

## **HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. C.A. Cave (Chairman); Councillor S.J. Griffiths (Vice-Chairman); Councillors Ms. B.E. Brooks, Miss. A.M. Collins, B.T. Gray, Mrs. S.M. Hanks, M.J.G. Morgan, M.R. Wilson and Ms. M. Wright.

Also present: Mr. A. Raybould (Tenant Working Group Representative) and Ms. D. Murphy (Cardiff and the Vale Citizens Advice).

### 642 ANNOUNCEMENTS -

The Chairman advised that the Tenant Working Group Representatives would be voting on a replacement to fill the current vacant Tenant Working Group Representative's seat on the Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2019 and therefore looked forward to welcoming the new representative at the March meeting.

Following a brief introduction provided by Ms. Delyth Murphy on her work as a Training Manager for Cardiff and the Vale Citizens Advice, the Chairman thanked Ms. Murphy for accepting a seat on the Committee and for her continued offer to liaise with Members to help answer any queries and/or gather advice they may need.

### 643 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -

These were received from Councillor Mrs. M.R. Wilkinson and Mrs. G. Doyle and Ms. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

### 644 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2018 be approved as a correct record.

### 645 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

No declarations were received.

### 646 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT UPDATE - PRESENTATION -

The Senior Neighbourhood Manager for Community Investment and Services to Older People in partnership with the Community Investment and Involvement Officer for Housing Services provided a presentation to the Committee to update Members on the work undertaken by the Community Investment Team.

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Officers were pleased to report, that during 2018/19 to date, over 2,800 residents had engaged in community activities, including fun days, consultations and national safeguarding week based around the following topics:

- health and wellbeing;
- employment;
- training;
- volunteering;
- digital service and inclusions; and
- green spaces.

The Officers apprised Members of the various projects that were currently underway or had taken place previously to meet the Community Investment Team aim of providing tenants with additional resources to support the Council's goal of building stronger cohesive communities.

Officers highlighted the importance of working towards increasing levels of digital inclusion in the future as it was now becoming more common for services to be accessed online and therefore any future work would need to reflect the increase in need. It was also important to build and develop on environmental projects as these types of projects would help to raise the profile of the Community Investment Team and encourage individuals to engage with members of the team and build confidence to engage with other services the team supported.

As well as continuing work to develop 'Community Champions' the Community Investment Team would be working towards the following projects for the future:

- Befriending and Household Management Support Through Timebanking;
- Development of Vulnerable Tenant Identification to Target Services;
- Increase Service Offer Within the Rural Vale, Including Bike Club;
- Review the Digital Inclusion Programme;
- Tenant Engagement Project;
- To Create a Council-Wide Approach to Providing Tenants With Work Experience Placements;
- Supporting the Growth of Additional Community Groups and Social Enterprises;
- Early Intervention and Prevention Services - Tenancy Ready; and
- Older People's Projects to Tackle Loneliness.

The Vice-Chairman referred to the percentage of persons over the age of 55 who attended digital drop-in sessions reporting to be more confident using digital technology and asked what plans were in place to improve on the 18% statistic. The Senior Neighbourhood Manager advised that the Community Investment Team was currently looking at its assessment techniques to identify the key skills being learnt and what tenants were gaining by attending regular digital inclusion sessions. It was important to note that many tenants new to the digital inclusion sessions saw these as a social activity and therefore the sessions were also improving individuals' wellbeing. It was hoped that as the projects continued then there would be more statistical data available in order to identify methods for improvement.

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A Member apprised officers of the December Committee meeting and the comments raised by Members in response to a report on Digital Inclusion and suggested that the Community Investment Team take note of the comments going forward. In referring to the presentation, the Member asked whether the equipment being used during the digital inclusion sessions was the most user friendly and/or accessible and queried whether it would be advantageous if ICT equipment could be purchased by tenants via the Vale Time Banking Project in the future.

The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that there were already some of the Council's homes that had had access to free Wi-Fi and that the Council was looking into broadband services as part of the planning process for new building stock and that this was being undertaken in partnership with local broadband providers. The Head of Housing and Building Services also advised that the Council was starting to investigate methods relating to the use of artificial intelligence technology to help tenants with specific needs such as learning difficulties and/or mobility restrictions and as a Housing and Building Department, develop a digital transformation plan to revolutionise the way that the Department was operating over the next 12-24 months.

