

Meeting of:	<b>Shared Regulatory Services Joint Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Tuesday, 28 June 2022</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Shared Regulatory Services Annual Report
Purpose of Report:	To advise members on the performance and financial position of the Shared Regulatory Service for the 2021/22 financial year.
Report Owner:	Head of Shared Regulatory Services Head of Finance, Vale of Glamorgan Council
Responsible Officer:	Director of Environment and Housing
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Advice has been sought from the partner Councils
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Shared Regulatory Services Joint Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) is a collaboration between Bridgend County Borough Council, the County Council of the City and County of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Council that commenced on the 1st May 2015, and is charged with the provision of Regulatory Services across the three Authorities.</li> <li>• The Joint Working Agreement requires the Head of SRS and the Head of Finance to produce an Annual Report which, once approved by the Committee, is forwarded to the partner Councils.</li> <li>• The report illustrates that the traditional reporting regimes and delivery of some statutory duties have been impacted significantly by the coronavirus pandemic over the course of 2021/22.</li> <li>• The £8.331m 2021/22 gross revenue budget was agreed by the Joint Committee on the 8th December 2020 which included an assumed 2.75% pay increase which was partially offset by a 1.9% reduction in the employer's superannuation contribution rate. No further savings were incorporated in the 2021/22 budget.</li> <li>• As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2021/22 revenue position remained challenging throughout the year, with sustained pressure on the service both operationally and financially.</li> </ul>	

The cost of the increased draw on services was mitigated by additional funding being provided by Welsh Government (WG).

- In 2021/22, £488k was claimed from WG against the Covid-19 Hardship Grant which funds the additional activities undertaken within the Covid Compliance and three Enforcement teams that cover the SRS region. In addition, £616k has been recharged to the Bridgend and Cardiff Councils in respect of the Service's support of the Test, Trace and Protect provision. A further £12k has been claimed against the WG Income Loss Grant during 2021/22.
- As at the 31st March 2022, Shared Regulatory Service has achieved an unaudited outturn underspend of £363k against the 2021/22 £8.331m gross revenue budget. This position includes consideration for a special reserve of £148k being created to fund the replacement of ageing vehicles plus the acquisition of operational equipment to support the operational activities plus safeguarding staff wellbeing whilst on operations
- The Draft Shared Regulatory Services Statement of Accounts 2021/22 is presented to Committee, to be signed by both the Chair of the Committee and the Section 151 Officer as Treasurer of the Committee, and to formally invite Welsh Audit Office to commence their audit of the account.

## **Recommendation**

1. That the Joint Committee approves the report, including the Draft Statement of Accounts, and authorises the Chief Executive, Vale of Glamorgan Council, to forward a copy of the report to the Heads of Paid Service for the other partner Councils.

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

1. To meet the requirements set out in Clause 5.1 of the Joint Working Agreement.

## **Background**

- 1.1 Under the Joint Working Agreement, the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) is required to produce an annual report that covers the operational and financial performance of the service for the preceding year. Clause 5 of the Joint Working Agreement states:

"The Joint Committee shall receive in each year at its annual meeting which shall be held no later than 30th June the report of the Head of Regulatory Services and the Lead Financial Officer in respect of the functions delegated to the Joint Committee relating to the twelve months ending 31st March of that year and a copy thereof shall be forwarded to the Chief Executive of each Participant.

- 1.2 The report shall include:-

- (i) *A statement showing the performance of the Regulatory Service Functions and progress in achieving the Objectives and delivering the Business Plan.*

- (ii) *a summary revenue account and statement of capital spending including the distribution or use of any revenue surpluses and the financing of any capital expenditure"*

**1.3** This is the seventh report produced under this requirement and covers the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022. If the content of this report is agreed, a copy of the report must be sent to the Head of Paid Service of each of the three Councils along with the SRS Business Plan for 2022/23. This annual report outlines many of the actions undertaken at each partner Council to deliver the wide range of statutory functions assigned to the Service. The report provides a review of operations across the service, a summary of the financial position, and outlines performance against the 2021/22 service objectives.

### **Operating the Shared Regulatory Service**

**1.4** The Shared Regulatory Service (SRS) operates across Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Through a collaborative model, it delivers a range of statutory services, that are critical to maintaining the health, safety and economic wellbeing of local communities. The operating model delivers an integrated service for the Trading Standards, Environmental Health, and Licensing functions, which has three service delivery sectors focusing upon the customer rather than the traditional professional delivery model.

- Neighbourhood Services: activities relating to residential premises or having an impact on the local community.
- Commercial Services: activities relating to business premises (generally where national standards apply).
- Enterprise and Specialist Services: specialist areas of work and income generating services.

**1.5** As a regional organisation, providing regulatory services across three local authority areas, the SRS seeks to place the corporate priorities and stated outcomes of the three councils at the heart of all its activities. Using them as a focus, the strategic priorities for the Shared Regulatory Service of

- Safeguarding the Vulnerable
- Improving Health and wellbeing
- Protecting the Environment
- Supporting the local economy
- Maximising the use of resources

provide a robust base for achieving the outcomes identified in previous business plans and the partner Councils' corporate aspirations. However, over the course of 2021-22, the planned work of the Service was impacted once again by the coronavirus pandemic and the emergence of new variants of the virus. This resulted in SRS

continuing to support the Test, Trace, and Protect (TTP) Service across the three Council areas through engagement with high risk settings as well as with the general public; and also in its COVID compliance work to ensure that businesses continued to comply with COVID safety requirements.

**1.6** The Joint Working Agreement, executed in April 2015, and updated in July 2017, underpins the entire service provision. The JWA contains a number of "milestones and requirements". In accordance with those requirements:

- The Wales Audit Office completed an independent financial audit of the service in September 2021; there were no recommendations for improvement.
- The Joint Committee approved the proposed Shared Regulatory Services budget for the 2022/23 period at its December 2021 meeting. The aggregate budget for the service remained at £8.331m, as a result of £134k of service savings being offset by £134k salary costs attributable to the national pay award.
- The Business Plan for 2022/23 is presented for political approval in papers to the June 2022 Joint Committee meeting.
- The Joint Committee will receive an audited statement of accounts for 2021/22 in September 2022.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

**2.1** The 2020/21 Annual Report illustrated that the SRS had delivered the requisite financial savings and delivered the majority of the business plan actions. The Key Milestones set for 2021/22 were:

- *Delivery of the SRS Business Plan 2021-2022 and the associated corporate priorities assigned to the SRS by the partner councils*
- *To support the partner councils and other agencies to manage the impact of Covid-19*
- *To monitor the implementation of new legislation and any requirements imposed by such legislation upon the Service.*
- *To review the impact of the coronavirus on service delivery mechanisms and the achievement of targets against the established performance metrics.*

**2.2** At the time of writing the SRS Business Plan for 2021/22, there was a sense of optimism that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic was behind us given the continued roll out of the vaccination programmes and falling infection rates. Nevertheless, the Business Plan was sufficiently realistic to recognise the impact of the COVID response on service delivery to that point in time and the need to keep an open mind on the future direction of the disease. Apprehension about the emergence of new

coronavirus variants of concern was borne out with the appearance of the highly infectious Omicron variant in the autumn of 2021, meaning that many key members of SRS staff remained in their secondment roles supporting the various strands of the COVID response until the final lifting of the majority of Welsh Government controls in March 2022.

