

Meeting of:	Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee
Date of Meeting:	Tuesday, 25 July 2023
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Strengthening Communities - The role of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee
Purpose of Report:	To set out some of the key issues that will help the Committee to determine areas of focus and to plan its future work programme
Report Owner:	Rob Thomas, Chief Executive
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring, Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Due to the corporate nature of this report, no specific Ward Member consultation has been undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is matter for executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report sets out a number of issues of relevance to the Committee to assist in developing its future work programme and encouraging more representatives from the voluntary sector to join the Committee. • The report highlights a number of Audit Wales reports that will have relevance to the Committee and the approach being taken to progress an integrated response to the reports, including engagement with stakeholders. • The report also highlights the need to review the Voluntary Sector Compact between the Council and Glamorgan Voluntary Services and work already underway. • The report highlights the potential for the work of the Committee to be aligned more closely to the Council's Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 and the critical challenges of Project Zero, the cost of living crisis and organisational resilience 	

Recommendations

1. That Committee notes the work being undertaken to review the Voluntary Sector Compact and the potential to shape the Committee's future work programme and encourage more voluntary sector representation on the Committee.
2. That Committee endorses the approach outlined in this report for engaging with a range of stakeholders to determine how the Council can work better with the third sector and social enterprises and increase community resilience and develop an integrated response to the four Audit Wales reports detailed in this report.
3. That Committee supports the approach outlined in this report to align the work of the Committee more closely with the critical challenges in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan, the work of the PSB and the Council's transformation programme.
4. That this report and the comments of the Committee be referred to Cabinet for their consideration.
5. That this report is circulated to all members for information.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To advise the Committee of the work being undertaken to review the Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services and the opportunity for this work to shape the Committee's work programme and to encourage more voluntary sector representatives.
2. To develop an integrated response and approach to the recommendations in the four Audit Wales reports detailed in this report.
3. To seek endorsement from the Committee for developing a future work programme aligned to the critical challenges in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan, the work of the PSB and the Council's transformation programme.
4. To ensure Cabinet are fully apprised of the discussions and are able to consider these as part of the Council's strategic work, including that on the Annual Delivery Plan and approach to the budget setting process.
5. To ensure all members are aware of the direction being taken by the Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The terms of reference for the committee as set out in section 14 of the Council's constitution are:

(1) To refer, as appropriate, reports and recommendations to the Council's Cabinet and the Executives of Voluntary Sector organisations.

- (2) To appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair from amongst the eight Members of the Council and an Honorary Vice-Chair from amongst the seven representatives from the Voluntary Sector
- (3) To advise the Council of the needs, views and concerns of the Voluntary Sector.
- (4) To report on the work of those organisations grant funded by the Council, either in full or in part.
- (5) To act as a consultative forum where the Voluntary Sector and the Council may, in partnership, put forward policy proposals for discussion and decision.
- (6) To facilitate and promote joint working between the Council and the Voluntary Sector.
- (7) In accordance with the statutory provisions, only Members of the Council will have voting rights. However, where there is no consensus, this will be reported in the minutes and placed before the Cabinet prior to a decision being taken.
- (8) To review the Compact and associated Annual Work Plan and to monitor and report on progress made towards achieving the actions contained within the Compact and the Plan.
- (9) To consider reports of the Cabinet and other Committees of the Council which have a bearing and impact on the Voluntary Sector.

- 1.2 In 2017 the Council agreed the current Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) and it is now time to review the compact.
- 1.3 At the request of the Council, Audit Wales undertook an audit and published a report [Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working | Audit Wales](#) in July 2021. The purpose of the report was to build on the work undertaken with the third sector during the covid pandemic. The report was reported to this Committee in February 2022 and to Cabinet in March 2022.
- 1.4 In the past year concerns have been raised about a lack of agenda items for the Committee, a reduction in attendance from officers from different parts of the Council as a result of changes in personnel and also vacancies with regards to the voluntary sector representatives on the Committee. However, work has continued between the Council and voluntary sector across a wide range of services and projects, with the Council valuing the contribution that the voluntary sector makes in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is therefore opportune to review the arrangements and focus for this Committee to ensure it is aligned and involved with key Council developments and has a voice and ability to influence

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The Council has strong relationships with a range of third sector and community organisations, and this has strengthened in recent years. Work is underway to reflect on the learning from the pandemic and cost of living crisis and articulate a vision for how the Council can work to support communities in partnership with other organisations, including the third sector and Town and Community Councils in new ways. This is described in the report to Cabinet of 20th July 2023 on the [Financial Strategy](#) (paragraph 2.84 onwards refer).