The Community Investment and Involvement Officer also advised that the Council already operated a Purchase Support Scheme, utilising redundant Council computers, to help Council tenants to purchase technology from a company called 'Computer Recyclers' and an additional 5% discount was added to orders when the individual advised that they were ordering in connection with the Council. Discounts on broadband services were also available for Council tenants.

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the ongoing work of the Community Investment Team be noted and that officers be thanked for a comprehensive and informative presentation.

#### 647 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018 (DEH) -

The Finance Support Manager presented the report to advise the Committee of the position in respect of Revenue and Capital expenditure for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 regarding those revenue and capital budgets, which formed the Committee's remit.

Council, on 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, approved the Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue budgets for 2018/19 and, on 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, Cabinet approved the revised 2018/19 Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account budgets. The Officer added that reports monitoring expenditure were brought to the Committee on a regular basis.

The Revenue Budget and projected outturn for 2018/19 was shown within the report in the table below and the Officer advised that it was anticipated that the Committee would outturn on target for the current financial year:

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	<b>Amended Revenue Budget</b>	<b>Probable Outturn</b>	<b>Variance (+ ) Favourable (-) Adverse</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Public Sector Housing (HRA)	(77)	(77)	0
Council Fund Housing	1,382	1,382	0
Private Housing	1,058	1,058	0
Regulatory Services	2,112	2,112	0
Youth Offending Service	692	692	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,167</b>	<b>5,167</b>	<b>0</b>

Public Sector Housing (HRA) - The HRA was expected to outturn on target and any underspends in year would be offset by additional contributions to Capital Expenditure thus reducing the reliance on Unsupported Borrowing.

Council Fund Housing - It was anticipated that the budget would outturn on target.

Private Housing - The income from Disabled Facility Grants (DFG) fees remained behind profile as at 30th November, due mainly to a reduction in applications coming through for DFG adaptations, hence capital expenditure had reduced and consequently agency fee income to revenue was also down. This put pressure on the revenue budget where fee income targets may not be achieved. Recently there had been indications of an upturn in demand, however there was very little scope to reduce expenditure to actively mitigate the position. Accordingly, should there be an overspend at year-end it would have to be funded from reserves.

Regulatory Services - The allocation represented the Vale of Glamorgan's budget for its share of the Shared Regulatory Service (SRS). A separate set of accounts were maintained for the SRS and periodically reported to the Shared Regulatory Service Joint Committee. It was anticipated that the SRS would outturn on target.

Youth Offending Service - It was anticipated that the service would outturn on target at year end.

With regards to the 2018/19 savings targets, the Finance Support Manager advised that as part of the Final Revenue Budget proposals for 2018/19, a savings target of £6.298 m was set for the Authority and the savings targets relevant to the

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Committee, were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The Officer added that each savings target had been given a RAG status with a green status indicating that it was anticipated that the target would be achieved in full within the financial year. An Amber status indicated that it was considered that the saving in the year would be within 20% of the target and Red indicated that the saving to be achieved in year would be less than 80% of the target. However, it was anticipated that savings related to the Committee would be achieved during the current financial year.

Appendix 2 of the Officer's report detailed financial progress on the Capital Programme as at 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2018 and the Officer advised that there were no amendments to be reported.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to Appendix 1 of the Officer's report which set out the approved savings updates for 2018/19 and asked for further clarification on the description under 'Reshaping Tranche 3 - Establishment Review' which stated 'Review of Various Payments to Staff and Efficient Utilisation of Staff'. The Finance Support Manager advised that the description referred to schemes that may result in a saving to the Local Authority such as the Annual Leave Purchase Scheme and/or any requests for reduction in working hours.

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the position with regards to the 2018/19 Revenue and Capital Monitoring be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

That the Scrutiny Committee is aware of the position with regards to the 2018/19 Revenue and Capital budgets.

#### 648 3<sup>RD</sup> QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2018/19 (MD) -

Members were advised of the progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and asked to confirm the updated Work Programme schedule for the remainder of 2018/19.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that Appendices A to C of the report set out the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee to date with the Committee Work Programme schedule being attached at Appendix D to the report. The Officer also drew Members' attention to the supplementary document tabled at the meeting which highlighted an administrative error and therefore an amendment with regards to page 3 of Appendix A.