## Human Resources

- 2.3** The on-going pandemic meant that multiple officers across SRS continued in secondment roles during 2021/22. These roles supported the public health initiatives, including the TTP service, enhanced surveillance in relation to care homes and schools, investigation of workplace clusters and monitoring public health measures in the workplace. Our three Joint Enforcement Teams continued in place over the course of the year, working closely with local businesses to ensure compliance with the various levels of COVID restriction. Since September 2020, a total of 29 Environmental Health students have been recruited into the service on a temporary basis to support these areas of work. They have performed incredibly well in challenging circumstances, and it is pleasing to see that as they graduate, a number of them have been successful in being appointed into permanent roles in the SRS. It is hoped that this trend will continue as more graduate in the months ahead.
- 2.4** Unfortunately, recruitment into certain roles remains problematic, and as in previous years, vacancies have arisen in the structure. While there is no single identifiable cause of staff leaving their roles, some of the reasons given by leavers include the desire to work closer to home, re-evaluation of the work and family life balance, and the attraction of higher levels of pay in the private sector.
- 2.5** Recently, the Directors of Public Protection Wales group presented its '*Building for the Future*' paper to Welsh Government. The paper explains the extent of the Wales-wide regulatory services recruitment crisis as well as the impacts it is having, particularly post-pandemic. The paper makes a number of recommendations for additional investment, as well as specific support to encourage young people to enter pathways into the Environmental Health and Trading Standards disciplines, both of which are currently represented by an ageing demographic. There is a pressing need for SRS to build upon these recommendations, and develop a new recruitment and retention strategy during 2022/23 to identify solutions for the medium and long term. A crucial part of this work will be a staff consultation and the creation of a working group to ensure that input is as broad as possible and that all options are considered.
- 2.6** The year saw a number of SRS staff beginning, continuing and completing further study, and in the coming year, additional opportunities will be identified and uptake encouraged through the performance review process.
- 2.7** Overall sickness absence levels for 2021/22 were **10.11 days per FTE person**. This represents an increase on the same measure for 2020/21 when the overall sickness

absence rate stood at **6.32 days per FTE person**. It is likely that a number of factors contributed to the lower rate of absence seen in 2020/21 (e.g., social distancing, shielding and almost exclusively homeworking) and these points were set out in the Annual Report presented to the Joint Committee in June 2021. It is encouraging to note on closer examination however, that the number of short-term days lost has barely risen in 2021/2022 compared to 2020/21, and it is the number of days lost through long term absence that has impacted the overall rate for 2021/22 (the Service has had a number of cases of long term illness). **Figure 1** below provides some context enabling comparison with the pre-pandemic levels of absence seen in 2019/20.

*Figure 1: 2021/22 sickness absence figures compared to those for previous years*

Year	Short term days lost per FTE	Long term days lost per FTE	Total days lost per FTE
<b>2021/22</b>	1.95	8.16	10.11
<b>2020/21</b>	1.68	4.64	6.32
<b>2019/20</b>	3.04	7.19	10.23

The 2021/22 absence figures compare favourably when viewed in the wider context of comparison against the average sickness rates across the partner Councils.

## Operational Performance

**2.8** Operational performance throughout 2021/22 has been reported both to the Joint Committee and to each partner Council through the legacy systems. Normally, performance is gauged against the targets set out in the Business Plan. Unfortunately, the on-going coronavirus response meant that a number of the targets and actions identified in the 2021/22 Plan were not achieved. While all the statutory documents were published on time, the service was unable to complete certain planned activities, due in large part to the continued secondment of key staff into COVID response roles. In anticipation of the Service now returning to much more of a ‘business as usual’ rhythm, a number of these planned activities are being rolled forward into the new Business Plan for 2022/23. The following paragraphs reference the key performance criteria, and thereafter there is some commentary on the activities undertaken during 2021/22 to control and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

**2.9** The Shared Regulatory Service has a role in delivering on Public Accountability Measures in respect of food establishments (PAM 023) for all three partner Councils, and also for empty homes (PAM 013 and PAM 045) for Cardiff and Bridgend.

- **PAM 023: Food establishments - broadly compliant (%)**

This measure provides an indication of how well a food business complies with food hygiene legislation. The food industry is responsible for producing and distributing safe food. The Shared Regulatory Service, as the enforcement agency, conducts inspections, ensuring that standards are met through a robust enforcement programme to deal with those who do not comply with standards. Additionally, the business support and advice regimes introduced into the SRS structure play a part in promoting an increase in hygiene standards, examples of that are set out under the priority heading supporting the local economy. Premises are deemed to be broadly compliant if specified risk scores are achieved for cleanliness, structural issues, and confidence in the management of the business.

The proportion of premises that are broadly compliant with food hygiene requirements, i.e., scoring a 3\* food hygiene rating or above, is in line with the UK average of 95%, and is consistent with that seen in previous years for each of the local authority areas, as shown in **Figure 2** below i.e.

*Figure 2: Percentage of food establishments 'broadly compliant'*

Year	Bridgend	Cardiff	Vale of Glamorgan
2021/22	97.38%	95.74%	97.25%
2020/21	97.24%	95.41%	97.53%
2019/20	97.49%	94.84%	97.37%

It is important to note that the 2021/22 figures, as for those seen in 2020/21, come with something of a caveat in that it will take some for the definitive picture to emerge, post COVID restrictions. The significant turnover of food businesses has continued, and there were over 900 new food businesses due for inspection across the region in 2021/22. Many of these new entrants to the market do not immediately attract a broadly compliant rating and this may have a bearing, in time, on the overall broadly compliant score. In addition, a focus upon new businesses will have an inevitable impact upon the traditional risk assessed food inspection programme.

