

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

Present: Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes (Chairman); Councillor Ms. J. Aviet (Vice-Chairman); Councillors J.C. Bird, Ms. B.E. Brooks, Mrs. C.A. Cave, S.J. Griffiths, Mrs. S.M. Hanks, A.C. Parker and L.O. Rowlands.

Also present: Councillor L. Burnett (Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration); Mrs. G. Doyle, Mrs. I. Gannon, Mr. A. Raybould and Ms. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

### 158 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor Miss. A.M. Collins and Ms. D. Murphy (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale).

### 159 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

### 160 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

### 161 HOUSING COMPLIANCE POLICY REVIEW (REF) –

Cabinet, on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 had referred the report to the Scrutiny Committee in order for Appendices A, B, C and D to the report to be considered and any comments returned to Cabinet.

The Operational Manager – Building Services stated that the review gave a comparison between the three years to now and how far improvements had been made in various areas. He stated that there had been marginal improvement but this was because previous compliance policies and processes provided the appropriate safeguards.

In referring to Appendix A, the Council Housing Fire Risk Management Policy and Procedures, the Operational Manager stated that this had changed very little as performance measures were already compliant with risk assessments. There was reference to the impact of the Grenfell fire and the Operational Manager stated that they were still awaiting improvements in fire safety legislation. He went on to say that whilst working within the current legislation, the Council was going above and beyond this, for example cladding such as was used on Grenfell was not used in the

Vale and wall insulation was utilised which prevented the spread of fire plus additional fire breaks.

The Operational Manager then went on to Appendix B, Council Housing Legionella Policy and Management Plan, and stated there had been some changes such as the review of profile risk assessment for housing stock.

The Operational Manager then went on to Appendix C, Housing Electrical Compliance Policy, where he stated that the Council worked to the 18<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Regulations and whose procedures were similar with that of Gas Compliance policy.

Following the Operational Manager – Building Services' presentation of the reference, there was a question and answer session.

A Committee Member referred to page 3 of the report and stated that it was good to see that issues around the Grenfell fire had been taken on board by the Vale of Glamorgan Council for any findings from the Grenfell enquiry and prior to any government legislation. This would be of particular comfort to those residents in high rise buildings within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Another Committee Member raised a question around Legionella and that there was one outstanding site still left in terms of review – this would show the Council was running at 87% and not 100% in terms of sites checked for Legionella. The Operational Manager – Building Services replied that the site would be completed very shortly as the original statistics had been done two or three months ago and in the meantime remedial works have been done on the site, such as dousing the water tanks.

The Committee Chairman asked about electrical compliance and whether the Scrutiny Committee could have a mid-term or six monthly update by when the Council should be reaching 100% compliance, to which the Operational Manager agreed and stated that the work that had been undertaken was now involving contractors who were working as quickly as possible in order to do this. The Committee also wished to pass on their sincere thanks to all those involved in the work undertaken as mentioned within the report.

It was subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Housing Compliance Policy Review be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the minutes above together with the draft revised Housing Compliance Policies be referred to Cabinet for consideration.
- (3) T H A T the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee receive a six monthly update on the Housing Compliance Policy Review.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) So that Members are aware of the Housing Compliance Policy review.
- (2) So that Cabinet is aware of the comments of the Scrutiny Committee prior to final determination of the Housing Compliance Policy review.
- (3) To ensure Members are kept regularly up to date on the progress surrounding the Housing Compliance Policy review.

162 DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY 2019 – 2024 (REF) –

The report was presented by the Principal Regeneration Officer, who stated that the report had gone to Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2019 in order to provide an update on the issue of empty homes in the Vale of Glamorgan and also sought approval of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 (attached at Appendix A to the report) as a consultative document. The five recommendations within the report had been approved by Cabinet.

The Principal Regeneration Officer was at the meeting in order to complete Recommendation (3), namely that the report was referred to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration as part of the consultation process.

The Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 provided the framework to ensure that the Vale of Glamorgan Council continued to be pro-active in its approach to returning empty homes back into use.

Empty properties could be detrimental to the lives of local residents as they were a magnet for crime and antisocial behaviour, could drive down property values locally and contribute to neighbourhood decline and blight. They also represented a risk for the emergency services and put added pressure on various Council teams and service areas.