The Democratic Services Officer provided an update regarding all ongoing items within Appendices A to C, all of which the Committee were previously aware.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to the Forward Work Programme as attached at Appendix D to the report and noted that there were currently 10 reports requested by the Committee that had not yet been assigned to a Committee meeting

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and queried if an additional ordinary meeting would be necessary to receive all of the items prior to the end of the current municipal year. The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that with regards to the Housing and Building Services Section all those reports under his responsibility were on track to be provided, however, he was unable to advise on items out of his jurisdiction.

The Member also shared his continuing concern over the use of the term 'completed' on the internal tracking documents (Appendices A to C) of the report with his main concern being that the public would not necessarily be aware that the reports were still being monitored.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that Appendices A to C were used for internal purposes only by the committee and therefore the public tracking document was the Forward Work Programme (Appendix D). Therefore, when an item was marked as completed internally the item was added to the Forward Work Programme that was uploaded to the public website for the attention of the general public.

At this point, the Chairman summarised that the key issue was specifically the use of the term 'completed' and therefore suggested that the term be amended to read 'added to the Forward Work Programme'. In agreement with the Chairman's point, the Member suggested that the matter of terminology be referred to the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group for its consideration which would also ensure that a generic term was used across the internal tracking for all five Scrutiny Committees.

A Member wished to share his recognition of his colleague's concern with regards to reports being carried over to the next municipal year and therefore there being a risk of the report being lost, and that maybe the better term to be used would be 'published' which better reflected the fact that the item was published on the Forward Work Programme and had become a public record and therefore continued to be monitored.

In conclusion, the Officer advised that a request would be passed to the Head of Democratic Services for consideration by the Scrutiny Chairman and Vice-Chairman Group and reminded members that the Forward Work Programme was a proposed list of items for consideration and maybe subject to change depending on prevailing circumstances.

**RECOMMENDED -**

(1) T H A T the views of the Committee on the status of the actions listed in Appendix A to C of the report be noted.

**10 October, 2018**

**Min. No. 402 - Housing Development Programme - Hayeswood Road, Barry (Ref) -**

(1) That the report be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration of the proposals contained within the report in

Cabinet, on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2018 resolved –  
[1] That the findings of the Site Assessment (attached at Appendix A of

<p>light of the comments made above and that a more meaningful engagement exercise be undertaken with the Traveller Community.</p>	<p>the report to Cabinet on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2018 and subsequently considered by Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee) be rejected and the identification of the site at Hayeswood Road, Barry as the preferred site to meet the longer term need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) be rejected.</p> <p>[2] That in pursuance of resolution 1 above, the proposal to submit a planning application for the site at Hayeswood Road, Barry as a detailed application for a Gypsy and Traveller site be rejected and not progressed any further.</p> <p>[3] That in pursuance of resolution 1 above, the proposal to enter into negotiations with Welsh Government for the acquisition of the site for the purposes of a Gypsy and Traveller site be rejected and not progressed any further.</p> <p>[4] That immediate steps be taken to improve engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller community, including those resident temporarily at Hayes Road, Sully, so that their needs can be carefully assessed and considered in advance of any new proposals being brought forward for consideration.</p> <p>(Minute No. C440 refers)</p> <p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p><b>Min. No. 406 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Scrutiny Decision Tracking of Recommendations and Updated Work Programme Schedule 2018/19 (MD) – Recommended</b></p>	
<p>(2) That the updated Forward Work Programme schedule attached at Appendix D be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.</p>	<p>Work Programme schedule uploaded to the Council's website.</p> <p><b>Completed</b></p>
<p>(3) That for future scheduling of the Committee's Forward Work Programme and recommendation tracking that the following reports be labelled as ongoing: Vacant Properties within the Private Sector (12 Sept 18: Min No 277) Social Enterprise (12 Sept 18: Min No 278)</p>	<p>Work Programme schedule amended accordingly.</p> <p><b>Completed</b></p>