- **PAM 013 and PAM 045**

PAM 013 measures the *percentage of empty private properties brought back into use*, while PAM 045 measures *the number of new homes created as a result of bringing empty properties back into use*. These indicators have as their core purpose the aim of indicating the reduction in the number of empty properties as a consequence of action by the Councils. The current performance measure guidance sets out the categories

of direct action that local authorities can take to bring a property back into use, including

- Grants, loans or other financial assistance
- Enforcement action including statutory notices, and
- Dialogue between the owner and the local authority where progress to restore the use of the property is evident.

Officers from the Shared Regulatory Service contribute a dedicated resource to bringing empty properties back into beneficial use within Cardiff and Bridgend.

In **Bridgend**, SRS responded to 245 new service requests from members of the public, empty property owners and others, requesting advice and support in relation to empty properties. Considerable progress has been achieved over the course of the year in respect of 17 longer term empty properties. The owners of these properties have received assistance mainly using the 5-stage letter process and on occasions may have been subject to the service of an enforcement notice. This has resulted in properties being marketed for sale, in change of ownership, and in renovation works commencing. A total of 115 properties have now been risk assessed and action has been targeted in relation to the 'Top 20' properties for Bridgend. Of these, planning permission for renovation work has been obtained in respect of two, six properties are subject to formal enforcement action and a grant application has been submitted in respect of one.

In **Cardiff**, SRS presented a new Private Sector Empty Homes Policy 2021-2024 to Cardiff Council's Cabinet, which was adopted. The increased profile of this work due to the adoption of the Policy has enabled the Service to employ two empty homes officers for a further two years. An empty homes working group has been established and is proving useful in shaping corporate working to maximise performance in this context. An action plan has been submitted to Welsh Government which will allow the drawing down of funding to underwrite losses made in any subsequent activity taken against the worst derelict, long term empty City Centre properties. In total, 84 properties were returned to use or new units created as a result of empty homes work in Cardiff during the last year.

- 2.10** The detail of performance against all the agreed performance indicators is set out in **Appendix 1**. The continuing COVID 19 pandemic, associated restrictions and fast changing enforcement demands of the Coronavirus Restrictions Regulations meant that once again, our traditional inspection programme was badly impacted in 2021/22. Specifically in relation to the Food inspection programme, and recognising the significant pressure faced by local authorities (given the inevitable secondment of key members of staff over the last two years) the Food Standards Agency has implemented a four nations approach through the Recovery Plan shown in **Figure 3** below.



**Figure 3: FSA COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan**



- 2.11** The expectation that all Category A rated establishments for Food Hygiene will have received an on site inspection by March 2022 has been achieved by the Service, as has the prioritisation of new businesses for intervention, based on risk. Further detail on the Food Standards Agency Recovery Plan for food interventions is provided in 2.27 below
- 2.12** Further recognising that many of our traditional performance metrics have been impacted by coronavirus response work, an additional set of performance indicators has been created during the pandemic. The purpose of the infograph included at **Appendix 2**, is to give elected members a flavour of the broad range of COVID related enforcement and advice work carried out by SRS.
- 2.13** The SRS may, through the relevant participant Council, prosecute breaches of legislation, particularly in respect of those who flout the law or who act irresponsibly, or where there is an immediate risk to health and safety. In the period, the service has been successful in challenging a range of unfair practices, many of which attracted media attention. The time and work required to investigate these matters, and the consequences this has on officers' ability to carry out day to day work whilst these matters are ongoing, is significant. The details of all the prosecutions that concluded in the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 are set out in **Appendix 3**.
- 2.14** The SRS has continued to support relevant corporate challenges at each Council. In addition to the coronavirus response sustained throughout the 2021/22 financial year, the Shared Service has brought its expertise to the table to support other significant challenges during the same time frame. Thus SRS Officers have been conducting checks on the suitability of accommodation offered by residents of the three local authorities through the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Other examples of providing corporate support include officers playing a key role in assisting the Councils to deal

with the requirements to improve air quality, as well as dealing with the emergence of avian influenza in the wild bird population at a number of park and leisure locations.

- 2.15** Under the Gambling Act 2005, every Licensing Authority has to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy which sets out the principles that it proposes to apply in exercising its functions under the Act. An amended Policy has been taken through each of the Licensing Committees, and these reflect changes in legislation and in guidance from the Gambling Commission.

### **Significant Service achievements**

- 2.16** Paragraph 1.5 above highlights the priority themes for Shared Regulatory Services, and a range of achievements over the course of 2021/22 demonstrate progress toward delivering the outcomes associated with these priorities. The 2022-23 SRS Business Plan reviews these achievements in some detail, while the sections below provide just some examples of the work carried out in the last financial year.

### **Improving Health and Wellbeing**

- 2.17** Improving health and wellbeing is a key priority for Shared Regulatory Services. Work undertaken to ensure that food is safe, that infectious disease, noise, and air emissions are controlled, that risks in the workplace are managed properly, allows people to live in healthy environments. Add to this our activities to ensure the quality of private rented property, the promotion of a safe trading environment and our regulation of licensed premises to ensure they operate responsibly, and it is evident that the work undertaken by SRS is hugely important to the health and wellbeing of the region.

#### ***COVID 19 related work***

- 2.18** Our role in improving health and wellbeing was of course dominated in 2021/22 by the coronavirus response. In May 2021, the Welsh Government began to relax some of the Coronavirus restrictions that had been in place since Christmas 2020. Wales moved from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 2 in a phased approach to reopening the economy and allowing more social interaction between households. This gradual lifting of restrictions reflected the fact that the virus was still in general circulation, but the vaccine programme was beginning to have an impact. There was a clear reduction in the number of people becoming severely unwell and the infection rate generally was beginning to fall. However, all this was being done at a time when the impact of the new Delta strain of the virus was uncertain.
- 2.19** May 2021 also saw the introduction of “*test events*” at Cardiff Castle and other venues across Wales. These gatherings were sanctioned on the understanding that the organisers and public health authorities would develop safe processes that would

enable larger events to take place as restrictions were relaxed further. The events were held successfully, and no significant incidence of coronavirus was associated with them.