The headline annual need for affordable housing in the Vale of Glamorgan Local Housing Market Assessment from 2017 to 2022 was 576 units per annum. Re-occupying empty homes was not the whole answer to this problem, but Welsh Government and Local Authorities recognised potential, both as units of accommodation and a source of income to the Council in times of continued budgetary pressures.

Long term empty private properties (standing empty for six months or more) were the main focus of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024. As at 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2019, of the 58,909 residential properties in the Vale of Glamorgan, 846 private properties were standing empty for six months or more. This represented 1.4% of the housing stock. Of the 846 private properties, 311 (36.76%) had been empty for over two years and 47 (5.56%) empty for over ten years.

When dealing with empty property owners, a voluntary way forward was always preferred. Advice, assistance and incentives reduced demand on Council resources and the need for enforcement action at a later date.

The empty homes issue required a joined-up whole Council approach to make the best possible use of the existing housing stock. Moving forward the key aims of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 were to:

- Assemble, maintain and improve the accuracy of empty homes data;
- Provide advice, assistance and financial incentives to reduce the number of long term empty properties;
- Promote the whole Council approach to tackling empty homes;
- Prioritise empty homes for enforcement action; and
- Raise awareness of the empty homes issue.

The Principal Regeneration Officer then provided a presentation that complemented the report looking at the current picture on empty properties in the Vale, a breakdown of distribution of empty homes by Ward, background as to why homes became empty, for example through the normal process of buying, selling and letting properties, absent / untraceable owners or legal issues such as probate of a will and looking at the strategic direction, such as from April 2019 the Vale of Glamorgan had removed the 50% discount for Council Tax for properties which were empty for more than six months, and the recent new post in place for a permanent Empty Homes and Loans Officer. Other considerations included opportunities to generate income and to secure additional affordable homes, for example through the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme. Additionally, the empty homes issue required bespoke solutions as behind every home there was a different story. Finally, emphasis would be on a voluntary approach and enforcement would be the last resort. The officer went on to then mention the next steps, which would be Cabinet approval – which had already happened – and then for Scrutiny to consider the report.

After this there would be a public consultation for four weeks and then a further Cabinet report to consider findings and any changes prior to finalising for adoption. After that there would be an annual review of the Empty Homes Strategy, which would be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee.

Following the presentation, a question and answer session was undertaken.

A Committee Member made reference to prior year performance data (PAM13) concerning empty homes and whether this was available within the report. The Principal Regeneration Officer stated that on page 13 of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 (attached at Appendix A to the report) that previous financial years' data was included, however this had to be caveated as the methodology had changed with the 2015/16 data, for example. The Committee Member, after looking at the figures, commented that they seemed to be erratic for prior years. The officer replied that he could not comment for the data prior to 2017/18 as he was not in post at the time but would look at the accuracy of the data going forward.

Another Committee Member stated that it was good to see the Council working on empty homes as these blighted local communities and involved lots of work in

getting resolved. As there was now a dedicated officer for empty homes, this would be an important move forward and a testament to the commitment of the Local Authority in dealing with this issue.

A Committee Member queried the consultation process and exactly who the Council was consulting, was it just the public in general or specific groups such as landlords and estate agents. The officer replied that the consultation would be targeted going to for instance, the Landlord Forum and the RSLs, but there was also a need to go and consult with the wider public in order to draw their attention to this issue of empty homes.

A Committee Member asked about Table 2 of the presentation concerning the number of empty homes by Ward. She asked if this could be improved by having percentages of houses in each Ward and a breakdown of private homes and social housing. The Principal Regeneration Officer said that the figures concerned private sector only but would look into the Councillor's suggestions going forward.