2.2 This work will complement the work underway to reimagine how services can be provided, and communities strengthened, for example, the Public Services Board work on tackling deprivation and the Llantwit Major Food project. Place making will also be a key part of this work. It is important that this Committee has the opportunity to be part of this work.

2.3 This report sets out a number of proposals with regards to the following issues:

- Ensuring that the work of the Committee helps shape the way the Council works and strengthens the relationship between the Council and the third sector.
- Ensuring an appropriate response to the 2021 Audit Wales report recommendations regarding working with the Third Sector.
- Addressing the vacancies for additional Voluntary Sector representation on the Committee.
- The need for a forward programme of agenda items for the Committee.
- The need to review the Voluntary Sector Compact with GVS.

Audit Wales Reports

2.4 In recent years, Audit Wales have undertaken a series of studies at both a local and national level which have relevance to the Council's relationship with the third sector.

2.5 The Audit Wales report [Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working | Audit Wales](#) identified the following proposals for improvement.

- The Council should reconsider the checklist set out in Appendix 1 of the Audit Wales report, in particular the following sections, vision, corporate strategy, Compact, understanding engagement with the third sector, designing services, training and performance review.
- As part of the review of the compact, the Council should reflect how it wants to work with the third sector to help deliver its strategic recovery priorities, how it can build on the positive work during the pandemic and consider how it can strengthen its application of the sustainable development principle.
- The Council should consider the level of resources and investment required to achieve a more collaborative way of working with the third sector and reflect this in its Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- The Council should consider what actions it can take to help the third sector adjust to a more collaborative way of working.

2.6 In March 2022 Cabinet agreed with the proposal to embark on a programme of engagement potentially facilitated by a third party. This would enable the Council to reflect on and clarify what it wanted the future relationship with the third sector to look like and also for the third sector to consider its contribution and how the Council can help facilitate a stronger, more sustainable and

meaningful relationship with the sector. It was envisaged that this work would involve, all Council Services, Voluntary Sector and Joint Liaison Committee, voluntary and community organisations including housing associations, Glamorgan Voluntary Services and Public Services Board Partners. It was recognised that this would be a long-term project and that a small Task and Finish Group should be established to plan this work.

- 2.7** Due to capacity issues this work has not been progressed as originally intended. However, the Council continues to work closely with the third sector across all Directorates for example on food poverty, loneliness and isolation, warm spaces and shared prosperity. Work with the third sector includes commissioning services, working in partnership and delivering grant funding. The third sector also continue to be represented through GVS on a number of strategic partnerships. However, there is still a need to ensure that the Council meaningfully responds to the recommendations in the report that remain relevant and use these to shape the future relationship with the sector.
- 2.8** In addition to the report on working with the third sector in the Vale, Audit Wales has now published three all Wales reports focused on the challenges of tackling poverty. The reports focus on leadership and information, opportunities to work with social enterprise and the importance of community resilience.
- 2.9** The first report [Time for Change – Poverty in Wales](#) was previously reported to this Committee in January 2023 as part of a report on the cost of living crisis. The recommendations for local authorities include:
- Local strategies, targets and performance reporting for tackling and alleviating poverty.
 - Leadership on the poverty agenda.
 - Experience mapping to create inclusive services for people in poverty.
 - A single web landing page for people seeking help.
 - Streamlining and improving application and information services.
 - Complying with the socio-economic duty.
- 2.10** Progress has been made across all of the recommendations, but further work will be required as the cost of living crisis continues and residents continue to struggle.
- 2.11** The report [A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises](#) was published in December 2022 and is the second report on the challenge of poverty in Wales. The overall conclusion of the report is that local authorities are not effectively working with Social Enterprises to maximise their impact, make better use of resources and improve services for people and communities. A response to the report has not yet been developed but in summary the recommendations are for all local authorities to:
- Self-evaluate current Social Enterprise engagement, management, performance and practice.

- Identify opportunities to improve joint working.
- Jointly draft and implement an action plan with timeframes and responsibilities clearly set-out to address the gaps and weaknesses identified through the self evaluation.
- Formally approve the completed Action Plan.
- Regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees.
- Revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance.