- 2.20** Later in May 2021, international travel resumed for *essential purposes* under a traffic light system. People returning from countries classified as red or amber needed to follow isolation and testing rules. Unfortunately, the guidance outlining what constituted an *essential purpose* was not particularly robust and many people travelled to amber and red list countries, particularly India. This brought additional work for the TTP service and the SRS/Police JET teams who were tasked with ensuring that returning travellers followed the isolation requirements. Many did, but a small number did not, and Cardiff in particular saw an early introduction of the Delta variant.
- 2.21** The summer of 2021 saw a phased move to Alert Level 1, which allowed more people to meet outdoors, more events took place, more retail outlets opened and as a result of the vaccine rollout, a relaxation of the controls on socialising indoors. Alert Level 0 followed, meaning that any number of people could meet indoors, including in private homes, public places or at events. All businesses and premises could open, with face coverings remaining a legal requirement indoors in healthcare settings and in commercial premises (other than hospitality premises). Welsh Government continued to advise working from home wherever possible. Fully vaccinated adults, under 18s and vaccine trial participants were exempted from self-isolation if they were a close contact of someone with coronavirus.
- 2.22** Unfortunately, by the autumn of 2021, infection rates began to rise and Welsh Government began a programme of advice and encouragement, urging people to continue to take precautions to protect themselves and others. Welsh Government introduced new restrictions for nightclubs and larger events, and the NHS COVID pass was launched as a pre-requisite for attending certain venue types and sporting fixtures, with this later being extended to include cinemas, theatres and concert halls.
- 2.23** Around this time, the updated Welsh Government coronavirus control plan set out two planning scenarios for the winter of 2021. In the first – ‘Covid Stable’ - Wales would remain at Alert Level 0 with all businesses able to open. The second scenario – ‘Covid Urgent’ - was designed to deal with any sudden changes in the situation, such as the emergence of a new, fast-spreading variants or vaccine immunity levels falling, with the risk of increased pressures on the NHS.
- 2.24** The emergence of the Omicron variant in November 2021 resulted in a significant increase in case numbers, but with the success of the vaccination programme by that time, it became evident that there was a reduction in symptomatic illness, severe disease, hospitalisation and mortality.
- 2.25** Throughout 2021/22, SRS played a central role in supporting TTP and in delivering the wider enforcement regimes that underpinned the Public Health (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations. Early 2022 saw the start of a transition where the focus of this work would move away from breaking chains of transmission in the whole

population, toward a programme that protects the most vulnerable in society. On 4th March 2022, Welsh Government published its transition plan in which a stepped 'return to normal' approach was set out. While this transition to the long-term steady state phase concludes at the end of June 2022, partners in the public health network commit to maintaining a capacity to respond to any future local outbreaks and to prepare for a resurgence of the virus. Working with partners, SRS now has the necessary arrangements in place to retain the required skill sets within the service for the duration of 2022/23.

- 2.26** The preceding paragraphs provide a snapshot of the coronavirus related work undertaken by the service in the last 12 months. The commitment of officers has been incredible, both those working directly on the COVID response and those maintaining, as far as possible, our 'business as usual' work. The following paragraphs highlight just a few examples of this.

#### ***Food Standards Agency / Local Authority recovery plan for food interventions***

- 2.27** As outlined in paragraph 2.10 above, the Shared Service has been working to the Food Standards Agency COVID-19 Local Authority Recovery Plan which applies across the four nations. Covering the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years, the aim of the Recovery Plan is to ensure that during the period of recovery from the impact of COVID-19, local authority resources are targeted where they add greatest value in providing safeguards for public health and consumer protection in relation to food. It also aims to safeguard the integrity of the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS). The plan provides a route map for re-starting the delivery system in line with the Food Law Codes of Practice for both new food establishments and for high-risk and/or non-compliant establishments while providing flexibility for the inspection of lower risk establishments.
- 2.28** SRS has been following the recovery plan to lead its food business inspection priorities alongside a number of essential interventions, namely
- Reactive work including enforcement in the case of non-compliance
  - Managing food incidents and food hazards
  - Investigating and managing food complaints
  - Sampling, and
  - Ongoing proactive surveillance.

#### ***Building Safety***

- 2.29** Following publication of the Building Safety White Paper, a Welsh Government priority remains the establishment of the Joint Inspection Team (JIT), hosted by the WLGA. This remains a work in progress and SRS continues to have a presence on the Steering Group which has been charged with appointing the members of the JIT. It is anticipated that appointments will take place this year to enable a work programme

to be drawn up in consultation with all Welsh local authorities and Welsh Government. We will work with the JIT to understand the scale of the issues in high rise buildings in the Authorities that we serve and working in conjunction with Welsh Government prioritise any remediation work to ensure the health and safety of the occupants.

- 2.30** In addition to the above, SRS is represented on the Leaseholder Task and Finish Group which is examining options to help support leaseholders who find themselves in significant financial hardship. Welsh Government is considering options to introduce a scheme to target provision where it is most needed, i.e., those buildings with identified defects where individual leaseholders cannot sell their properties on the open market and find themselves in considerable difficulty due to escalating costs.

### Safeguarding the Vulnerable

- 2.31** SRS contributes toward the safeguarding agendas of the partner Councils by seeking to ensure that children are protected from harmful substances and products, that older and vulnerable people are protected from unscrupulous individuals and traders, that illegal money lending activities across Wales are challenged robustly, and that the public feel safe when using taxis as public transport.

- 2.32** During 2021 /2022, a number of significant rogue builder or doorstep crime prosecution cases concluded in court. Sitting behind each of these cases is a story of residents being defrauded of large sums of money, often their life savings. The cases show a pattern of little, or no, work being done, and where work has been carried out, it will have been to a very poor standard. The legacy of COVID-related delays in the court process meant that fewer cases of this type than normal, finally concluded in court. Nevertheless, the impact of the six concluded cases in this category is significant, i.e.

- A combined total of nearly *10 years* in custodial sentences
- A 12-month Community Order
- Compensation of £3080 for some of those affected
- A number of Proceeds of Crime investigations from which it is hoped compensation for the victims will be forthcoming.

- 2.33** The work of the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit (WIMLU) in bringing loan sharks to justice has benefitted local communities through the allocation of monies obtained by virtue of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA). Over the years, a range of innovative projects and initiatives have been launched with a number of these resulting in a tangible outcome such as community fun days, a school music project and the children's story book '*A Fistful of Feathers*'. Continuing this theme of securing benefits from the 'ill-gotten gains' of loan sharks, a new initiative to encourage responsible borrowing from Credit Unions has been piloted. Known as the 'Near Miss' scheme, the WIMLU worked with the Cambrian Credit Union to identify individuals who narrowly

missed out on satisfying the borrowing criteria of the Credit Union, and used a sum of POCA monies to enable them to take out small, underwritten loans. The pilot proved to be very successful, resulting in 28 loans being issued with only 2 defaults, and Credit Union staff reported that the pilot enabled them 'to think differently about loan decisions...and take a more calculated risk'.

