local Authorities in Wales. It was important that the Council forged ahead, however, he commented that with regard to modal shift, suggesting that the Council took the opportunity to encourage its employees to travel to work on any other means as opposed to their cars with it being important that employees used public transport wherever possible. The officer said that e-bikes had been a permanent staff benefit however with regard to business travel usage, she would need further discussions internally before considering the way forward. Councillor Goodjohn was of the view that anything the Council could do to strengthen the long-term arrangements would be a good way forward.

The Chair said that she was positive about the potential that procurement changes could bring. It was important to look at Project Zero although she also asked if the Council was considering the potential issues with regard to CO2 emissions in order to secure the funding. The officer advised that this was an area that the Property Services Department were increasingly looking at and following a query regarding changing behaviours, the officer advised that at the moment the behaviour change had not been qualified.

The Leader, with permission to speak, said that the Vale was one of the first Councils in Wales to declare a Climate Change Emergency and that focusing on 2050 would have been an easy option and in her view it had been the right decision to aim for 2030 although it was ambitious. The Council she said would continue to progress to 2030 and that all Local Authorities were sharing their learning in working in this regard.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T Resolutions (1) and (2) of the Cabinet reference be noted.
- (2) T H A T Cabinet considers focusing its approach to behavioural change as a dedicated work stream and researches the contribution that behavioural change could have on the Council meeting its Net Zero Targets.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

WALES CENTRE FOR PUBLIC POLICY – RESPONSE TO THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN 2024-2030 (DCR) –

To assist in the consideration and scrutiny of the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2024-2030, the Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee had commissioned a

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review of the Plan by the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP), which was attached to the report at Appendix A.

Dr. J. Price (Wales Centre for Public Policy) in presenting his response at Appendix A said that on the whole the actions proposed in the document appeared realistic and reflected a well thought through series of actions intended to reduce organisational operational emissions across scopes 1, 2 and 3. The difficulty with regard to costs was recognised he said and that fully costed programmes were required. The WCPP response also tried he said to provide some examples of ways of working to accelerate transaction and identified three principles of successful engagement that it started early in the project development phase, it was genuinely participatory and that it had a meaningful impact on plans.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the content of the report and Appendix A, alongside the reference from Cabinet relating to the Carbon Management Plan 2024-2030, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the response from Officers to be made to the Wales Centre for Public Policy report in presenting the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2024-2030 be noted.
- (3) T H A T having regard to comments made at the meeting, Cabinet be requested to consider the following –
 - To look at alternative funding options that climate bonds represent;
 - To look at the additional possibilities with planning considerations that the report refers to; and
 - To consider holding climate conversation events across wards within communities in the Vale of Glamorgan in order to speak with residents, to seek their views on what they consider need to be looked at in their areas and to raise public awareness of the Plan.
- (4) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee's thanks be extended to the Wales Centre for Public Policy for their consideration of the Carbon Management Plan.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (3) To enable Cabinet to consider the comments of the Committee.
- (4) To extend thanks to the Wales Centre for Public Policy for their valuable input.

PRESENTATION: CUSTOMER RELATIONS SERVICE UPDATE –

The Operational Manager for Customer Relations provided an overview of the current situation in the service and the operational challenges in the short and medium term. In referring to interventions that had been put in place, the

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Operational Manager provided detail in relation to maximising the service's performance, continuing to evaluate high demand and supporting digital projects and strategic outcomes. With regard to the management of resources he said this had included working in conjunction with HR to support colleagues on short and long term absences to return to normal working and they had also worked hard to recruit and train new Customer Relations staff with 7 permanent, full-time resources starting between July and September which had helped stabilise the vacancy rate. Although there was work to be done the service had still received for example 91 % satisfaction levels with the statistics showing Very Helpful (61%) Helpful (18%) Average (12%) and 89% Extremely Knowledgeable (32%) Very Knowledgeable (21%) and Knowledgeable (34%). Following a comment from Councillor Dr. Johnson that it was difficult to scrutinise in detail the presentation update without any prior knowledge of its content, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Committee receives a further update in respect of the Customer Relations Service in the format of a written report in six months' time.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the information provided at the meeting and in order to apprise Committee.

AUDIT WALES: FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW OF THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL JULY 2024 (DCR) –

As part of the Council's annual audit work programme for 2023/24, the Auditor General for Wales undertook a review of the Council's financial sustainability.

The review was undertaken to help fulfil the Auditor General's duties under section 17 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 (the 2004 Act). The review may also inform a study for improving value for money under section 41 of the 2004 Act, and or an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The review sought to provide assurance that the Council had proper arrangements to support its financial sustainability.

The Audit Wales' Review concluded that, "Overall, whilst having arrangements for the short to medium term, the Council lacks a long-term plan and regular assessments of the impact of decisions to support its long-term financial sustainability." The Head of Service / Section 151 officer advised that there had been no surprises to the Council and he had been content with the recommendations.

