

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 6th February, 2019.

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

Also present: Mrs. G. Doyle, Mr. A. Raybould and Ms. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

723 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE -

These were received from Councillor Ms. M. Wright and Ms. D. Murphy (Cardiff and the Vale Citizens Advice).

724 MINUTES -

RECOMMENDED - T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

725 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST -

No declarations were received.

726 PRESENTATION - FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT AND COMMITTEE REPORTING -

The Head of Housing and Building Services provided a presentation to the Committee, the purpose of which was to inform Members of a new Committee Report format that had been agreed to aid the decision making process. The new format of the report would improve transparency and would allow officers to demonstrate how proposals were grounded in the Five Ways of Working as set out in the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, aligned to the Council's Corporate Wellbeing Objectives and through the Council's objectives, to the seven National Wellbeing Goals for Wales.

The Officer advised, as Members would already be aware, the Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act gave public bodies a legally binding common purpose of the seven National Wellbeing Goals for Wales and detailed the way in which the Local Authority, as a specified public body must work, and how the Council should work with other public bodies to improve wellbeing across Wales.

The Wellbeing and Future Generations (Wales) Act had promoted new ways of working to be embedded across the organisation. The Council was an early adopter of the Act and the Corporate Plan had been designed to maximise the Council's

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contribution to the National Wellbeing Goals and to embed the Five Ways of Working in its work. The Council was now more integrated in how it delivered its work, and to reflect this had introduced outcome based scrutiny, focusing on progress against the outcome area rather than by Department. Furthermore, embedding the Act required Officers to ensure their work was grounded in the Five Ways of Working and to ensure work was aligned to the Council's Wellbeing Objectives. It also required the Executive to ensure decisions were taken in accordance with the Act. Importantly it also affected how Elected Members undertook their roles through scrutiny and Full Council, requiring Members to have due regard for the Act and to scrutinise decisions in accordance with the Five Ways of Working and the National Wellbeing Goals.

Elected Members were able to channel their wide range of community intelligence into decision making and as such, through using the framework of the Five Ways of Working, Members could ensure that proposals were in line with the sustainable development principle:

- Ensuring the proposals are reflective of the long term needs of the Vale of Glamorgan;
- That proposals would prevent problems, or prevent issues from escalating;
- That relevant services and organisations have been involved in the development/implementation of proposals;
- That public, Third Sector and private partners have played a part where possible; and
- That, where possible, we have sought to involve the public in our work.

In conclusion, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised that the new Committee Report template was already in circulation and the newly added Executive Summary section of the template was added in the hope that it would make the report easier to read for both Elected Members and members of the public.

A Member thanked the Officer for his presentation and wished to raise the point that report recommendations were less obvious within the new report template and suggested that the formatting for the recommendations section of the report be amended to ensure that the recommendations could be found more quickly within the document. The Chairman echoed the Member's observation and advised that the comment would be returned to the Performance and Development Team who were leading on the report template implementation.

A Member queried if the report template had been adopted by Cabinet as the previous report template was not used as part of the 21st January Cabinet agenda, to which, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised that the template had been formally adopted by the Cabinet and would be in circulation from the 4th February Cabinet meeting. The Officer also wished to add that the report template document was still under development and would be amended as and when feedback was received. As report authors, the template supported Officers to think more deeply about what, why and how they were trying to achieve their goals and therefore it was hoped that Members would find the report template much more useful.

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AGREED - T H A T the comments as set out above regarding the formatting of the new report template be forwarded to the Performance and Development Team following the meeting.

727 CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING MID-YEAR REPORT (REF) -

The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that the reference before Committee was referred to all Scrutiny Committees for consideration and highlighted that the attached report to the reference was a mid-year report and therefore an annual report would follow.