Crucially, all the 'Near Miss' borrowers started savings accounts as a result of their inclusion in the scheme, and some were able to go onto borrow further monies in the safe setting of the Credit Union.

- 2.34** Across the Shared Service, our Licensing teams have adopted the NR3 database, which is part of the National Anti-Fraud Network. This is a database of all hackney carriage / private hire drivers whose licence has been revoked or refused (if a new applicant). This development has been part of a national commitment for Licensing Authorities to use the database to ensure that those who have had their licence revoked by one authority are not able to slip through the net and become licensed in another local authority area.

## Protecting the Environment

- 2.35** Protecting the environment is a core strategic priority of SRS. Many of the activities such as water sampling, monitoring air quality, and remediating contaminated land contribute toward promoting a better environment. This in turn means better long term prospects for the health and wellbeing of our communities. The SRS has a key role to play in ensuring society makes best use of existing resources and bringing back redundant/derelict properties into use is an important contributor to both the environment and local community development. SRS has a key role to play in the wider climate change and future generations agendas through its enforcement role on energy efficiency controls in respect of properties and consumer products. The impact of these activities is less apparent in the short term for communities, but has an important role for future generations. In the more immediate term, SRS ensures communities are protected from nuisance and are safer, by investigating noise complaints, and dealing with stray dogs and other animals.

## *Animal Welfare*

- 2.36** In recent years, there has been a huge increase in demand for pet dogs, particularly the most desirable breeds, and this was only exacerbated during the coronavirus pandemic as families sought 'lockdown buddies'. Huge demand drives huge prices with recent research suggesting that the average going rate for a Labradoodle puppy is now in excess of £1,300, while a French Bulldog costs in excess of £1,700, and an American Bully puppy goes on average for around £2,300. Perhaps it is no surprise that this is an industry that has attracted a rogue element, keen to make quick profits, with little thought for animal welfare, and in an environment where they perceive

there to be a low risk of being caught and punished. This is the world of the unlicensed, illegal dog breeder.

- 2.37** Over the course of the year, SRS has received an unprecedented volume of complaints and enquiries about unlicensed dog breeding. As a service, we are determined to take a firm line against illegal breeding to protect not only unsuspecting purchasers, but to safeguard the welfare of dogs and their puppies, and at the same time create a 'level playing field' for legitimate, properly licensed breeders. The following major investigations into illegal dog breeding that concluded during 2021/22, illustrate the gravity and extent of the problem.
- 2.38** In the first of these cases, a complaint was received about sales of American bully puppies via Facebook. After some investigation, a warrant was executed at the individual's property where 5 breeding bitches and 3 male dogs were found, as well as 8 puppies. All but two of the puppies had recently had their ears cropped, a practice classed as animal mutilation and prohibited by the Animal Welfare Act. During the course of the investigation the scale of the defendant's illegal trading was established with the finding that he had registered 67 dogs at one local veterinary practice alone. The defendant was sentenced to a total of 16 weeks in custody with immediate effect, fined £1200 and ordered to pay costs of £9775. He was also banned from keeping animals for a period of 8 years, with no right to apply for this ban to be revoked for a period of 5 years. In addition, an order was made to deprive the offender of the 8 puppies and 8 adult dogs found at the property.
- 2.39** In the second of the major illegal dog breeding cases concluded during 2021/22, a couple were convicted of breeding dogs without a licence and for multiple animal welfare offences related to the number of litters produced within a short period. The investigation showed that breeding bitches were not given enough time to recover after giving birth to one litter, before being artificially inseminated to produce the next. A warrant executed at the couple's home found 28 dogs in an outbuilding, a laboratory with equipment including a multipurpose centrifuge machine, microscopes, equipment for storing and collecting semen, and for taking blood. A further 30 dogs were discovered at two other properties. Investigations found that the couple bred at least 67 litters between 2014 and 2020 with information on known C-sections indicating that 43 litters had been delivered between 2018 and 2019. One dog had delivered 6 litters within a 4 year period while numerous others were forced to deliver 2 litters in less than a 12 month period. The dogs were registered with 5 different veterinary practices and litters given different names and addresses to avoid detection. The couple were fined a total of £19,000 each, ordered to pay prosecution costs of £43,775.50 and a victim surcharge of £175 each. They were also told to repay a total of £372,531.54 within 3 months in a Proceeds of Crime hearing, or face a 2 year prison sentence.

## ***Air Quality***

- 2.40** During 2021/22, SRS ensured that Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils met their statutory duties under part 4 of the Environment Act 1995 by producing the 2021 Annual Progress Report (APR) for each area, and reporting these to the respective Cabinets.
- 2.41** In **Bridgend**, the 2021 APR highlighted continued non-compliance of the annual average air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) at a number of locations within the Park Street AQMA. Work has continued in terms of assessing measures outlined in the Draft Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to pursue mitigation that will manage and improve traffic flows through the Park Street AQMA in order to reduce NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in line with air quality objectives. In March 2022, Cabinet was presented with the preliminary results of the assessment of the key options for Park Street. The modelling results indicate that NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at the majority of locations will achieve compliance with the annual average air quality objective for NO<sub>2</sub> of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup> by the end of 2023, including all currently monitored locations within the AQMA. A public consultation on the updated AQAP will now be undertaken to help finalise the Action Plan which will then be reported to Cabinet for approval prior to submission to Welsh Government by the end of September 2022.
- 2.42** In **Cardiff**, the 2021 APR highlighted that no monitoring sites recorded concentrations in exceedance of the annual average objective set for NO<sub>2</sub> of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. The results were indicative of the impacts of the COVID lockdowns and restrictions on pollution levels in Cardiff, which was likely due to traffic volumes having decreased. SRS continues to support delivery of the Cardiff Council Clean Air Plan in line with the additional Legal Direction it received. Work in 2021-22 has ensured delivery of a number of key measures in the Plan, namely implementation of 36 Electric Buses, Retro fit programme of 49 buses, and a taxi lease scheme in conjunction with a 30 day try before you buy scheme with Cardiff Capital Region. In November 2021, Cabinet implemented an interim transportation scheme on Castle Street following approval in June 2021. Work is ongoing to assess the implementation of a permanent scheme on Castle St to ensure long-term NO<sub>2</sub> compliance post COVID recovery and work is ongoing to monitor the impact of the current interim scheme in terms of ensuring compliance is maintained.
- 2.43** In the **Vale of Glamorgan**, the 2021 APR demonstrated that no monitoring sites recorded concentrations in exceedance of the annual average objective set for NO<sub>2</sub> of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Monitoring within the previously declared Windsor Road Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) showed continued compliance concerning the applicable air quality objectives for NO<sub>2</sub>. Work is now underway to ratify the annual data for 2021 in readiness to submit the 2022 APRs, which will assess the result for the data gathered in 2021.