A Councillor asked about the accuracy of the figures involved in the presentation and the report, to which the officer advised that these were snapshots from the Council Tax team and therefore they had to rely on their records, however he did caveat that the Empty Homes and Loans Officer did cross reference and check this data as much as possible for accuracy. The Head of Housing and Building Services added that the Council was attempting to provide a holistic response to the empty homes issue and that the Councillor's point on the percentage of the total number of homes empty per Ward would be useful in terms of reporting. In terms of the reliability of the Council Tax data and the figures around empty homes, he stated that if a house was declared as empty it was visited by Council Tax staff to assess the veracity of that claim. Regarding measuring going forward, different policies and regulations affected previous figures, looking forward to next year they would be looking to see how the current reduction in the Council Tax discount would impact those figures. With regard to previous rises in the numbers of empty homes, there was no Empty Homes and Loans Officer in order to analyse or monitor the data at the time of these and any such rise may have been with regards to new building projects such as at Barry Waterfront, where houses were empty for some time. The Principal Regeneration Officer advised that the Vale of Glamorgan Council was ranked third for 2017/18 in terms of the relevant Public Accountability Measure (PAM 13) for empty homes.

A Member mentioned an example of Cardiff Council which had charged a percentage premium of the standard rate of the Council Tax allowance for empty homes. A Committee Member suggested that the Scrutiny Committee should have an update on the progress of the recent changes to Council Tax policy in the Vale of Glamorgan and also to look at similar Authorities and how they dealt with empty homes, such as Bridgend and Cardiff.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Regeneration, with the approval of the Chairman, spoke to the Committee with regards to the Empty Homes Strategy. She stated that she had been surprised by the numbers of empty homes in the Vale and wanted the consultation exercise to also see if the balance between gentle persuasion and enforcement was correct with regards to empty homes. The Cabinet

Member mentioned similar previous initiatives such as the funding that had been provided for bringing flats above shops back into use and habitation. She stated that the Empty Homes Strategy report was very accessible and this hopefully would have the effect of encouraging people to look at the empty homes issue. Her question to the Committee was whether the Council had the right balance between gentle persuasion and enforcement with regards to empty homes or did the Council need to engage more forcefully.

A Committee Member suggested that the question of whether the right balance was struck between gentle persuasion and enforcement in terms of empty homes was correct and this should be put to the public as part of the consultation process.

A Committee Member asked if the Council could assist if there were home owners who needed to renovate empty homes as potentially they needed up to 80% equity in the house in order to do this. The Principal Regeneration Officer reiterated the need for bespoke solutions to the empty housing issue and to look at how valuation work was assessed in terms of making empty homes habitable.

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in the minutes above, together with the draft of the Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024, be referred to Cabinet for its consideration.
- (3) T H A T Cabinet consider the Committee's recommendation that a question be put into the public consultation exercise asking if the right balance had been struck between persuasion and enforcement for empty homes.
- (4) T H A T the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee receive an update on the progress of the recent changes to Council Tax policy in the Vale of Glamorgan and how similar Authorities dealt with empty homes.

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) That Members are aware of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy 2019-2024.
- (2) That Cabinet is aware of the comments of the Scrutiny Committee prior to the start of the public consultation exercise.
- (3) To ensure the right balance was struck between persuasion and enforcement around empty homes.
- (4) To ensure Members are updated on the recent changes to Council Tax policy and how similar Authorities dealt with empty homes.

## 163 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19 (DEH) –

The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management advised that the year-end revenue position was a favourable variance of £35k, after a transfer to £716k to specific reserves. A revenue savings target of £29k had been set for 2018/19 and was achieved. The Housing Revenue Account was also able to increase the level of its ring-fenced reserve to £2.668m after achieving a £1.893m surplus. There was capital expenditure during the year of £12.707m. She went on to say that following the end of the financial year, Scrutiny Committee were provided with provisional outturn figures. The Statement of Accounts would be approved by Council before 15<sup>th</sup> September, which would normally follow the audit by Wales Audit Office.

The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management stated that the following areas of the report were of particular relevance to the Committee:

## Council Fund Housing – Favourable variance of £2k

There were adverse variances totalling £25k, with £10k relating to Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless and an under-recovery of £15k on the Rural Housing Enabler post, in the main due to a planned transfer from reserves not being actioned due to underspends elsewhere within the division.

There were favourable variances totalling £209k, with £117k relating to the Homelessness Prevention team, due to staff vacancies and expenditure being offset against additional Transitional grant funding and Cold Weather Grant. Also, staff vacancies in the Homelessness and Housing Advice team and the Housing Strategy team resulted in a further £52k favourable variance. The Supporting People staffing budget was also £35k below budget due to staff vacancies. There were also various smaller favourable variances totalling £5k.