<b>5 December 2018</b>	
<b>Min. No. 546 – Initial Capital Programme Budget Proposals 2019/20 To 2023/24 And Capital Monitoring 2018/19 (DEH) – Recommended</b>	
(2) That the Initial Capital Budget proposals for 2019/20 be noted and that the Committee's comments be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.	Referred to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 <sup>th</sup> December, 2018. <b>Completed</b>
<b>Min. No. 547 – Initial Revenue Budget Proposals 2019/20 And Revised Budget 2018/19 (DEH) – Recommended</b>	
(2) That the Initial Revenue Budget Proposals for 2019/20 and the comments raised by the Committee, including those relating to cost pressures as set out in the minute above be passed to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee as the lead Scrutiny Committee.	Referred to Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting on 13 <sup>th</sup> December, 2018. <b>Completed</b>
<b>Min. No. 550 – Digital Inclusion (DEH) – Recommended</b>	
(2) That a further report on digital inclusion be provided to the Committee with particular consideration given to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible new sites/areas eligible for free Wi-Fi taking into account any suggestions received from Tenant Working Group Representatives;</li> <li>• The relevant costs and security implications for making Microsoft Office 365 available to Council tenants.</li> </ul>	Added to work programme schedule. <b>Completed</b>
<b>12 September 2018</b>	
<b>Min. No. 273 – Older Persons Housing and Accommodation Including with Care and Care Ready (REF) – Recommended</b>	
(2) That the comments of the Committee as set out in the minutes above be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.	Cabinet, at its meeting on 15 <sup>th</sup> October, 2018, resolved that the findings of the assessment of older people's housing and accommodation be endorsed, and the implications of the assessment be considered by the Council to inform future housing policy. (Min No C444 refers) <b>Completed</b>

(2) T H A T the Forward Work Programme attached at Appendix D to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.



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(3) T H A T a request be passed to the Head of Democratic Services for the Scrutiny Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen Group to consider a change to the status terminology within internal Scrutiny tracking documents.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2) For information.
- (3) To ensure that any terminology changes made to the internal Scrutiny tracking documents remain uniform across all five Scrutiny Committees and that the status of items are clear for both members of the public and Elected Members.

649 VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2018-2022 (REF) -

Following apologies received from the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised that the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 statutorily required Local Authorities to undertake a homelessness review and to produce a Homelessness Strategy setting out how the Vale of Glamorgan Council, in partnership with other stakeholders, would identify and develop the services required to help and support those persons in housing need. Therefore, a draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy had now been developed in consultation with partners setting out the steps and activities that would be undertaken by the Council and partners to deliver the required strategic outcomes for clients who were homeless or threatened with homelessness.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2018, Cabinet endorsed the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy and relevant Action Plan for consultation purposes and that the commencement of a formal consultation exercise be approved. Cabinet also resolved that following consideration by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee any comments be referred back to Cabinet for final determination.

The Head of Housing and Building Services introduced Mr. Mark Lawrence (Homelessness Consultant) who was seconded to the Local Authority from Shelter Cymru and had made an invaluable contribution to the development of the draft Strategy. The officer also introduced Ms. Joanne Rowe (Private Rented Sector Co-Ordinator) who had significant day to day experience of dealing with individuals likely to be or already homeless.

The Homelessness Consultant advised that the draft Strategy document itself was set out over two parts with the first containing the results of the Local Authority's review on the issue of homelessness and the second an Action Plan on how to tackle any points identified over the next four years. To gain a more open response from service users, a basic questionnaire was put to service users by independent individuals employed on behalf of the Local Authority and the feedback received from the 35 clients who engaged over a six week period was generally good.

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It was found that the main focus of the positive comments received were based around that of soft skills i.e. empathy and therefore the positivity of feedback around this area was very rewarding for the Housing Solutions Team who were trying to provide a personal service under strict legislation.

Following the first stage of review which was to contact the service users direct, 120 invitations were sent out to local partners who had a connection to the Housing Solutions Team. Approximately 50 organisations attended the Homelessness Consultation event which followed with all of the information collated during the event being used to form the basis of the Action Plan. Therefore, the Strategy was not just the Council's vision for the future but also that of its partners and service users.

The officer advised that Section 66 of the new Housing Wales Act 2014 set out the requirement to prevent individuals becoming homeless in the first instance and the Vale of Glamorgan Council was sixth out of 22 Welsh Authorities. Section 73 of the Act set out the Local Authority's duty to resolve an individual's issues when they were already homeless and the officer was proud to report that the work of the Housing Team had resulted in the Local Authority being second out of 22 Local Authorities in meeting the statutory duty.

The Action Plan contained 46 actions that would direct the future work of the Council over the next four years; however, homelessness was an increasing issue within society and would always be an issue due to the multitude of possible issues resulting in an individual becoming homeless. Often the individuals that the Housing Solutions Team worked with presented with some sort of mental health issue and therefore the Housing Solutions Team now had a mental health professional as part of the team.