## Supporting the Local economy

- 2.44** The work of SRS has a significant impact upon the local economy in a number of different ways. The provision of timely advice and guidance on regulation can enable businesses to maximise the benefit they derive from the marketplace, and the taking of firm enforcement action against rogue traders and those undermining the *bona fide* trade maintains an environment in which legitimate businesses are able to flourish. At the same time, effective market surveillance ensures ‘visibility’ of trading practices that would otherwise be hidden, and this is particularly so in regard to the huge increase in online trading in recent years. The SRS role as regulator also extends to providing a fair trading environment for consumers, supporting them to become better informed and confident in their purchasing decisions.
- 2.45** SRS has maintained its 28 Primary Authority partnerships over the course of another year in which the trading environment for many businesses continued to be challenging. Discussions are currently underway with some highly respected companies with a view to agreeing additional Wales-only Primary Authority partnerships, with a number of these being household names.
- 2.46** Following a number of tragic incidents where customers have died as a result of consuming products that they were unaware contained certain allergens, the law on allergen declaration changed on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021. The amendment to the legislation, commonly known as ‘Natasha’s law’ requires *all products pre-packed for direct sale* to have a full list of ingredients showing clearly the presence of any of 14 specified allergens. Pre-packed for direct sale foods are those that are placed in sealed packaging on the premises where they will be sold, before a customer makes their selection. Examples of foods commonly pre-packed for direct sale include sandwiches, wraps and bakery items, but depending on the circumstances, many other foods can fall within this definition.
- 2.47** In the run up to the change in the law on food allergens, SRS worked with businesses of all shapes and sizes to assist them in complying with the new requirement. In order to support this approach, free online workshops were provided for businesses across Bridgend, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. The workshops provided local food businesses with an overview of the legal requirements but also provided the opportunity for attendees to ask questions of the SRS Officers delivering the training about the changes in the law, and how the changes would apply to individual businesses.
- 2.48** Further raising awareness of the change in the law on allergen labelling, SRS worked with the team at Bro Radio to produce the first of an ongoing series of podcasts entitled ‘*Ask the Regulator*’. The first edition of the podcast focussed on allergens and provides crucial information in a clear, user friendly format for businesses and consumers alike. The allergens podcast can be accessed at <https://www.srs.wales/en/Business-Advice/Podcasts.aspx>

- 2.49** Officers have since released further podcast episodes in the format of discussions between regulators, businesses and members of the public on Safeguarding, Halloween and Bonfire season, Food & Christmas and Health & Nutrition. Such has been the success of the series that more ‘*Ask the Regulator*’ podcasts are planned for 2022/23 on other Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing matters. In addition, a wider audience is now being reached as a result of the podcasts being available through Spotify.

### Maximising the use of resources

- 2.50** Maximising the use of resources was the original catalyst for creating SRS, and work in this area continues. By reducing “triplication” of effort, introducing better processes, making systems work without constant intervention and improving access into the service, our business improves and customer satisfaction increases. Income generating activities like marketing our metrology laboratory, offering paid for advice services, building Primary Authority partnerships and extending our training provision to business are examples of our move to a more “commercial” culture.
- 2.51** The ease with which the public and stakeholders are able to access SRS services has been particularly important in 2021/22 as in 2020/21 as buildings were less accessible and staff worked largely from home. Improvements to the **SRS website** have taken place over the last year, with more planned for near future to ensure that all information is up to date and to ensure the best possible customer journey. During 2021/22, the SRS website had 64,914 users and 177,919 page views. Our noise and air pollution web pages consistently receive the most page views.
- 2.52** The SRS website is supplemented by our **social media** offerings, SRS Twitter (@SRS\_Wales) and the SRS LinkedIn account. These channels have proved to be a highly effective way of getting information to a large number of businesses and residents.
- 2.53** Use of the **noise app** has gone from strength to strength. The app can be downloaded by residents wishing to make a complaint about noise, enabling them to record short bursts of the disturbance and submit to the service to determine if a nuisance has occurred. This approach has been invaluable at a time when noise nuisance complaints increased with more people staying at home, and has enabled complaints to be triaged effectively, thereby ensuring that officers’ site visits are prioritised where and when they are most needed.
- 2.54** An essential component of the operating model for SRS was the introduction of technical and mobile working solutions that enable employees to work remotely. This contributed hugely to the early success of the service, but as agile and home working capability becomes the norm for many Council services, it is clear that SRS needs to reposition itself at the cutting edge of mobile technology if it is to enhance its remote working capabilities moving forward. SRS will continue working with staff via the ICT

Review working group and ICT services to explore options for improving equipment and systems to ensure that we deliver services both efficiently and effectively.

- 2.55** During both 2020/21 and 2021/22, it wasn't possible to maintain pre-pandemic levels of cost recovery and income generation. There have been a number of reasons for this, however one of the main causes has been the reduction in revenue from the delivery of training courses, as a result of the impact of COVID restrictions on face-to-face teaching.
- 2.56** As part of the 2021/22 Annual Internal Audit Plan, two audit reviews were carried out in respect of Shared Regulatory Services. The first of these reviews involved an audit of **SRS governance and financial controls**. Just one issue was identified which needs to be addressed, that of resolving the current recruitment difficulties experienced by SRS. This was reflected in the Management Action Plan with the recommendation that 'The recruitment strategy is reviewed and updated to find solutions for recruitment and selection in the current market'. This review resulted in an audit outcome of '*reasonable assurance*' being awarded, meaning that there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place.
- 2.57** The second review involved an audit of **the Wales Illegal Money Lending (IML) Grant**. No key issues were identified in this audit and the report concludes that a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with 'internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited'.

