

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 19th February, 2025.

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.M. Hanks, Dr. I.J. Johnson, B. Loveluck-Edwards and N.J. Wood.

Also present: Councillors J. Aviet, I. Buckley, L. Burnett and E. Williams.

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 R. Fisher and H.C Hamilton.

MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 18th December, 2024 and 15th January, 2025 be approved as a correct record,

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Franks declared an interest in item 6 budget proposals 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30 proposals for consultation advising that he had dispensation from the Standards Committee to speak only on matters as a trustee of Dinas Powys Library and activity centre.

PAY POLICY 2025/26 (REF) –

Cabinet on 6th February, 2025 had referred the revised Pay Policy to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to its final consideration and approval by Full Council on 10th March, 2025. The Operational manager for Employee Services advised the Committee that a number of changes had been made within the document in particular having regard to paragraph 4.4 of the report. The pay policy also referenced a number of benefits for example shared cost of AVC schemes with

staff being able to purchase additional pensions if required, the Council's cycle to work scheme which had recently been agreed on a permanent basis in order for staff to be able to purchase bicycles together with updated figures in respect of the role of the chief executive officer as well as updates on salary scales based on the 2024 pay awards.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently,

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and the details provided by the officer at the meeting.

VALE 2030 - DRAFT VALE OF GLAMORGAN CORPORATE PLAN 2025-30
(CX) –

The report set out how the Vale 2030, the draft Corporate Plan (the Plan) 2025-30 (attached at Appendix A to the report) had been developed, the outcome of the consultation and the subsequent changes to the Plan. The Director of Corporate Resources in presenting the report advised that the recommendations of the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) undertaken in November 2024 which had reported to Cabinet on 6th February, 2025 had shaped changes to the Vale 2030, Corporate Plan 2025-30. The Vale 2030 also detailed five new Well-being Objectives and the activities that would be undertaken in 2025-30 to deliver those objectives.

The commitments within Vale 2030 would be reflected in Annual Directorate Plans together with a suite of performance measures which showed how the different Council service areas would contribute to the delivery of the five Well-being Objectives. Work had commenced to develop Directorate Plans which would be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Committees in March / April together with proposed service improvement targets for 2025-26.

Publishing the Council's Well-being Objectives at the start of the financial year would enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations under the performance duties of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WFGA), both of which placed specific duties on the Council in relation to objective setting and reporting. Under the WFGA, the Council was required to publish its Well-being Objectives by 31st March each year and to keep these under review.

The Operational Manager for Corporate Strategy and Insight drew Committees attention to the number of comments received as a result of the consultation that had been undertaken in Autumn 2024 which had shaped the document. Although she said not all objectives had been commented on by all respondents, a number of the comments had now been included in the appendices referring to for example reference to the capacity and financial challenges facing the Council. Based on the

consultation and the panel performance assessment, it had also been considered appropriate to change the title of the document as some comments received considered the title to be unclear for the public with the new title being considered to be more engaging.. A number of the sections in the document had also been separated to provide more focus. In conclusion the officer further informed Committee of the number of positive comments that had been received relating to the support the Vale Council provided to vulnerable people and the youths of the Vale.

In referring to the next steps the Director reiterated that in the new arrangements five directorate plans would be reported to cabinet and the scrutiny committees and discussions had also been held with the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice chairs group and group leaders as to the proposals for monitoring the plan going forward together. An annual statement at the beginning of the year would also be produced which would detail what was to be progressed with particular priority in the forthcoming year.

The Chair said that she was fully aware, following the consultation, that a lot of the feedback had been acted upon which she said was very positive and in her view the move to five directorate plans made complete sense. The Chair also commented that she was pleased that the current iteration of the corporate plan was creating outcomes that were measurable, using both quantitative and qualitative data to measure the progress against the plan, and was looking forward to seeing what could be achieved going forward.

Councillor Carroll said that he had concerns with regard to the document stating that there appeared to be no reference in the document to productivity which in his view was the way in which improvements should be made. In response the Director said that the corporate plan needed to do a number of things in particular referencing improvements to well-being and identifying in the strategic context for services of how the council worked and how it delivered its services. Although the use of the word productivity was not specifically referred to in the document he said this was covered within several actions references to digital strategy the use of digital services, artificial intelligence (AI), service transformation work and the target operating model theme of Reshaping. .