There had been a net transfer into reserves and provisions of £182k. A transfer of £32k was made from the Community Safety reserve to fund the overspend in year and as a result of the final underspend position across the service, this allowed the transfer of £70k into the Homelessness reserve, there was a £35k top-up of the bond provision for temporary accommodation, a transfer to the Community Safety reserve of £64k towards funding the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator role and other projects into 2019/20, as well as £10k for Local Homelessness Strategy development work and £35k to the Supporting People reserve.

## Private Sector Housing – Breakeven

There were adverse variances totalling £67k. £15k relating to supplies and services within the Division, mostly due to additional spend required as part of historic renewal area schemes and £11k as Renewal Area fee income was lower than anticipated due to delays in the capital spend. There was also an adverse variance of £41k due to lower than planned drawdowns from reserves to fund the costs of Occupational Therapist and Empty Homes Officers.

There had been a number of favourable variances totalling £67k. Disabled Facilities Grant fee income was £45k higher than the reduced revised budget due to increased

demand late in the year. There was a £7k favourable variance on staffing costs within the Division and £6k favourable variance on premises costs due mainly to the relocation of the Disabled Facilities Grants Team within the Dock Office. Home Loans fees were also higher than anticipated by £7k during the year. There were also other small favourable variances of £2k.

#### Rent Allowances – Breakeven

There was a £10k adverse variance made up of £3k relating to the annual audit fee and £7k relating to the administration subsidy received from the Department for Works and Pensions.

There was a favourable variance of £326k. £197k related to Discretionary Housing Payments, which was used to provide support to claimants adversely affected by some of the key welfare reforms. The grant allocation received from the Department for Work and Pensions had been fully spent. The saving was due to a lower take-up from claimants than anticipated from the top up allocation provided by the Council from its own funds. There were also favourable variances of £129k from recovered overpayments and associated subsidy on rent allowances.

This had enabled £316k to be set aside in the Neighbourhood Services for Big Fill.

The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management also referred to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget.

The 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resulted in a surplus of £1.893m compared to the amended budget surplus of £77k. A breakdown was shown in Appendix 2 to the report. The HRA reserve balance opened at £775k and closed at £2.668m. This level was higher than the figure projected in the current Housing Business Plan, mainly due to a reduction in the required revenue contribution to capital. The level of this balance would therefore be reviewed as part of the production of the next Housing Business Plan.

The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management spoke about Appendix 3 to the report, Capital Monitoring Approved Programme total for 2018/19 which was £16.225m, actual spend 2018/19 was £12.707m with a variance outturn of £3.518m. She went on to say that Appendix 4 to the report showed the Council's reserves and explained this was a one off amount and this was topped up by other funds. The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management also went on to say that the savings listed in Appendix 5 were all achieved by year end.

A Committee Member queried the adverse variances and gave the example of £10k relating to Temporary Accommodation for the Homeless (including the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation) as well raising the wider issue of slippages which needed to be resolved, going forward. In relation to the first question, the Head of Housing and Building Services advised the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation was for a statutory period only for temporary accommodation and only to house single persons, not families.

The Head of Housing and Building Services mentioned slippage and referred to Appendix 3 to the report, Capital Monitoring, which cited an example of the New Build programme which requested slippage of £1.328m into 2019/20 for the continuation of Holm View Phase 1 and feasibility work for new schemes and acquisition of properties / land. He also went on to say that the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) had now come to an end, but progress was being made now to find alternative frameworks going forward.

A Committee Member asked about an update on Universal Credit and also queried whether there had been an increase in rent arrears as a result. The Head of Housing and Building Services advised that this type of reporting normally went to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee – not the other Scrutiny Committees – and therefore did not have the information to hand. However, the relevant report did mention there had been reductions in arrears over the longer term. The National Government was now looking to remove the five weekly wait around Universal Credit which had also been another factor in rent arrears elsewhere. The roll out of Universal Credit in the Vale of Glamorgan had been delayed but even when this roll out was complete, the Vale of Glamorgan already had provision to offer money advice and support for tenants – for example helping to organise payments in advance for vulnerable tenants.