## Financial Performance

- 2.58** The Gross Revenue Budget and provisional outturn position for 2021/22 are shown in the tables below, with the position in respect of each of the partners detailed to include both the Core and Authority Specific expenditure positions. The service is reporting an unaudited outturn position of a £363k underspend against a gross revenue budget of £8.331m, as illustrated in the following tables:

	Gross	Forecast	Outturn
	Budget	Outturn	Variance
Authority	£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Bridgend	1,777	1,635	142
Cardiff	4,812	4,666	146
Vale	1,742	1,667	75
<b>Total Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>8,331</b>	<b>7,968</b>	<b>363</b>

- 2.59** Multiple recruitment drives were undertaken in the year, however, the Service continued to experience significant issues in attracting appropriate candidates to particular disciplines within the service, which may in part be due to a national scarcity of resource being available. This issue has been amplified further by the impact of Covid.
- 2.60** The Service has continued to work with local universities in the practical support of students who are enrolled on degree courses relevant to the areas within the SRS where there are vacancies. A sizeable number of newly qualified Environmental Health Officers were employed to assist within the Covid Enforcement teams throughout the region, with this initiative being funded by the Welsh Government Covid Hardship Grant during 2021/22.
- 2.61** Where possible, staff have worked from home since the outbreak of Covid, with only skeleton staffing levels at the hubs, therefore achieving compliance with social distancing guidance.
- 2.62** Due to qualifications and specific skills held by SRS employees, a specialist team has been created to support the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) teams across the SRS region. This however, has placed additional pressure on residual staffing levels and workflows.
- 2.63** A full breakdown of the unaudited outturn position is shown in **Appendix 4**.

## Core Services

- 2.64** The approved gross Core Services Budget for 2021/22 is £5.941m which achieved an overall outturn underspend of £348k. The Core service's budget is allocated in line with the population split across the participating authorities, as illustrated in the following table:

Authority	%	Gross	Forecast	Outturn
		Budget	Outturn	Variance
		£'000's	£'000's	£'000's
Bridgend	22.67%	1,347	1,263	84
Cardiff	56.56%	3,360	3,174	186
Vale	20.77%	1,234	1,156	78
<b>Total Core</b>		<b>5,941</b>	<b>5,593</b>	<b>348</b>

- 2.65** The £286k overspend within Animal Services is predominantly due to residual horse accommodation costs incurred in the first few months of the year. Additionally, £28k has been moved to a specific reserve to purchase a replacement vehicle for the team, which will reduce vehicle costs going forward.
- 2.66** During 2021/22, the volume of complaints of unlicensed breeders and sick puppies has more than doubled. To help address these issues, one team member is currently on a partial secondment to a Wales wide task force. In the final quarter of 2021/22, the team worked in conjunction with other interested parties where

there had been a number of confirmed instances of Avian Influenza within the SRS region.

- 2.67** Environmental Services achieved a £67k overspend, which is predominantly the result of a £50k commitment to replace ageing air quality equipment across the region.
- 2.68** Food Services achieved a £381k underspend, which is a direct consequence of a noteworthy proportion of staff resource being diverted to support TTP activities. Additional Port Health duties were required to minimise the risk of infection through the Airport and Seaports, providing confidence that appropriate action could be taken should infection be identified. Remaining staff resource focussed on ensuring that the targets of the Food Standards Agency recovery programme were met in prioritising inspection of high risk and existing businesses.
- 2.69** Housing Services has achieved an overall overspend of £33k, which is predominantly the result of Works in Default activities which will be 100% recharged back to Cardiff, plus surveys of private and public sector homes to evaluate their compliance with accepted housing standards. Strong performance has seen the empty homes teams of the region exceed the annual performance targets, with considerable progress being made against some of the longer term empty properties.
- 2.70** Health & Safety and Communicable Disease (HSCD) Service achieved an underspend of £96k, which is a direct consequence of the level of support provided to the regional TTP teams for both the Cardiff & Vale plus Cwm Taf Health Boards. The HSCD team have also continued to focus on working within the care sector such as nurseries, care homes and domiciliary care whilst actively participating in multi-agency meetings concerning the impact of Covid in these sectors.
- 2.71** Pollution Services achieved a £37k underspend, which is the upshot of a member of staffing being seconded to lead the Bridgend Covid Enforcement team. An increase in complaints with regard to hospitality venues was identified as being a direct consequence to restrictions being revised. The team worked closely with the enforcement teams to ensure a consistent approach was employed with regard to both noise nuisance and Covid enforcement requirements.
- 2.72** Trading standards achieved an overall £220k underspend, which includes provision of £45k to fund the replacement of two ageing vehicles which will positively contribute towards reducing the carbon footprint of the Service, plus £25k to purchase a number of body cameras to be used by staff whilst on operations.
- 2.73** A senior officer was seconded to lead the Vale's COVID Enforcement team, which compounded issues on staffing within the budget for trading standards provision. There continues to be a national shortage of suitable candidates within this area, and the situation was further exacerbated by the continued secondment of a senior member of staff to Welsh Government. It is hoped that there will be a return to more proactive work in 2022/23.

**2.74** The 2021/22 Welsh Government Rentsmart Grants of £66k were built into the SRS budget. The grant forms an element of the Housing Support Grant received directly by the partner Authorities, therefore, as with previous years, the SRS costs will be recouped directly from the partners at year end.

### Authority Specific Services

**2.75** The approved gross budget of £2.390m in respect of Authority Specific (AS) Services has achieved an overall outturn underspend of £15k, as illustrated in the following table:

	<b>Gross Budget</b>	<b>Forecast Outturn</b>	<b>Outturn Variance</b>
<b>Authority</b>	<b>£'000's</b>	<b>£'000's</b>	<b>£'000's</b>
Bridgend	430	372	58
Cardiff	1,452	1,492	(40)
Vale	508	511	(3)
<b>Total AS Services</b>	<b>2,390</b>	<b>2,375</b>	<b>15</b>

**2.76** The £58k outturn underspend at Bridgend, relates directly to underspends within the Kennelling & Vets plus Licensing Services. Of this sum, the £35k underspend within the Bridgend Licensing Section is the consequence of carrying a temporary vacant post. In addition, Bridgend Empty homes has achieved an outturn underspend of £1k.

**2.77** Kennelling and Vets achieved an outturn underspend of £22k with activity continuing to perform below target, this is very much consistent with activity levels realised in previous periods.

**2.78** Despite the notable uptake in dog ownership during 2021/22, the number of dogs being presented as homeless to the service has remained on par with previous periods. However, it should be noted that the number of dogs signed over to the kennels by owners has increased as a result of homeworkers returning to their offices.

**2.79** Overall, Cardiff achieved an outturn overspend of £40k.

**2.80** Cardiff Licensing Section has achieved an outturn overspend of £105k, which is consistent with the outturn position of this unit in previous years. There are overspends within both the Employee and Supplies & Services sections. The position is partially offset by underspends across the other headings within Cardiff Authority Specific Services.