Councillor Carroll however, commented that in his view there was too much emphasis on other things rather than the services being provided and that the local authority was not there to address radical ideology but to provide core services and he felt the plan going forward should be more focused on service provision.

Councillor Johnson said that in his view there had been a dramatic improvement in the plan since the first draft following the consultation undertaken and that it was important that as a local authority the well-being of every single person in the Vale was considered and queried the work being undertaken in relation to the new customer relations strategy and the strategic equalities plan. The Director said it was

timely that a new customer relations strategy was being prepared and that the brilliant basics work being undertaken was a major piece of work. There was also a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a strategic equalities plan which was currently being redrafted.

Councillor Goodjohn in referring to objective five referred to within the plan said that in his view some of the wording of some of the actions was difficult to quantify and difficult to identify where the change was coming from. He asked if the wording could be strengthened and clarified, in particular he said in relation to the comments around the Welsh language and the Customer relations strategy. He also asked that further consideration be given to the document being made more user friendly and that it also detailed more clearly for the public the improvements that the Council was trying to make.

The Director said that he would re-look at the outcomes of objective 5 with the intent to develop a more visionary focus and reflect more innovative ways of working that the Council planned to progress.

The Leader (with the committees permission to speak) said the plan was about delivering better services for residents and in referring to page 17 of the appendix said this section talked about changing how the council worked and the transformation agenda which brought the plan to life. It was also important she added to look at ways to deliver services, to ensure that the public consultation assisted the way forward and emphasised the importance of diversity and inclusion as a vision as not everyone within the area she added lived the same type of life. The council had to understand the challenges that all residents faced so it could work with the public to ensure services were delivered as effectively as possible.

Councillor Johnson said he had appreciated the amendments made to the document and welcomed the detail in relation to the data. He said it was important to be ambitious and to consider outcomes by setting baselines with the scrutiny committees having an important role to play in looking closer over the years at the data when received, to understand how good and representative it truly was.

Council Franks commented that it appeared that every time a new plan was developed there was criticism of the previous plan.

The Leader in response said that the council was not saying that other plans were flawed but that things were of their time and that it was now timely to do things in a different way. The Council she added had faced austerity over the years and the experience gained as a result provided opportunities for years to come and commenting that it was important to work together as the difference that could make could be significant. The panel performance assessment had also been arranged in order to assist the process with experts from across the UK and a considerable number of people having considered the plan which had been widely accepted and on a number of occasions praised.

Following the discussion it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

T H A T the comments of the Committee on the draft plan be referred to Cabinet with Cabinet being requested to consider the following -

- the wording within the document in relation to objective 5 relating to goals and in particular those of the Welsh Language and the new customer services strategy be strengthened and clarified,

- further consideration be given to making the document more user friendly and

- the improvements that the Council was trying to make be detailed more clearly within the plan.

Reason for recommendations

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

INITIAL BUDGET 2025/26 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025/26 TO 2029/30 PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION (REF) –

Cabinet on 16th January 2025 had referred the report to all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration and debate, with all the Scrutiny Committees' views being referred for scrutiny by the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee and for a composite response to be developed and referred back to Cabinet on 27th February 2025. The Head of Finance/section 151 Officer provided a presentation to the Committee highlighting a number of areas including the provisional settlement from Welsh Government which showed a slight increase to previous forecasts. In presenting the report the section 151 Officer also highlighted a number of cost pressures facing the council in particular having regard to the impact on budgets relating to the increase in demand relating to Looked After Children, Additional Learning Needs in schools, Home to School transport and the growing adult population which were all having an impact on the Council's budget.

The Chair queried the funding formula that local authorities received for services and asked how this worked. The Head of Service in response said that the formulas had been in place for a number of years and attempted to assess need for the provision of services for the Vale of Glamorgan. The Council was continuing to lobby Welsh Government with regard to the way funding was allocated as the formulas did not reflect the needs of residents of the Vale in particular having regard to the demographics of the Vale of Glamorgan for adult services and the budgetary and complex needs issues facing schools.

The Chair in referring to the references that had been received from other Scrutiny Committees, for the Committee's consideration as lead committee, suggested that

the references be forwarded to cabinet for further consideration with the Committee's approval.

