

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 14TH MARCH, 2022

REFERENCE FROM HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 9TH MARCH, 2022

“ TASK AND FINISH GROUP: HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PROVISION
WITHIN THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN (CX) –

The purpose of the report, as set out by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, was for Members to consider the findings and recommendations of the main report on Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan (Appendix 1) and for these to be referred on to Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement (with any additional comments or recommendations the Committee wished to add).

The main report (Appendix 1) was the culmination of the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group, as supported by Council Officers and other stakeholders and interested parties, set up in early 2021 to look at housing and homelessness provision as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's recovery from COVID-19. The report outlined the key areas and themes around current and future housing and homelessness provision, with the challenges faced in progressing this by the Council, Welsh Government, other Local Authorities and partners also set out.

A key part of the main report were the recommendations that had been made by the Task and Finish Group which covered a number of areas:

- That the Council continues to hold 'off the shelf' plans in order to develop temporary accommodation and prioritises as part of its housing development programme the inclusion of new build and the acquisition of existing properties.
- That the Council builds on and develops the 'Housing First' approach towards people who were homeless and other vulnerable groups.
- That the Council ensures greater provision for people who were 'job-ready' in order to help them transition from benefits to employment in order to maintain their current accommodation and to transition to more permanent accommodation if appropriate. This should include looking at increasing the opportunities for tenants to seek employment and apprenticeship opportunities within the various departments of the Council and its services.
- That the Council provides further modular accommodation with intensive, wraparound support, such as seen at the Court Road development.
- That the Council ensures greater provisions for accommodation for older persons (particularly within the rural Vale), in order to increase downsizing opportunities for older tenants occupying large homes and free up that accommodation to be utilised by those persons living in housing that has become unsuitable (including those residents living in temporary and homeless accommodation).

- That the Council undertakes a review of its assets and existing housing i.e., a review of the Council's de-designation strategy in order to increase the supply of single person housing and to look at reviewing previously de-designated units as well as investigating the potential conversion of other properties to types of housing most needed.
- That the Vale of Glamorgan Council investigates at a regional level the potential of collaborating with other Local Authorities to purchase Modern Methods of Construction units, to ensure the most economical use of monies are made for each local authority and to increase the pace and scale of social housing for homeless clients.
- That the Council explore the possibility of accelerating the process between planning for new build social housing sites and move in ready for tenants, i.e., complete the building of such housing units off site. As part of this, the Council should look at examples of best practice in other Local Authorities in Wales and elsewhere.
- That the Council build carbon neutral properties and invest in original stock to bring up to a similar level where able in order to ensure sustainable accommodation and to reduce fuel poverty.
- That the Council considers prioritising local residents during the first phase of housing allocation at rural sites, but then considers allocating such housing to residents elsewhere within the Vale of Glamorgan if there is insufficient demand or priority within the local area itself.
- That the Council reviews the opportunities of expanding the One Stop Shop provision at Holton Road i.e., greater inclusion of 3rd Sector services to complement the work undertaken by Pobl. As part of this, consideration should be given to promoting and publicising the services available to all residents within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- That the Council develops a land disposal protocol which prioritises the disposal of surplus Council owned land for new Council house building in addition to purchasing land within the private market, and further, Council officers liaise with Welsh Government officials regarding surplus public sector land.

Also, in terms of monitoring, it was recommended that a report providing an update on any progress made on the above be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time and for the report to then be referred onto Cabinet for their consideration.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Perkes (who also acted as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group) stated that this review of Housing and Homelessness Provision had included a cross party group of Members from this Scrutiny Committee and had also included a representative of the Tenant Working Group / Panel, who acted as the Vice Chair of the Group, as well as the contributions made by various Vale of Glamorgan Council Officers (such as Democratic Services, Housing, Legal, Section 106 and Social Services) plus various external partners and experts such as representatives from Pobl, Newydd Housing Association and Welsh Government (WG).

The contributions made by all of the parties involved in the review had helped to increase the knowledge and understanding of the Group rapidly and gave the Group

a thorough grasp of the needs, issues and challenges faced by homeless people and to identify who these people were in order to better assist them. The Group also looked at what WG were looking for from Local Authorities regarding housing and homelessness provision, as well as the different policies, legislation and procedures that the Council needed to follow within this area . All of these contributions had helped inform the Group's recommendations within the main report, from the types of housing required to a greater emphasis on Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). It was also important to build on the success of the award-winning development at Court Road regarding temporary accommodation and support. The review had also emphasised the need to identify homelessness more effectively (including 'hidden' homelessness), thereby helping to prevent a return to street homelessness. These sentiments were also echoed by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, who had also sat on the Task and Finish Group and referred to the positive feedback from people residing at the Court Road development for temporary accommodation for housing homeless persons.

The Head of Housing and Building Services also commended the report and its recommendations, which would help to assist in delivering the relevant services and preventing or minimising homelessness. He added that the Council had faced a number of challenges over the course of the last few years (such as COVID-19) which had tested its ability to respond and to provide services, including its housing and homelessness provision. This report would help stand housing services in good stead going forward. Furthermore, there would be other reports coming to the Committee in the coming months which would look at the impact of local housing provision and the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, where the challenge would be assisting and housing refugees from the conflict. There was a commitment from the UK Government, Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association to assist Ukrainian refugees, including Vale residents putting themselves forward to sponsor refugees as well as the work that would be undertaken by the Council directly to help house these, as had been done previously with housing refugees from Syria and Afghanistan.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Committee endorses the findings and recommendations of the main report on Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan by the Task and Finish Group.
- (2) T H A T the report be referred to Cabinet for its consideration and endorsement.
- (3) T H A T an update report on this be provided to the Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time and for the report to be referred onto Cabinet.

Reasons for recommendations

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

(2) In order for Cabinet to consider the findings, actions and recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group.

(3) To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet are kept updated on any progress made as a result of the findings and recommendations of the main report on Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan.”