2.12 The Audit Wales report [Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance](#) was published in January 2023. This is the third and final report in the series of reports focusing on the challenge of poverty in Wales. The overall conclusion of the report is that local authorities face a challenging and uncertain financial future but find it difficult to empower people and communities to be more self-reliant and less dependent on services. In summary the recommendations are for all local authorities to undertake the following and the Council is currently developing a response to the recommendations:

- Strengthen community resilience and support people to be more self-reliant, local authorities need to ensure they have the right arrangements and systems in place.
- Self-evaluate current engagement, management, performance and practice and identify improvements.
- Draft and formally approve an Action Plan arising from undertaking an evaluation exercise.
- Regularly report, monitor and evaluate performance at relevant scrutiny committees.
- Revise actions and targets in light of the authority's evaluation and assessment of its performance.

2.13 The Council wishes to take forward its response to all four Audit Wales reports as one programme of work that recognises the importance of working across a variety of sectors and the benefits of collaboration. The first step in this work will be a programme of engagement facilitated by a third party. The proposed approach builds on the work undertaken in line with the Council's Public Participation Strategy and is consistent with the five ways of working as detailed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This work will also be part of the new approach to reshaping our services with an increased focus on community. The Council is keen for the Committee to be part of this work.

Voluntary Sector Compact

2.14 The Council signed a Voluntary Sector Compact with Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) in 2017 which had its foundations in an earlier compact agreed in 2008 which also involved NHS organisations and the then Vale Centre for Voluntary Services. The Compact was due for renewal in 2021 but this has been delayed due to a number of factors including the covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.15** The current Compact between the Council and GVS reflects the considerable partnership working between GVS and the Council and this has continued and further developed with GVS taking on the management of a number of buildings to deliver and support a range of community services. The existing compact recognises the enormous contribution made to local communities, and the community as a whole, through voluntary action. It sets out clear definitions of the responsibilities and expectations of the Council and the voluntary sector in working together. The compact provides a framework for ongoing collaboration and the agreement is built on the principles of integrity, trust and mutual respect.
- 2.16** Both the Council and GVS are keen to build on the existing compact but also wish to ensure that a new compact reflects the many changes that have taken place since 2017 and also the significant challenges of climate change and the cost of living crisis.
- 2.17** As part of work to review the compact GVS, are contacting all their members and asking for their views on the current compact and what needs to change. Feedback on this exercise should be available in October and will inform the drafting of a revised compact in the Autumn as well as potentially the work programme of this Committee and how the Council responds to relevant recommendations in the Audit Wales reports.
- 2.18** It is intended that a new compact will reflect how both organisations have developed and the future focus of that relationship and how it will also compliment work with our Town and Community Councils and social enterprises.
- 2.19** In line with the Committee's current terms of reference the Committee would continue to have a role to review the Compact and associated Annual Work Plan and to monitor and report on progress made towards achieving the actions contained within the Compact and the Plan.
- 2.20** When the Voluntary Sector Compact was reviewed in 2017, the terms of reference for the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee were also reviewed. The work which will be needed to develop the new compact and in addressing the Audit Wales reports also provides an opportunity to review the Committee's terms of reference and ensure there is appropriate alignment.
- 2.21** This is consistent with work being undertaken with scrutiny committees to ensure effective scrutiny, work with member champions, a new approach to working with the Equality Consultative Forum and work needed to review the Town and Community Council Charter.

Reviewing how we Work and Strengthen Communities

- 2.22** The Council has recently commenced consideration of the next phase of transformational activity, and this is reflected in the Council’s Financial Strategy report to Cabinet referenced above. Within that report, a series of transformation themes are proposed including ‘Strengthening Communities’.
- 2.23** Paragraph 2.87 of the Cabinet report describes this theme as follows. “The Council has strong relationships with a range of third sector and community organisations, and this has strengthened in recent years. Work is underway in to reflect on the learning from the pandemic and cost of living crisis and articulate a vision for how the organisation can work to support communities in partnership with other organisations, including town and community councils in new ways. This will complement the work underway across different parts of the Vale of Glamorgan to reimagine how services can be provided, and communities strengthened, for example, the Public Services Board work on tackling deprivation and the Llantwit Major Food project. Place making will be a key part of this work. This theme is a strong one within the Council’s Project Zero Challenge Plan which seeks to contribute to a zero carbon Wales by 2050 in addition to the Council’s target to be net zero by 2030.”
- 2.24** The way in which the Council operates in the future will need to be different from that of today, reflecting the different services, expectations and means of interacting both internally and externally. The Council’s Annual Delivery Plan 2023-24 details three critical challenges, these are:
- Cost of Living Crisis: supporting our residents, local organisations and business in the face of rising costs in particular around energy, food and housing.
 - Project Zero: responding to the climate and nature emergencies and delivering the commitments in our Climate Challenge Plan.
 - Organisational Resilience: ensuring that we can continue to adapt and provide our services despite the financial pressures and workforce challenges that we and many of our partner organisations face.
- 2.25** These challenges are likely to continue into 2024-25 and will strongly influence the Council in the medium-term. The Council recognises and values that these can only be met through a programme of change and by working in collaboration with other sectors and the community. The insight of this Committee into work being undertaken as part of these challenges would be beneficial.
- 2.26** Developing an improved and shared understanding across different sectors forms part of our work to develop greater insight together with better use of data and increased public engagement and consultation and to have a more evidence-based approach to our work.