The Chairman asked about the Contribution towards expenditure – with an adverse variance of £65k in the report, which appeared to largely be due to the water commission received being less than budgeted and a reduction in the number of properties being removed from billing as a result of sales and redevelopment. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that the relationship between the Council and Dwr Cymru meant, in terms of the collection of water commission, that the Council would bear the arrears of this but would ultimately receive the money back from Dwr Cymru.

A Query was also raised in relation to paragraph 2.22. Dwellings Rents – where there was an adverse variance of £45k, due to the dwelling rents collected which were slightly less than budgeted. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that this was due to under-anticipated void costs and tenants not paying rent.

It was

**RECOMMENDED –**

- (1) T H A T the financial measures taken and proposed be noted.
- (2) T H A T an update on Universal Credit numbers and rent arrears be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

**Reasons for recommendations**

- (1) In order for Members to be aware of the provisional financial position and actions that have been taken.

(2) For the Committee to have an update on Universal Credit numbers and rent arrears.

#### 164 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY 2019 (DEH) –

The revenue position for 2019/20 was challenging with a savings target for the year for this Committee's services being set at £211,000.

The capital budget for the Committee had been set at £23.082m.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2019, Council approved the Revenue Budget for 2019/20, Minute No. 835. The Housing Revenue Account budget and the Capital Programme for 2019/20 onwards were approved by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2019, Minute Nos. 779 and 780 respectively.

The Finance Support Manager, Resource Management, went on to mention that although it was early in the financial year it was anticipated that services would outturn within budget at year end. She advised that progress had already been made on this. She then went on to mention that as part of the Final Revenue Budget Proposals for 2019/20, a savings target of £211k was set for the Committee. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a statement detailing all savings targets for 2019/20. It was anticipated that the CCTV saving would not be achieved this year and the service was requested to consider how this saving would be met in the current year.

A Committee Member asked about the current status on CCTV and its inclusion in these. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that CCTV – in terms of savings – was considered as part of the reshaping process, it was a non-statutory service and as a result the Council bore all of the cost. The CCTV stock was very old now and nearing the end of its life which meant there needed to be some kind of investment into it. The Head of Housing and Building Services mentioned the example of North Wales where the local Police and Crime Commissioner had formed a partnership with the Local Authority in terms of sharing costs towards CCTV. In the last round of capital approvals, it had been estimated that £350k would be needed to replace the current stock of CCTV and therefore discussions were ongoing to see if other partners could take on these costs – for example, South Wales Police. Once these discussions were completed, a report would be going forward to Cabinet.

The Committee Member also queried what 'third party spend' – referred to in the savings figures of the report – was, to which the Finance Support Manager, Resource Management explained this encompassed a broad range of supplies and services, such as consultants and advertising, procured by the Council from outside service providers.

It was

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2019/20 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the content of the report.

165 END OF YEAR 2018/19 PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE VALE (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, who advised that the performance report presented the Council's progress at Quarter 4 (1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2019) towards achieving its Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes for Year 3 of the Corporate Plan 2016-20 as aligned to Well-being Outcome 1, "An Inclusive and Safe Vale". It also outlined the Council's progress against existing regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals in response to local and national audit work undertaken by the Wales Audit Office.

Overall, the Council had made good progress in delivering its Corporate Plan priorities in relation to the Well-being Outcome 1 Objectives of, "Reducing poverty and social exclusion" and "Providing decent homes and safe communities". This had contributed to an overall Green status for the Outcome at Quarter 4.

90% (54) of planned activities aligned to "An Inclusive and Safe Vale" had been attributed a Green performance status reflecting the good progress made during the year. 10% (6) of planned actions aligned to this Well-being Outcome had been attributed a Red status. These related to: identification and adoption of a new gypsy site (IS008); launch of a Vale connects messaging service aimed at protecting residents from scams other fraudulent activities (IS012); implementation of restorative justice approaches for young people (IS014); initiation of new regeneration / renewal areas (IS015) and development and adoption of a new Vale of Glamorgan Community Strategy (IS016).

