

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
9TH APRIL, 2025

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
31ST MARCH, 2025

“ LEARNING AND SKILLS DIRECTORATE PLAN 2025/26 (INCLUDING ACTIVITIES, PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND ASSOCIATED PERFORMANCE TARGETS) TO DELIVER VALE 2030, THE COUNCIL’S CORPORATE PLAN 2025-30 (DLS) –

The report presented for Members’ consideration the planned activities, performance measures and associated performance targets in the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan 2025-26 (attached at Appendix A). This Directorate Plan aligned primarily to the remit of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee. The other Directorate Plans were being considered by relevant Scrutiny Committees and their comments and recommendations were to be considered by the Corporate Performance and Resources Committee to form a composite reference to Cabinet on the five Directorate Plans for 2025-26. This approach broadly followed that taken in scrutinising the Council’s Revenue and Capital Budget proposals.

The Directorate Plans had been informed by the Council’s commitments in Vale 2030, the Council’s approved Corporate Plan (Full Council, 10th March, 2025) for the period 2025-30.

All Scrutiny Committees had considered the draft Corporate Plan (December 2024) and their views alongside that of a wide range of key stakeholders had informed the five new well-being objectives and 50 commitments detailed in Vale 2030 which was a five-year plan.

Progressing the activities and associated performance targets outlined in Directorate Plans would help to meet the Council’s statutory obligations under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFG). Both pieces of legislation placed specific duties on the Council in relation to reviewing and setting objectives, keeping performance under review and reporting on performance, with a focus on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

Scrutiny Committee Members were asked to review the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan 2025-26 (planned activities and proposed performance measures and associated targets) and how it would support delivery of the commitments and outcomes in Vale 2030.

Members were asked to refer any comments and recommendations with regards to the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan 2025-26 to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee to form a composite reference to Cabinet on the five Directorate Plans for 2025-26.

Councillor N. Marshallsea queried the 5% budget reductions for resources bases. In reply, the Learning & Skills Strategy & Performance Manager advised that it should be taken in context of the wider factors affecting schools. The reduction would be carefully managed in terms of mitigating any negative impacts.

Councillor Marshallsea asked how the use of Welsh language would be promoted to school staff. The Senior Corporate Performance Partner advised that there was opportunity for school staff to develop their Welsh language skills outside of normal working hours. Information on take up of training would be sought and shared with Members of the Committee. In addition, the Principal Improvement Partner stated the Central South Consortium had a planned programme of professional learning available to staff on a termly basis in terms of their Welsh. That was based on an annual survey undertaken around the competency of people's Welsh language skills. There was also a specific support available for Learning Support Assistants that could be provided on both a school and cluster level. Opportunities for professional development were available to English medium speakers and also to Welsh speakers that wanted to brush up on their skills.

It was noted that the Directorate Plan did not contain specific references to active travel plans for schools. In response, the Learning & Skills Strategy & Performance Manager advised that activities relating to active travel was a key focus particularly when it came to areas such as Project Zero. In addition, active travel is potentially picked up under another Directorate Plan as well as it being a day-to-day activity. Agreed information be collated on schools that participate in Active Travel to be shared with the Committee.

Councillor E. Goodjohn referred to actions relating to the risks associated to Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and queried what were the mitigating factors planned to reduce risk. He also added that the Council needed to allocate additional resources to the area of ALN. In reply, the Director of Learning and Skills stated that there was a focus on preventative measures to reduce demand on specialist resource bases. Therefore, the Council would work closely with schools to ensure that teachers had the abilities and competencies to support the majority of needs of pupils. To do that there was an intention to work with Headteachers to formulate a plan of action that would enable close working with lead officers for teaching and learning in schools.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried whether there had been consideration of health outcomes relating to tackling obesity and teaching basic life skills relating to cooking and healthy eating. The Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources replied that the Council undertook lots work in the area of healthy eating within schools which was a key priority for the Big Fresh Catering Company to meet new legislation set by Welsh Government. There were lots of initiatives, such as the School Holiday Enrichment Program, which were focused on supporting schools as well as those deprived communities. The Council also worked with schools and

community groups around active travel, and it was a key component of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Program. Healthy eating therefore represented day to day activity which was why it did not appear in the Directorate Plan. Councillor E. Goodjohn added it would be good if additional performance indicators in relation to healthy eating for young people could be considered.

In response to Councillor E. Goodjohn's query regarding work within the Council to promote apprenticeship schemes and could the Council do more to demonstrate success, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources advised that there were lots work around that in a couple of different streams. Within the Sustainable Communities for Learning Program and the benefits realisation reports that were part of the Council's tendering process, readers would be able to see the work expected from some suppliers in terms of creating opportunities for apprenticeships. There were also other schemes including the Communities for Work Scheme and the Council's internal program, the Quick Start scheme. It was hoped for a report around that work to be presented to the Scrutiny Committee in the future.