The Corporate Safeguarding Working Group was established in the Council to learn lessons from the CSSIW and Estyn 2011 joint report following their investigation into the way Pembrokeshire County Council was managing allegations of professional abuse and its arrangements for safeguarding and protecting children in education. The Group was well attended by all the Directorates and met on a quarterly basis with standing agenda items including Safer Recruitment, Regional Safeguarding Board and a Work Plan.

The mid-year report provided a summary of activity by the Corporate Safeguarding Group to date and the end of year report would be accompanied by appendix reports from all directorates outlining their contribution to corporate safeguarding and the wider safeguarding agenda.

The Officer added that the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 was implemented in April 2016 and had brought about significant changes, in particular, relating to the introduction of 'Duty to Report' for all Local Authority employees. A significant focus of corporate safeguarding had been to ensure that there was widespread awareness of employee's responsibilities in terms of 'Duty to Report'. An awareness raising campaign took place last year through the production of posters/leaflets and also a designated telephone number was established for reporting. Furthermore, a mandatory safeguarding e-module was launched for all employees during National Safeguarding Week 2018 that was designed to provide all employees with safeguarding awareness information.

The Group was well attended by all the Directorates and met on a quarterly basis with standing agenda items including Safer Recruitment, Regional Safeguarding Board and a Work Plan.

The Corporate Safeguarding Group had developed a Work Plan that focused on the key areas that had been identified as features of corporate safeguarding arrangements. Membership of the group had been agreed; Terms of Reference were in place; Areas of Safeguarding activity across the Local Authority were being identified and appropriate persons were invited to represent their divisions/directorates. The group had also contributed to the development of a Corporate Safeguarding page on Staffnet to further strengthen the visibility and raise awareness of the remit of Corporate Safeguarding.

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In conclusion, the Officer advised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had good office representation across all aspects of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Boards both for Adults and Children. There had been a number of successful development days for the Board and the Director of Social Services for the Vale of Glamorgan was the Co-Chair of the Regional Safeguarding Boards.

A Member referred to paragraph 15 of the Officer's report attached to the reference and in particular to the statement that 'increased awareness of safeguarding and the responsibility to respond to concerns of those who may not be eligible for the Council's services had brought about significant pressures within the Social Services Teams' and queried the type of pressures and what work was underway to mitigate the issue. The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that by the Council advertising more widely, more individuals were aware of the support available and therefore had expressed their concerns. The annual report to follow would specify in more detail the Directorate specific activities currently underway. However, for the Housing and Building Directorate an example of the work taking place was the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Manager that had been appointed to refine the support work taking place around these topics and to become a central point of communication.

RECOMMENDED -

- (1) T H A T the Corporate Safeguarding Mid-Year report and subsequent reference from Cabinet on 7th January, 2019 be noted.
- (2) T H A T a request be raised with relevant Officers for a regular reference to be provided to the Committee following the rolling annual and mid-year Corporate Safeguarding reports provided to Cabinet.

Reasons for decisions

(1&2) To ensure corporate wide scrutiny of Corporate Safeguarding arrangements.

728 TIMEBANKING PROJECT - 12 MONTH MONITORING REPORT (REF) AND SIX MONTH PROGRESS REPORT PRESENTATION - COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TEAM -

The Senior Neighbourhood Manager (Community Investment and Services to Older People) presented the reference and attached report to Members alongside a supportive PowerPoint presentation to update Committee on progress implementing the Timebanking Project.

The Officer advised that the report highlighted the progress in delivering the Timebanking Project over its first 12 months and requested approval from Cabinet to extend the scheme for a further 12 months, during which time options would be determined for the long term future of the project. The Officer was pleased to report that all of the targets for the first year of the Timebanking project had been met and the scheme had been an effective way of increasing the levels of volunteering amongst Council tenants. 364 tenants had signed up to the scheme and taken part

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in volunteering, donating over 1,600 hours of their own time to community activities and events. This had proved beneficial to the participants, enabling them to build up confidence, increase their self-esteem and improve their personal relationships. It had also meant that some individuals had been able to gain work experience and employment. In terms of community benefits, volunteering had brought neighbours together building community spirit and improving the areas where people lived aesthetically.