Of the 32 performance measures aligned to this Well-being Outcome, a performance status was applicable at end of year for 22 PIs. 16 PIs were attributed a Green performance status, with the remaining 6 achieving Amber status with performance within 10% of target. A performance status was not applicable for 10 measures. These related to measures which were either establishing baseline performance in 2018/19 and consequently no target was set or were national well-being indicators for which Welsh Government data was not yet available.

As at April 2019, of the 28 regulatory report actions contained within the Insight Tracker, 19 had been completed and 9 remained ongoing. Of the 9 ongoing actions, 6 had been attributed an Amber performance status and the remaining 3 a Red status. With respect to the two reviews which related to Well-being Outcome 1: "Welsh Housing Quality Standard" and "How Local Government manages demand: Homelessness", there were 17 existing local actions in response to both reviews, of which 12 had been completed. 5 local actions remained ongoing and were currently attributed an Amber performance status to reflect progress to date.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Quarter 4 performance results as aligned to Well-being Outcome 1 and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

The report also asked Members to review the progress reported against the regulatory recommendations / proposals for improvement relevant to their respective Scrutiny Committee in order to enable completed actions to be closed down. Members were being asked to endorse by recommendation to Cabinet the removal of completed actions from the Insight Tracker. Following Cabinet's consideration, this would be reported to the Audit Committee whose key role was to have final oversight of the Council's response to issues raised by its external regulators.

The Head of Housing and Building Services referred to Appendix 4 of the report, outlining the progress against existing recommendations and improvement proposals made by external regulators. He cited the example of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) where the Wales Audit Office commended the Vale of Glamorgan as well as a commendation on tackling homelessness such as the implementation of a new Housing Strategy.

A Committee Member referred to the Service Plan Actions for Customer Contact One Vale (C1V) in the report, as they were aware of a number of complaints about the Contact Centre and the Council Tax help line. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that there had been some capacity issues and as part of the Reshaping Review the Contact Services would be looked at and explained that satisfaction levels with regard to the C1V service were still high. The Head of Housing and Building Services asked whether the Committee Member could provide details regarding these complaints so that it could be forwarded to the relevant officer.

Another Committee Member asked about funding on renewal areas. The Principal Regeneration Officer responded that last year the Cabinet had approved the Regeneration Policy which included two areas in Barry, Paget Road and Broad Street Parade. Discussions were ongoing with landlords but at the moment there was no further update.

A Committee Member queried the current status of the proposed Gypsy site and the recommendations from last year – firstly, to contact the Gypsy and Traveller Community and seek a site and secondly, to ascertain what the Gypsy and Traveller Community required in terms of a new site. In relation to the first question, the Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the Welsh Government was looking at a suitable grant for this request and would be contacting the Council about this in due course. For the second question, he replied that the Gypsy and Traveller Community did not want a 'traditional' pitch and would rather cater for their own needs. He also stated that a new report for Cabinet concerning suitable sites would be going forward after the August recess. A Committee Member asked how quickly this report would come after recess to which the Head of Housing and Building Services said that he had spoken with the Head of Regeneration and Planning and

stated they were looking at the end of September / early October for the report to be produced.

The Chairman referred to CPM/124: Percentage of domestic abuse victims that report that they feel safer as a result of target hardening in the report and queried the meaning of “target hardening”, to which the Operational Manager Public Housing Services explained that this covered such measures as CCTV, panic buttons, locks, etc. for victims of domestic abuse in their home.

The Head of Housing and Building Services also referred to those areas of the Insight Action Tracker relevant to the Committee – for example, the action to set-up a ‘Gateway’ for all Supporting People funded services to ensure clients who came through the homelessness service were provided with the most appropriate support and which had been completed.

It was

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving key outcomes in line with the Corporate Plan Well-being Outcome 1 – “Citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan have a good quality of life and feel part of the local community” be noted.

(2) T H A T the progress made to date in addressing existing regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals arising from local and national Local Government Studies be noted and endorsed and it be recommended to Cabinet that the completed actions be removed from the Insight Tracker.

#### Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council is effectively assessing its performance in line with the requirement to secure continuous improvement outlined in the Local Government Measure (Wales) 2009 and reflecting the requirement of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

(2) To ensure the Council implements its regulatory recommendations and improvement proposals and responds appropriately to the recommendations and proposals for improvement identified through the Wales Audit Office’s programme of local and national Local Government Studies.