Councillor E. Goodjohn queried whether there was any scope for the Council to be more ambitious in relation to the actions around the Council's Youth Service and in terms of how the Council engaged and heard the views of young people. In response the Director stated that within the Council's new Corporate Plan there was an objective to be more systematic when it came to harnessing and utilising the Youth Service and the Youth Council. That meant that there was an aim for the Youth Service to have a greater reach to all Directorates within the Council to share and understand the views and perspectives of young people.

Councillor E.J. Goodjohn asked whether the Council could do more to tackle child poverty, and could more be done to provide young people affordable access to be able to participate and access leisure, sport, cultural and heritage activities. Councillor E.J. Goodjohn also asked whether more could be done to enable better access to examinations for those young people home educated. In response to child poverty and access to leisure and culture, the Learning & Skills Strategy & Performance Manager advised that the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan needed to be read in context with all the other Directorate Plans that formed a joined up and cross cutting picture around poverty. The Directorate Plan was holistic that reflected multiple elements of the Vale 2030 Corporate Pan. Therefore, contribution towards poverty agenda from the Learning and Skills Directorate would be around work undertaken through community focussed schools and also by some of the other initiatives and day-to-day activities previously raised by the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources such as the Enrichment Program. With regards to access to examinations for young people home educated, it was agreed for information to be sent via email.

Councillor J. Lynch-Wilson stated that it was important to recognise how important the local communities were to the safe and successful running of schools and praised the good work around inclusivity being undertaken.

Councillor H. Payne referred to the Arts Central gallery and the feasibility study of building of a cultural community network, and queried how would the Council

encourage those people that would not normally engage with the arts and cultural activities. In reply, the Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources commented that there were lots of work to encourage visitors to the arts and culture spaces. The feasibility study related to the courtyard area between the arts centre and the library and bringing in a more diverse range of art exhibitions to attract new audiences. There was similar work planned for Old Hall in Cowbridge and was on the back of a growth in visitors to the Penarth centre. A report on those initiatives would be presented to Committee.

Information regarding the Sanctuary Nature Neighbours project would be sent via email.

Councillor N. Hodges asked whether the Directorate Plan contained sufficient long-term focus on the risks and impact following cuts to the benefit system. In response, the Learning & Skills Strategy & Performance Manager clarified that the Vale 2030 was the new Corporate Plan which covered the next 5 years. The Directorate Plan was an in-year service plan focussing on the specific strategic actions and activities for the Learning and Skills Directorate. During the year the Council would undertake an annual self-assessment which was linked to Directorate Plans, and which would factor in new legislation, changing landscapes and new policies. That provided opportunity to potentially changing priorities should the need arise. It was important to recognise that the Vale 2030 Plan did have significant focus around poverty across all Directorates, with the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan having a emphasis on schemes such as community focused schools which had an aspect of tackling poverty.

The Chair, Councillor R. Thomas, stated that some new performance indicators did not contain targets, and he asked whether there was scope for targets to be set; for example, the percentage of secondary school children who reported that they felt engaged and that they had a voice about services and decisions that mattered to them. The Learning & Skills Strategy & Performance Manager, in response, advised that for some new indicators it was not possible to set targets, so for those it was important to set a baseline following during year 1 that could be used as a benchmark to set targets for future years.

Subsequently it was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the comments of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Learning and Skills Directorate Plan and performance targets for 205/26 be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee for its consideration in order for a composite response to be developed and referred back to Cabinet on 1st May, 2025. The comments relating to the following:

- Additional detail being added in relation to the Active Travel programmes for schools;
- The need for more resources in the area of Additional Learning Needs;
- More resources were required in relation to healthy eating, in order to combat obesity within young people;

- The inclusion of an additional performance indicators in relation to healthy eating for young people and in relation to the Council's apprenticeship scheme;
- Was there scope for the Council to be more ambitious in relation to the actions around the Council's Youth Service and in terms of how the Council engaged and heard the views of young people;
- Could the Council do more to tackle child poverty;
- Was there more that the Council could do to enable better access to examinations for those young people who are home-educated;
- Could the Council provide more opportunities for young people to access leisure, sport, cultural and heritage activities;
- Queried whether the Council could do more to encourage more people engage with arts and culture;
- Did the Directorate Plan contain sufficient long-term focus on the risks and impact following cuts to the benefit system; and
- The need for targets to be set for those new performance indicators where a measure had not been included.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting and to advise the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee of the views of the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee.”