

START WELL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Decision Notice – Remote meeting, 19th January, 2026.

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

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

Present: Councillor R.R. Thomas (Chair); Councillor H.M. Payne (Vice-Chair); Councillors A. Asbrey, J. Aviet, W. Gilligan, E. Goodjohn, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, N.P. Hodges and J. Lynch-Wilson.

Co-opted Members: Dr. M. Price (Roman Catholic Church), K. Riddick (Parent Governor – Secondary Sector), M. Werrett (Church in Wales) and G. Scott (Welsh Medium Education).

Also present: Councillors R.M. Birch (Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language), I.R. Buckley, L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), C.P. Franks, G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson, N.C. Thomas and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health).

AGENDA ITEM 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor W.A. Hennessy; L. Barrowclough (Parent Governor – Primary Sector), P. Bond and R. Davies (Vale Youth Council).

AGENDA ITEM 2. MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

AGENDA ITEM 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

The following declarations of interest were received:

Councillor J. Aviet	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Aviet declared a personal interest in that a family member worked at Pencoedtre High School, and they were also a Governor for Colcot and Oakfield Primary schools. Councillor Aviet remained in the meeting for the duration of the item.
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Councillor J. Aviet	Agenda Item 5 – Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). Councillor Aviet declared a personal interest in that they were a member of SACRE/SAC and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor E. Goodjohn	Agenda Item 5 – Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). Councillor Goodjohn declared a personal interest as they were a member of SACRE/SAC and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor W. Gilligan	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Gilligan declared a personal interest as they were a Governor for Sully Primary School and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor S. Haines	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Haines declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of St Athan Primary School and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor N. Hodges	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Hodges declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of Ysgol St. Baruc and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor J. Lynch-Wilson	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Lynch-Wilson declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of St Athan Primary School and Llantwit Major School and remained in the meeting during the item
Councillor H. Payne	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Councillor Payne declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of Palmerston Primary School and remained in the meeting during the item.
Councillor R. Thomas	Agenda Item 5 – Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC

	(Standing Advisory Council). Councillor Thomas declared a declared a personal interest in that they were a member of SACRE/SAC and remained in the meeting during the item.
Dr. M. Price (Co-opted Member)	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. Dr. Price declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of St Richard Gwyn School and a member of the Vale of Glamorgan's Governors Association, and remained in the meeting during the item.
K. Riddick (Co-opted Member)	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. K. Riddick declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of Pencoedtre and Whitmore High Schools, and remained in the meeting during the item.
K. Riddick (Co-opted Member)	Agenda Item 5 – Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council). K. Riddick declared a personal interest as they were Chair of SACRE/SAC and remained in the meeting during the item.
M. Werrett (Co-opted Member)	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. M. Werrett declared a personal interest as they were Head of Education for the diocese under which several schools in the Vale came under their remit. M. Werrett remained in the meeting during the item.
G. Scott (Non-voting Observer – Welsh Medium Education)	Agenda Item 4 – Vale of Glamorgan Council: School Balances. G. Scott declared a personal interest as they were a Governor of Ysgol Pen Y Garth, and remained in the meeting during the item.

AGENDA ITEM 4. VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL: SCHOOL BALANCES (REF) –

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the findings from Audit Wales' review of School Balances (Appendix A to the report), and the response to the review findings and Audit Wales'

recommendations (Appendix B to the report), including the proposed new corporate risk on School deficits (Appendix C to the report) be noted

(2) T H A T issues and concerns identified by the Start Well Scrutiny Committee be referred to Cabinet for its consideration. Comments related to:

- The importance of safeguarding the wellbeing of Headteachers and school staff;
- Concerns around recruitment/retention, staff burnout, leadership sustainability and high expectations;
- Pressure caused by Additional Learning Need demand, staffing needs, and curriculum requirements be emphasised;
- A concern that schools were being pushed beyond capacity;
- Problems were systemic across Wales, not Vale-specific, but Vale data showed large variations between schools with similar contexts;
- Need for consistent practice across the Local Authority.

(3) T H A T the Start Well Scrutiny Committee receive a report detailing the updated financial position for schools at its meeting scheduled for 16th March, 2026.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To advise Cabinet of the views and concerns of the Start Well Scrutiny Committee.
- (3) To provide an up to date financial position statement on school balances.

AGENDA ITEM 5. ANNUAL REPORT FOR SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION) / SAC (STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL) (DLS) –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Annual Report for SACRE/SAC 2024-2025 (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education) / SAC (Standing Advisory Council) be ratified for publication.

Reason for recommendation

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

AGENDA ITEM 6. TASK AND FINISH REVIEW GROUP MEMBERSHIP – WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT ON SCHOOLS HAVING TO MAKE DIFFICULT DECISIONS TO BALANCE BUDGETS (DCR) –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Councillors A. Asbrey, W. Gilligan, S. Haines and H. Payne, along with Co-Opted Members Dr. M. Price and K. Riddick, be confirmed

as members of the Task and Finish Review Group to consider “What has been the impact on schools having to make difficult decisions to balance budgets”.

Reason for decision

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