Looking forward to the future, the Officer advised that the Housing Solutions Team looked to increase on the number of households having their needs satisfied within the private sector and improve on the 240 figure since 2015. It was also hoped that within the next two to three months, two new support workers would be employed to help individuals maintain properties and their tenancies and therefore prevent repeated cases of homelessness. An online portal that could be accessed by individuals starting to worry about their home security was also being designed.

In conclusion, the Homelessness Consultant added that there was currently no quick fix for homelessness and that it was a national issue gaining more and more daily coverage within the media. Universal Credit would have a definite impact on homelessness and could have a significant impact over a short period of time following the Bedroom Tax which had already impacted on homelessness statistics. Brexit would also bring about possible job losses and interest rate increases on unsecured loans which would put households under significant strain. However, despite all of the aforementioned factors, the Housing Solutions Team was doing a fantastic job and was fully qualified to deal with any future challenges.

A Member referred to page 9 of the draft Strategy and queried whether the statement made that there had been no rough sleepers recorded over the same period (with regards to achievements made since the introduction of the Housing

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(Wales) Act 2014 on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2015) was accurate when the Council was aware that there were more rough sleepers within the Vale of Glamorgan.

The Homelessness Consultant advised that the main issue with the Local Authority conducting rough sleeper counts was that the count was only a snapshot of the number of people sleeping rough at one particular time and that homeless individuals tended to pick multiple locations as a base through the night. The Private Rented Sector Co-ordinator also wished to apprise Committee of a Homelessness helpline called 'Street Link' which allowed any individual to call in a sighting of a person who seemed to be homeless and then the relevant Local Authority would be contacted with the information. This allowed the Local Authority to respond much quicker to offer support to any homeless individual. It was also important to note that due to the more rural setting of the Vale of Glamorgan, it was more difficult to measure the amount of individuals sleeping rough and to build working relationships with them in comparison to places such as Cardiff City centre where the night time economy resulted in homeless individuals being more visible and known to support staff.

The Chairman congratulated officers on the fact that the Local Authority was picking up on any instances of homelessness much quicker than it had previously and seconded the points raised by the Operational Manager for Public Housing Services in that sometimes homeless individuals were not always willing to accept the help offered by the Local Authority.

The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that many homeless individuals wished to stay within their local area to ensure that they remained close to their support network and there were often very complex reasons for the individual being homeless in the first instance. With regards to the number of individuals classed as 'sofa surfing' it was impossible for the Local Authority to confirm the number of individuals however, the Local Authority had seen a visible increase on the number of individuals sleeping on the streets of the Vale of Glamorgan. The vast majority of homeless individuals referred to the Housing Solutions Team by Elected Members, were already known to the team.

The Member thanked officers for their responses to her query and stated that it was extremely useful to know about the Street Link helpline and a comfort that the helpline was an out of hours service.

A Member congratulated officers on a very good Strategy and noted the huge progress made with regards to homelessness support since her time in office as a Cabinet Member and shared her continuing belief in a collaboration of support services to tackle homelessness. However, the Member expressed her concern over the continued use of bed and breakfast establishments being used for emergency accommodation as it had huge financial implications for the Local Authority. The Member also wished to highlight that the list of individuals as set out in the reasons for homelessness under Section 66 Housing (Wales) Act 2014 on page 11 of the Strategy were indeed the exact individuals who would most likely end up in bed and breakfast emergency accommodation.

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In response, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised that the Local Authority was already putting long term plans in place to address the increasing need for one bedroom accommodation across the Vale of Glamorgan and added that an effective Strategy was essential to help support such planning. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services also wished to add that the bed and breakfast emergency accommodation was not suitable for families, however, with all Local Authority accommodation being full but more individuals presenting as homeless, bed and breakfast accommodation was sometimes unavoidable. The Vale of Glamorgan Council currently operated on 10 emergency placements however, a severe lack of one bedroom accommodation was a huge concern and a priority factor in long term planning. The Homelessness Consultant apprised the Committee of the legislation currently in place around using bed and breakfast accommodation for emergency placements and that bed and breakfast accommodation was only meant to be used for a maximum of six weeks. However, homelessness was a crisis that the Local Authority must respond to and therefore any new build projects would act as a small relief to the crisis. For context purposes the Private Rented Sector Co-Ordinator advised that 10 individuals were already accommodated in the one bedroom emergency accommodation available to the Local Authority, however, 5 of those 10 individuals already had a 'move on' plan. Due to the unexpected nature of individuals declaring themselves as homeless, for example individuals suddenly fleeing domestic violence, the Local Authority was only able to plan its provision as a responsive service.