Councillor Franks endorsing the comments regarding how funding was allocated enquired if the Head of Service could provide more detail in relation to the cost pressures referred to in the report. The Chair advising that some of the cost pressures related to the remit of other scrutiny committees where officers would have been in attendance advised Councillor Franks to raise his concerns with the relevant Directors outside of the Committee meeting. In response to Councillor Franks query relating to unplanned reserves for 2024/25 the Head of Service said this was also of concern to himself advising that the finance team were working closely with all directorates, in particular in relation to forecasting demand as well as work being undertaken with regard to Children's Services where there had been an unprecedented demand for services for Looked After Children.

The Chair in noting the predictions for the reserves sought clarity as to how the Council managed its reserves at a safe level. The Head of service said that the Council held a general fund to cover unknown risks, specific reserves for risks such as pay pressures, legal challenges, non delivery of any savings proposals and also reserves to enable investment in the future transformation of services. It was important he said to ensure a very clear remit of why the Council held reserves was developed.

Councillor Franks queried the reference in the report to a commitment of monies to be paid in compensation to the City Deal being advised by the Head of service that he was unable to provide any information in regard to this matter owing to its confidential nature.

Councillor Carroll in referring to the proposed Council Tax increase of 6.9% asked whether this was solely related to the demand for services which the Head of Service confirmed this to be the case reiterating the impacts on the Council budget in relation to the looked after children service, additional learning needs in schools, home to school transport, and the demands on service with regard to the growing adult population in the Vale. Councillor Carroll also queried what the Council was doing to measure productivity with the Head of Finance commenting that the reshaping transformation programme was about doing things differently and more efficiently with resources having to be moved around year on year.

In response to a further query from Councillor Carroll regarding whether a home working assessment for employees had been undertaken and whether home working had impacted budgets, the Head of service said that no specific work to assess the impact of homeworking had been done. The Council he said relied on its managers and senior officers to look at the mix of hybrid and homeworking and presence in the office.

Councillor Johnson having regard to the report said that the main issue was the shortfall of funding from both the Welsh and UK Governments together with the fact that the Council had so much demand on its services. In referring to the reference to five staffing positions being deleted and the restructuring of the ICT service he sought clarification as to whether five posts were additional to the report that had recently been presented to Cabinet on the service area and also with regard to future Welsh language translation services proposed to be undertaken via Amazon as opposed to the SLA with Cardiff Council asked for further information on this proposal. The Director of Corporate Resources in response said that the five posts identified in the report were additional to the information outlined in the recent Cabinet report for the service area and that he would provide the detailed information to Councillor Johnson outside of the meeting. With regard to the use of Amazon for translation purposes this related to the need to be more cost effective when translating social media posts and press releases as opposed to other translation services covered within the SLA with Cardiff. There being no further discussion it was agreed

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the references from the Scrutiny Committees Environment and Regeneration, Homes and Safe Communities and Learning and Skills be referred to Cabinet for consideration with the Committees approval.
- (2) TH AT the comments of the Committee be referred to Cabinet in particular having regard to the need to ensure continued lobbying of the Welsh and UK Governments with regard to the disproportionate funding allocation via funding formulas to the Vale of Glamorgan.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) For Cabinet's consideration.
- (2) In order that further consideration could be given to the use of the current formulas for funding which were disproportionate to the needs of residents of the Vale.

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROPOSALS 2025/26 TO 2029/30 (REF) –

Cabinet on 16th January 2025 had referred the report to all Scrutiny Committees for their consideration and debate, with the view that any recommendations of the Scrutiny Committees be passed to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee in order for their views to be forwarded to Cabinet. The Chair advised that no comments or recommendations on this item had been received from the Committees following their considerations.

The section 151 officer / Head of Finance advised Committee that the report set out the current 5 year Capital Programme for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 with the shortlisted Capital Bids that had been submitted for the period referenced at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report.

It was noted that the Council was facing significant pressures in relation to price inflation and the cost of living crisis which had seen increases in the costs of materials and labour. This had impacted on the current schemes within the Capital Programme and also the funding available to fund new schemes within the Capital Programme. The total value of capital schemes over the next 5 years was £399.7m and was summarised within the table in the report. This included £15.6m for the Band B Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, £85.5m for Education pipeline schemes and £228.8m for the Housing Improvement Programme.

Having considered the report there being no comments made the Committee

RECOMMENDED –

T H A T the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents contained within the report.