- 2.81** HMO Cathays and HMO Plasnewydd have achieved a combined £46k outturn underspend, which is due to staff changes and a reduction in operational costs incurred in the year.
- 2.82** The Student Liaison Officer achieved a £13k outturn underspend which was driven by a change in staff plus a reduction in operational costs incurred to date. The officer has continued to work together with other associated bodies to develop and disseminate guidance for students in respect of Covid related restrictions.
- 2.83** The Night Time Noise team achieved a £1k outturn overspend during 2021/22.
- 2.84** Cardiff Port Health Authority achieved a £7k outturn underspend which is the result of small volume of staff resources being diverted to cover Test, Trace and Protect activities.
- 2.85** Overall, the Vale achieved a £3k outturn overspend in respect of Authority Specific Services.
- 2.86** The Licensing Service achieved a £24k outturn overspend. Within the Vale, the taxi trade has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, an increase in the submission of electronic forms has driven an increase in staff hours to successfully navigate the increased workload.
- 2.87** The Burial section achieved a £4k outturn overspend which reflects the uptake of public health funerals in the year. However, it should be noted that there were no known Covid related funerals.
- 2.88** The Pest Control Service achieved an £8k outturn underspend.
- 2.89** The Kennelling and Vets Service continues to emulate the reduction in pressure experienced at Bridgend, and as a result achieved a £17k outturn underspend.

## Net Position

- 2.90** In accordance with the Joint Working Agreement (JWA), income budgets remain the responsibility of each Partner Authority and are shown in this report for completeness. The following table illustrates an overall achieved outturn overspend of £7k, against a net budget of £6.205m.

	<b>Net</b>	<b>Unaudited</b>	<b>Outturn</b>
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Outturn</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Authority</b>	<b>£'000's</b>	<b>£'000's</b>	<b>£'000's</b>
Bridgend	1,310	1,344	(34)
Cardiff	3,494	3,524	(30)
Vale	1,401	1,344	57
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>6,205</b>	<b>6,212</b>	<b>(7)</b>

- 2.91** A full breakdown of the forecast outturn position is illustrated in **Appendix 5**.
- 2.92** All partners have confirmed that they have made successful claims against the WG Covid income Loss Grant, however, these funds are held centrally by the partner authorities so are therefore not showing on this report.
- 2.93** Bridgend have achieved a net outturn position of a £34k overspend, against a net budget of £1.310m, which is due to the gross expenditure outturn underspend of £142k being offset by an £176k shortfall in income receipts.
- 2.94** Core income under recovered £21k against the £60k budget.
- 2.95** Licensing income achieved a £155k shortfall in receipts against a budget of £407k.
- 2.96** The achieved net outturn position for Cardiff is an overall overspend of £30k, against a net budget of £3.494m which is the result of gross expenditure underspend of £146k being offset by a £176k shortfall in income receipts at Cardiff.
- 2.97** Core income under recovered £40k against a budget of £183k
- 2.98** Authority Specific Services achieved £136k against a budget of £1,135.
- 2.99** The achieved net outturn position for the Vale of Glamorgan is a £57k underspent.
- 2.100** The £75k gross expenditure outturn position as detailed at point 2.1 of this report, has been offset by an £18k overall under recovery of income against target in 2021/22. The £8k over recovery of income within Core has been fully offset by the £26k under recovery of income within the Licensing Section where there has been a decrease in the number of licensed taxis in the area which is directly attributable to the impact of Covid.

### **Challenges moving forward**

- 2.101** Since its inception, SRS has consolidated service delivery in accord with the agreed standards. Over the last two years, the service has engaged with a wide range of partners to play a central role in tackling the spread of coronavirus. The over-riding challenge during 2022/23 will be to balance the need to respond to any resurgence of COVID-19, with the need to respond to other emerging global events while at the same time ensuring a return to 'business as usual work' with. Consequently, the Key Milestones for 2022/23 include:
- *Delivery of the SRS Business Plan 2022-2023 and the associated corporate priorities assigned to the SRS by the partner councils*
  - *To support the partner councils and other agencies to manage the impact of any resurgence of Covid-19*
  - *To monitor the implementation of new legislation and any requirements imposed by such legislation upon the Service, for example the Welsh Government requirements around Special Procedures*



- *To contribute to the climate change goals in each of the partner authorities through effective enforcement of environmental controls such as those regulating energy efficiency in the private rented housing sector.*
- *To consult with staff and develop a recruitment and retention strategy comprising actions for the short, medium and longer term in order to attract, develop and retain skilled staff.*
- *Review the agile working arrangements for the service to ensure that technology is being exploited fully to improve service delivery.*

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

- 3.1** The Annual report demonstrates the partner Councils' commitment to improving social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being and promoting sustainable development in line with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Equalities, Sustainability and safeguarding issues have all been taken into account when drafting this plan. Our work with stakeholders seeking to ensure that our early intervention and prevention activities maintain wellbeing in the SRS region is a crucial element of our approach to protect local people and the environment.
- 3.2** The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires the SRS to underpin decision making by contributing to the seven well-being goals of the Act, following the five ways of working, and consequently undertaking actions that will have a positive impact on people living in the future as well as those living today. The SRS Business Plan contains a number of initiatives that contribute to the wellbeing objectives. Section 6 of the Business Plan illustrates how the SRS priorities interface with the wellbeing goals on matters such as safeguarding the vulnerable and protecting the environment and forms the basis for the Annual report.
- 3.3** Aligning the Wellbeing Goals of the Act enables us to evidence our contribution to the National Wellbeing Goals. Promoting the five ways of working is reflected in our approach to integrated business planning. Setting consistently challenging yet realistic steps and performance improvement targets, the SRS is able to clearly demonstrate progress towards achieving the national goals by the production of the Annual report.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** The implications are set out in the body of the report.

## **Employment**

- 4.2** The implications of the budget reductions undertaken in 2020/21 are set out in the body of the report.

## **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.3** The partner Councils have a duty to improve under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The report outlines achievements in 2021/22 for the matters assigned to the Shared Regulatory Service. The Joint Working Agreement executed on 10 April 2015 and amended July 2017 sets out the obligations placed upon the partner Councils in delivery of the Shared Regulatory Service.

## **5. Background Papers**

None

## ***Appendices***

- Appendix 1 – SRS Performance Measures 2021- 2022
- Appendix 2 – SRS Covid activities 2021-2022
- Appendix 3 – SRS Prosecution Statistics 2021-2022
- Appendix 4 – Projected Gross Revenue Outturn Position (tab A)
- Appendix 5 – Projected Net Outturn Position (tab B)