Over the last 6 months, the Community Investment Team had continued to promote Time Banking to increase the number of Vale Homes' tenants actively engaging in volunteering. This had not only brought significant benefits to the individuals involved in volunteering but had also improved local communities within the Vale of Glamorgan. Volunteers had been involved in a number of activities including maintaining community gardens, litter picks, painting and the running of community based sports activities. Over the summer months there was a significant increase in those engaging with volunteering activities which was expected in part due to the school summer holiday period. Through active support and encouragement, many partner groups were also more proactive in registering new members, these groups included the Amy Evans Centre, Vale People First, Gibby Green Fingers and Pave the Way.

Within the Cabinet report, very clear targets were outlined in relation to the outcomes for the project to gain further insight to the value of developing volunteering services for tenants. The targets measured the difference Timebanking made to tenants and ensured value for money. The Officer highlighted that Appendix 1 to the report set out the progress to date against each of the targets identified.

It was clear following the first year of Timebanking; the project was achieving the ambitious targets set. The project was bringing benefits to the local community and enabled the creation of a strong network to build on, when rolling the project out further. The Officer advised that some tenants had told staff it could be a challenge to leave the house and that they lacked the confidence to become involved in their community. The incentives offered in the form of credits alongside the support and training provided by the Community Investment Team was empowering tenants to overcome those barriers. At the end of the first year 100% of individuals who had engaged in Timebanking activities, either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more positive and confident as a result of getting involved.

In conclusion, the Officer apprised committee of the plan for the next twelve months which was to continue meeting with new tenants at tenancy sign-up events to embed volunteering. It was also planned to switch the focus to the rural Vale and develop projects in St Athan and Llantwit Major. These areas had been identified as there were lower levels of tenant engagement. Given the success of the project to date, there was potential to work with new partners and roll out Timebanking regionally throughout the Vale. This had been picked up by the Public Services Board and discussions were already taking place in order to develop viable options for taking the roll out forward.

Following the Officer's presentation, a Tenant Working Group Representative highlighted that her Working Group were having difficulty in receiving the credits

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despite making several attempts to communicate with Lead Council Officers. A Member of the committee echoed the Representative's point and highlighted that the Colcot Working Group were excellent advocates for community engagement and requested that the dissemination of credits be undertaken urgently. The Senior Neighbourhood Manager apologised for the delay and advised that the issue would be rectified urgently.

A Tenant Working Group Representative wished to clarify if there was a maximum shelf life for using the credits and therefore how long they would remain valid. The Senior Neighbourhood Manager advised that there was a shelf life for the credits which was a couple of years and therefore there was no immediate rush to use the vouchers giving the individual the freedom to spend the credits as and when they wished to on the activities of their choice.

A Member congratulated the Officer on the excellent work currently underway and for an excellent scheme overall and noted that during a time of austerity it was becoming increasingly important for the Council to utilise such schemes to improve maintenance in the rural Vale such as:

- To cut and maintain grass and verges;
- To clean and repair street signs;
- To maintain bus shelters; and in the process
- To provide health and safety training to volunteers.

At this point, the Chairman also wished to add that the scheme provided an opportunity to work with Town and Community Councils in the future as the Councils often had a list of jobs that they wished to complete within their local area and may have access to a small pot of funding to complete the jobs. Therefore, it could be an excellent additional avenue for developing the Vale Timebanking Project going forward.

In response, the Head of Housing and Building Services reiterated that the Vale Timebanking Project was a pilot scheme and the Council needed to ensure that the scheme was sustainable before developing beyond its means. Currently, the scheme was funded by the Council's Housing Revenue Account and was therefore restricted to Council tenants. However, the Senior Neighbourhood Manager was prompting discussions with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and was receiving positive feedback from Council Directors. It would also be necessary for a Working Group to be established to manage any works that were underway as part of widening out the scheme across the Council. The project update as received by members at the meeting had also been presented to the Public Services Board to encourage working relationships with partner agencies who would wish to adopt the scheme and support its expansion to the wider Vale.