The Operational Manager for Housing and Building Services added that the Local Authority did not currently have any direct emergency access accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan as was currently operated within neighbouring Local Authorities. However, the increase in homeless individuals within the Vale of Glamorgan meant that the Local Authority would need to consider whether other types of resources were required within the Vale. A second possible solution to offer support to homeless individuals was a Local Authority lettings agency. To build resilience into the Housing Solutions Team, some of the staff who were currently on a temporary contract would be offered permanent positions and if the borrowing cap was removed by Welsh Government it would allow the Local Authority to accelerate its housing development programme. The Local Authority did not wish to rely on emergency bed and breakfast accommodation and would be doing all it could to avoid it in the future.

The Member thanked the officers for their informative responses and requested that Committee receive regular updates on the output information informing the Strategy Action Plan and the Member's recommendation was seconded.

A Member wished to raise a number of points regarding the draft Strategy document as follows:

- The Member congratulated officers on a very well written summary and noted that there were 3,882 housing applicants on the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Register seeking affordable rented accommodation and of those, approximately 70% of households had no earned income. The Member noted that this was evidence of a severe issue for the Council and that there was also a significant amount of hidden homelessness that the Local Authority

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was not yet able to measure and therefore the Strategy seemed to lack a definition on what being homeless was.

- There was a grammatical error on the second bullet point at the bottom of page 9.
- Within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan, the action of 'explore needs to develop a direct access hostel' was currently rated as a low priority. However, following discussion that had taken place during the meeting the action was obviously a high priority and should be changed to reflect this.
- Page 21 of the draft Strategy referred to a mental health link worker and the Member queried whether the individual would be placed in the Housing Solutions Team or at Barry Hospital.
- There were several references to the legislative sections of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 within the document, however, there were concerns that the terminology would not be easily understandable to lay persons and therefore, an explanation of the legislative sections (in particular Section 73) needed to be added to the document.
- The pie charts within the document were not clear to the reader as some colours used were very similar and therefore the reader could not be certain which percentage was relevant to which category. Therefore, the Member suggested that a different type of chart be used and that the total statistics also be added to the chart for the readers benefit.
- The challenge facing the Local Authority was enormous and therefore a more stronger point needed to be made within the background information of the Strategy over the gravitas of the challenge faced.
- A Member referred to the statement made on page 3 of the Strategy which said that the aim of the current legislation was to focus more intensely on prevention rather than cure and therefore the Member suggested that more emphasis be put into the document with regards to specific prevention methods.

The Head of Housing and Building Services thanked all Members for their comments regarding the draft Strategy and advised that that all points would be taken into consideration and reflected in the draft document as appropriate. During the collation of the document, considerable attention was given to the terminology used to make sure that the document was interesting to read and understandable for all. With regards to the Member's suggestion of adding more statistical information into the document, the Officer advised that the information would probably be more appropriate for the Committee's attention as Members would have expert knowledge to assess and evaluate the statistics. The Officer also confirmed that the mental health link worker would be based within the Housing Solutions Team. It was also important to note that the draft Strategy would also need to be formally adopted by Welsh Government prior to adoption by the Local Authority.

With full Committee agreement, the Chairman requested that the output information and relevant statistics informing the Action Plan be presented to the Committee on a quarterly basis and also wished to add that on page 17 of the document a note was currently included which stated '(Link to be added once draft approved)' which needed to be populated.

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In conclusion, the Chairman thanked all parties for their contribution during the meeting and summarised that it was imperative that a focus on prevention as well as cure led the work of the Local Authority to tackle the homelessness crisis and that the fantastic work of the Housing Solutions Team and the Local Authority's position in comparison to other Local Authorities should be included within the draft Strategy. The Committee also wished to pass on their sincere thanks and respect to the members of staff in the Housing Solutions Team for their excellent and unwavering work.

#### RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the minutes above be referred to Cabinet along with the draft Strategy and Action Plan.
- (3) T H A T the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee receive a quarterly update report on the output information and relevant statistics informing the Action Plan.

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Members are aware of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan.
- (2) Cabinet is aware of the comments received from the Scrutiny Committee prior to final determination of the Strategy and Action Plan.
- (3) To ensure Members are kept regularly up to date on progress surrounding the strategy during the current homelessness crisis.