The key findings of the review (Appendix A to the report) were reported as follows:

- The Council had arrangements in place to manage its financial resilience in the short to medium term, but its longer term approach was less certain due to being at an early stage in its transformation agenda;
- The Council had a clear approach to manage its financial position over the short to medium term which was well-understood by senior officers and

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Members. The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) contained reasonable assumptions and forecasts;

- Although the Council understood its financial position, a limited evidence base and a mixed track record in delivering savings meant this understanding might be limited in depth and accuracy;
- The Council had clear arrangements for reporting its financial position, but this did not include an understanding of the impact of delivering on its objectives nor how it affected the longer term.

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

"R1: We have identified some weaknesses in how the Council plans its approach to financial sustainability in the medium to long-term. To address this, the Council should improve its long term planning to determine how it will address its funding gap for the length of its plan to support service transformation and promote long term financial sustainability.

R2: To report on the impact of its financial approach, the Council should develop reporting arrangements to provide members with the impact of its financial position and MTFP on local communities and delivery of its well-being objectives. To report on the impact of its financial approach, the Council should develop reporting arrangements to provide members with the impact of its financial position and MTFP on local communities and delivery of its well-being objectives."

In response to the recommendations, the Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer had developed an action plan which would be progressed by the Council and 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 Council's regulatory improvement areas through quarterly performance monitoring arrangements. This would be supplemented with a six 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 enquired as to whether there was any scope in future Medium Term Financial Plans for details on the savings proposals that were rejected in order to provide a greater understanding of the proposals and the impacts for the budget. The Head of Finance said he would consider the suggestions and how they could be added to the process.

The Chair also asked if EIAs could be published and shared with Members.

Councillor Carroll raised his concern regarding the Audit Wales conclusion that the Council lacked a long term plan and enquired what actions were being taking to resolve this. In response the Head of Service said that work was underway with regard to the reshaping programme developing into a more transformational

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approach with reshaping initiatives being proposed to balance budgets over the mid and long term. He further advised that the generous settlements from Welsh Government for 2021/22 meant that the reshaping programme was pushed back with 2023/24 being the first significant savings programme for a number of years. For 2024/25 a similar programme had been prepared but challenges were recognised in delivering it.

Following discussion, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the findings from Audit Wales' Review of the Council's Financial Sustainability (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.
- (2) T H A T the report be referred to Governance and Audit Committee and thereafter to Cabinet for their oversight and endorsement of the proposed Council actions (as contained within Appendix B to the report) to address the recommendations.
- (3) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider sharing with Members the EIAs that have been drawn up to support savings proposals in order that Members can see how the savings proposed impact local communities.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2&3) To ensure the Council responds appropriately and implements areas of improvement as identified by Audit Wales.

HYBRID PLATFORM MEETING SOLUTION (HLDS / MO) –

In 2021, the Council implemented a new Hybrid Meetings system to comply with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act), contracting Civico for three years from 1st October, 2021.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services in presenting the report, by way of background advised that on 17th November, 2022, a report to Cabinet highlighted issues with the software and recommended regression testing, which later revealed several significant issues prior to and during testing as reported to Cabinet on 8th June, 2023. An accompanying Part II report at that time also outlined steps to ensure compliance with statutory requirements for hybrid meetings. Cabinet had subsequently referred the reports to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration. It was noted that Civico had developed and tested the hybrid meeting system throughout 2022 but faced ongoing technical difficulties. Failures at a Full Council meeting in September 2022 had led to

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further testing through Autumn / Winter 2022, but issues persisted, as later reported to Cabinet in June 2023.

Both parties had agreed to end the contract with the matter being finalised in February 2024 by letter however, the report before Committee also provided details in regard to lessons learned to date.

Given the Council's statutory obligations under the 2021 Act, a new provider had subsequently been appointed to ensure a compliant hybrid meeting platform was in place for Council meetings.

There being no comments on the report it was

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the position as outlined within the report be noted and considered together with the data provided in the Part II report later on the agenda.

(2) T H A T the work undertaken to date in respect of the Council's contract with its current Hybrid meeting platform supplier, VP-AV, be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

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 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.

HYBRID PLATFORM MEETING SOLUTION (HLDS / MO) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12 AND 14) –

Having regard to the content of the Part I report considered earlier in the meeting the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided Committee with further details that were confidential in nature.

It was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the comprehensive reflection of the work and discussions undertaken with the Council's previous Hybrid Platform meeting supplier, Civico, and the decision to work with a new Hybrid software supplier, VP-AV be noted.

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(2) T H A T the work undertaken to date in respect of the Council's contract with its current Hybrid meeting platform supplier, VP-AV be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.