- 2.27** It is important that the work of the Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee is aligned to this. It is proposed that in developing the Committee's work programme that consideration is given to agendas focusing on the Council's three critical challenges and the role of the voluntary sector in helping to successfully meet those challenges. This might mean for example one meeting focusing on work being undertaken by different organisations to support people through the cost of living crisis, the next meeting focusing on the challenges for the sector in decarbonising and how they can help meet our net zero target for 2050 and then a meeting focusing on how the Council and services can be more resilient through partnership working and understanding the long term needs of residents.
- 2.28** It is recognised that the sector is facing many challenges in terms of capacity and resources, and this is likely to impact on finding representatives of the sector to join the Committee. By taking a more integrated approach to reviewing the Voluntary Sector Compact, responding to the Audit Wales reports and setting work programme based agendas for this Committee it will be possible to address some of the concerns raised about vacant positions on the Committee, attendance at meetings and agendas. It will also ensure the work of the Committee is integral to work being undertaken as part of the Council's transformation programme to strengthen communities and to meet the critical challenges in the ADP.
- 2.29** In addition, it is proposed that the Committee has the opportunity to consider in more detail the work of key strategic partnerships including the Public Services Board and delivery of the new Well-being Plan. In particular the focus of work of the PSB on the climate and nature emergencies, working with our most deprived communities and becoming an Age Friendly Vale. Delivering these priorities will require the involvement of a range of stakeholders including the third sector.
- 2.30** The proposed programme of engagement looking at the third sector, social enterprises and community resilience will commence in the Autumn and will take place over a number of months. It will provide an opportunity to explore our current position/knowledge levels and ways of working and consider what needs to change, how and at what pace. This will include having a better understanding of work already taking place between the Council and the third sector, what works well, what needs to improve and where there are opportunities. This work will build on work being undertaken by GVS to consult with their members on the Voluntary Sector Compact and also the residents opinion survey being commissioned by the Council in the late summer.
- 2.31** In summary, it is proposed that the work to review the Voluntary Sector Compact continues, engagement is undertaken in response to the four Audit Wales reports and the outcomes of this together with other engagement and participation activities are used to shape the Committee's work programme. Work undertaken as part of the Council's transformation programme and to

meet the critical challenges will also shape the work of the Committee with the intention that a draft programme is developed for the Committee's next meeting

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 The proposals outlined in this report will assist the Council in contributing to the national Well-being Goals and the Council's own Well-being Objectives as detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-25. The proposed approach also embeds the five ways of working through involvement and collaboration to develop ways forward, to ensure a longer term thinking and more sustainable approach to how we work and with a more integrated programme of activity. It also places the third sector at the heart of the work being planned and strengthens their role and influence through the Committee. In terms of prevention as the work develops officers are keen to explore the opportunities for a more preventative approach and how the knowledge and experience of other sectors can assist, particularly with work around cost of living and climate change

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 The work outlined in this report and improved working with the third sector, social enterprises and Town and Community Councils will be critical for taking forward work on the climate and nature emergencies. To achieve net zero we need increased community engagement and close working with all sectors to share learning and expertise

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report

Employment

- 5.2 There are no employment implications as a direct result of this report

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3 There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as necessary as part of the wider work on strengthening our communities and responding to the Audit Wales reports

6. Background Papers

[Voluntary Sector Compact \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\) Voluntary Sector Joint Liaison Committee February 2017](#)

[Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution](#)

- [Vale of Glamorgan Council – Third Sector Partnership Working | Audit Wales July 2021](#)

[Ref from G&A - Third Sector Partnership Working \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\) Cabinet March 2022](#)

[Time for Change – Poverty in Wales Audit Wales November 2022](#)

- [Cost of Living Support \(valeofglamorgan.gov.uk\) Cabinet Report December 2022](#)
- [A Missed Opportunity – Social Enterprises Audit Wales December 2022](#)
- [Together We Can – Community Resilience and Self Reliance Audit Wales January 2022](#)