In referring to a member's earlier suggestion involving risk and the Council's liability with regards to volunteers taking part in community activities, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised that comprehensive risk assessments were carried out and personal protection equipment was made available to volunteers as and when required. Extensive liaison and checks were also undertaken with any partner providers. At this point, a Tenant Working Group Representative wished to provide

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reassurance that in her experience any necessary training had been provided to Tenant Working Group volunteers free of charge.

The Head of Housing and Building Services thanked the Member for his suggestions of activities in the rural Vale and advised that the Council was still looking at developing apprenticeships and seasonal works that would also tie into the type of activities mentioned by the Member. This would mean that the Council would approach local recruitment agencies allowing the Council to save money and provide individuals with the opportunity to acquire permanent positions. The difficulty in particular with grass cutting was that the Council needed to have access to specific machinery and therefore it would be wise for the Council to have future discussions with local farmers within the community. In conclusion, the Officer added that all suggestions were being explored and a structure would need to be established over the next 12 months to adequately cope with an expansion such as putting in place adequate administrative support.

A Member stated that she was pleased to see that the Barry Memorial Hall was accepting Timebanking credits and advised that staff at the Memorial Hall had noticed an increase in whole families attending whilst using their time credits; which was a pleasure to see. However, the Member also wished to express her concern over volunteers being used instead of employed Council staff which would effectively mean that individuals employed by the Council would be made redundant. On this point, the Chairman wished to add that it could be difficult to employ staff on a short term basis and that the nature of the work running and promoting the scheme was a very demanding task for an individual volunteering to take on.

In conclusion, the Chairman wished to share an email that had been forwarded to her by a member of the local organisation called Beautiful Barry who had recently been involved in improving the gardens at Barry Hospital as follows:

“Beautiful Barry is a relatively new community group and we have had a great team of volunteers and a very active Facebook group with 4,000 members. We take part and organise a wide range of community events always with the positive effect and clean environment as a main cause. We are familiar with the time credits scheme and worked with Council Officers previously and believe their efforts are the reason the scheme is successful. We would very much like the scheme to be extended to all Barry residents and were quite surprised in a world full of equality policies that this is not already the case. This was highlighted in August of last year when BB was asked by a staff nurse at St. Baruc’s Dementia Ward at Barry Hospital if we could give their outside garden a bit of a clear up. In the past it had been maintained by families of patients and had now been neglected somewhat. We had about 20 of our own volunteers and invited Nicky from Gibby Green Fingers to come and she also brought about 20 volunteers and together we did a great job and have since met with hospital directors about a long term plan there. We were quite disappointed to hear that the Gibby Green Fingers volunteers could earn time credits and our volunteers, predominantly not being Council tenants, could not. We understand from speaking with Council Officers that this is probably due to funding but we find it a little unusual and unfair that the Vale would support some volunteers and not others, many of whom are under 16 years old. Perhaps going forward long term this could be looked at again.”

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The Head of Housing and Building Services thanked the Chairman for sharing the email and expressed his gratitude to the individual from Beautiful Barry who had taken the time to share their views on the scheme. The Officer added that it was very positive to see that the key message of the email echoed Officer's wishes to extend the scheme Council wide.

RECOMMENDED -

(1) T H A T the 12 month monitoring report and reference from Cabinet on 21st January, 2019 in relation to the Timebanking Project be noted.

(2) T H A T the extension of the project for a further 12 months be strongly endorsed by the committee.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Timebanking Project is implemented effectively and the key outcomes are achieved.

(2) To ensure the expansion of the Timebanking Project is undertaken as soon as possible.