

## SHARED REGULATORY SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2024.

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

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

Representing Bridgend County Borough Council – Councillors M. Lewis and H. Williams.

Representing Cardiff City and County Council – Councillors N. Mackie (Chair) and M. Michael.

Representing the Vale of Glamorgan Council – Councillors P. Drake and R. Sivagnanam (Vice-Chair).

(a) Announcement –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

(b) Minutes –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2024 be approved as a correct record,

(c) Declarations of Interest –

No declarations of interest were received.

(d) Shared Regulatory Services Overview and Update Report (DEH) –

The report apprised the Committee of the work of the service and progress toward completing the actions contained in the Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) Business Plans.

The key sections of the report were covered and presented by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, in conjunction with her colleagues, namely the three Operational Managers for the Shared Regulatory Service, and the Operational Manager – Accountancy. They covered a number of areas, including sickness absence, staff retention across SRS ('Growing our Own' approach and regulatory

apprenticeships), the financial position for Quarter 2, performance monitoring, through to the Port Health Plan 2024-25, Food Standards Agency audits, safeguarding the vulnerable (such as the enforcement of new offences for supplying corrosive substances to the under 18s), Licensing enforcement, recent awards (such as around the work of SRS and partners on dealing with illegal tobacco supply and money lending), working with business and the local economy and examples of recent enforcement activity, amongst others.

Both the Chair and Vice Chair wished to share their and the Committee's appreciation and thanks for the efforts of the various teams and leadership that form the SRS in their work in supporting and safeguarding local business, communities and others, despite the challenges they faced in terms of financial constraints and undertaking significant change, such as through embracing digital transformation principles to make the very best use of resources.

The Vice Chair asked about the morale of the SRS teams, and was informed that despite their large workloads, SRS staff remained committed, driven and continued to firmly believe in protecting public health and consumers. She also referred to the potential benefits of digital transformation and asked about the impact of, and reception to, this change by service users, residents and businesses. It was explained that the digitalisation of contact, services, etc. had received positive feedback from these groups, in terms of them wishing to see greater digital access to services, to make payments online, etc.

There being no further questions, and after considering the report, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted and agreed.
- (2) T H A T the 2024-25 Port Health Plan attached at Appendix 3 to the report be approved.
- (3) T H A T the Head of Shared Regulatory Services be authorised to make administrative amendments to the Port Health Plan 2024-25, should the need arise.

#### Reasons for decisions

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To ensure that the Shared Regulatory Service had the necessary arrangements in place to deliver its obligations in respect of Port Health.
- (3) To enable minor changes to be made, should the need arise during the lifetime of the Port Health Plan, without the need for it to be brought back to the Joint Committee.

(e) Shared Regulatory Services Fees and Charges 2025-26 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, which set out the proposed fees to be charged by Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) in the 2025-26 financial year, for a range of licensing and other services. The Joint Committee was asked to approve the recommendations made with respect to the setting of those fees for which it had responsibility.

For completeness, the accompanying schedule to the report also set out fees which SRS would be required to charge during the 2025-26 financial year but which were set by external bodies such as the Association of Port Health Authorities and the UK and Welsh Governments.

As part of this annual fee setting process, reference was always made to the Consumer Prices Index (CPIH) for the previous August when setting the rate of increase, and this was consistent with a range of governmental fees and benefits. The CPIH for August 2024 was 3.1% (compared with a rate of 6.3% in August 2023), and this had been applied to the majority of the fees contained in Part One of the Fees and Charges Annex to the report. The exceptions to this were also set out in the report, such as pest control, licensing of wedding venues and some animal related licensing, where an increase in excess of 3.1% was proposed.

The Committee, after considering the report, subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the SRS charging and fee proposals, as set out in Part One to the Annex of the report be agreed, and agree to their implementation as follows:

- a. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, with the exception of
- b. The new all-Wales Special Procedures Licensing fees which would take effect immediately.

Reason for decision

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

(f) Shared Regulatory Services Budget Savings (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Head of Shared Regulatory Services, outlined to the Committee the background and context to the funding of Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) by the three partner Authorities.

The savings journey for SRS was described, from the significant savings made by its formation through to more recent ones in 2022-23, and again in 2023-24.

The 2024-25 Shared Regulatory Services Agreed Budget stands at £8.813 million, with a full-time equivalent staffing in the region of 175. This means that 11 years on from the Atkins baseline assessment, despite inflation, annual pay awards and similar pressures, these essential, statutory services were being delivered for £1.5 million (15%) less budget and by 82 (32%) less staff. Also, over this time, the

Service had taken on additional responsibilities under new legislation and areas of regulation.

As a result of the very challenging financial outlook going into 2025-26, the partner authorities now required a consideration of options for further savings to be made by the service. It was envisaged that these savings would be taken from the core services budget which was the responsibility of the Joint Committee. These options and key considerations would be set out in the linked report to be introduced in Part II of the Joint Committee meeting

The Committee, after considering the report and the points outlined above, subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the content of the report be noted, with a view to decisions being made on the Shared Regulatory Services Budget Savings report under Part II of the agenda.

Reason for decision

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

(g) Shared Regulatory Services Audit Wales 2024 Audit Plan (HOF) –

The report, presented by the Operational Manager – Accountancy and by the Audit Manager, Audit Wales, provided details regarding how Audit Wales would complete the work in question in January 2025. The Committee was requested to consider and note the content of this report and the proposed Audit Plan, at Appendix A to the report.

Key points of the report were highlighted to the Committee, such as the audit approach, the materiality levels, the main audit risks, the audit fee and the audit timetable.

The Committee, after considering the report and appendix, subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the content of the report and appendix be noted.

Reason for decision

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

(h) 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.

(i) Shared Regulatory Services Budget Savings (DEH) (Exempt Information – Paragraphs 12, 13, 14 and 15) –

The report outlined the background and context to the funding of Shared Regulatory Services (SRS) by the three partner Authorities.

As requested by the partner Authorities, several scenarios were outlined to explore the feasibility and impact of savings being achieved (of the 2024-25 core services budget), ahead of the 2025-26 financial year.

Members discussed the various scenarios, raising a number of questions and comments on these. Due to this, it was decided that the requirement to set a balanced budget by 31st December, 2024 as outlined in the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Working Agreement (JWA) be waived for this year, and an extraordinary meeting be scheduled for late January 2025 (date to be confirmed) allowing feedback from the partner Authorities in order to ratify the Shared Regulatory Service budget for 2025-26.

The Committee, after considering the report, subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the content of the report in the context of agreeing the level of budget savings required of the Shared Service in 2025-26 be noted.

(2) T H A T the requirement to set a balanced budget by 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2024 as outlined in the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Working Agreement (JWA) be waived for this year, and an extraordinary meeting be scheduled for late January 2025 (date to be confirmed) allowing feedback from the partner Authorities to ratify the Shared Regulatory Service budget for 2025-26.

Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) To enable an informed decision to be made on the level of savings required by the partner Authorities, while balancing the tight lead time before the savings needed to take effect, and allowing for the implications of the Welsh Government's Settlement for Local Government to be fully understood for each of the partner Authorities.