

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

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

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

### 377 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors Ms. J. Aviet (Vice-Chairman), J.C. Bird and Ms. A.M. Collins. An apology was also received from Ms. B. Hunt (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale).

### 378 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

### 379 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

### 380 HOUSING AND PROPERTY ACQUISITIONS POLICY 2019 (REF) –

Cabinet had, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2019, considered the report and referred it to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration and in order that the views of the Scrutiny Committee could be further considered by Cabinet prior to the final agreement of the Policy.

The Operational Manager, Building Services outlined the report. He went on to say that the Vale of Glamorgan Council had a successful building programme and the Housing and Property Acquisitions Policy would provide another avenue in order to satisfy housing needs. Any such acquisition would need to address the housing needs within the Vale of Glamorgan and be in line with the Council's corporate or strategic objectives including economic, social and environmental. The Operational Manager, Building Services added that the Council would only consider acquiring houses or property where, for example, it would enable the Vale of Glamorgan to deliver its corporate objectives, contribute to the provision of affordable or social housing, deliver economic and / or social development benefits, it was required for the delivery of a wider strategic development project and provide a sound financial investment. The Operational Manager went on to cite an example of where land might need to be bought in order to provide an entry route to a potentially 'land locked' area for housing development and also Welsh Housing Quality Standards

(WHQS) work around leasehold flats, such as where these were purchased back from leaseholders.

The Operational Manager, Buildings Services then went on to take questions from Committee Members.

A Committee Member asked for clarification with regards to new builds. The clarification centred on whether the Council would be looking at greenfield sites and cited an example of housing associations who currently looked to develop new builds on such sites. The Operational Manager, Building Services advised that this was an area the Council was looking at and would be looking at both brown field as well as greenfield sites potentially for housing development. He went on to say the Housing and Property Acquisition Policy would also assist in this regard.

Another Committee Member asked whether the Council's policy on acquiring properties would be advertised to the general public or were the Council waiting for people to come to it in order to acquire properties. The Operational Manager, Building Services replied that the Council was not advertising as it would need to look at budgets. At the moment it was relying on word of mouth, particularly as the Policy progressed. He went on to say it would be important for the Council to look at suitable properties and the costs involved in bringing up buildings to the level of WHQS as well as looking to purchase properties not necessarily at market value.

The Chairman asked when the Policy would start, to which the Operational Manager, Building Services replied that it would start with immediate effect following adoption of the policy. The Council currently had land but in the longer term this Policy would assist as another piece of the Council's armoury in terms of acquiring property or land. The Chairman asked an additional question regarding targets and whether these would be set or would aim at a year by year view. The Operational Manager, Building Services replied that targets could not be set for this specifically as it was part of a wider strategy, as well as budgetary constraints and market value of houses also having an impact on this. The Chairman wished to add that it was good that the Council now had this new Acquisitions Policy.

It was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the details of the Housing and Property Acquisitions Strategy be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Scrutiny Committee's comments be referred back to Cabinet for consideration.

#### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To note the process by which housing and property can be acquired.
- (2) To support the aims and objectives of the Council's Corporate Plan, the Council's Wellbeing Plan, the Council's Local Housing Strategy and the Council's

Housing Development Strategy and also to ensure appropriate scrutiny of these important documents.

### 381 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN (DSS) –

The report was presented by the Head of Children and Young People Services, who stated that the report provided an update in relation to the Youth Justice Plan 2018-20 and we were now in the mid-term of this Plan. This was essentially a progress report in those areas being met as well as those areas where there was still more improvement required and therefore where an explanation for this would be provided. The report would ensure that Committee Members could carry on exercising oversight of this key area of work for the Council. The Head of Children and Young People Services further added that in the near future they would be looking at a new Plan after the current one ended in 2020.

A Tenant Working Group Member queried whether the ageing population had an impact on youth opportunities such as apprenticeships given more people remain available for work for longer. The Head of Children and Young People Services replied that yes, this could affect opportunities but also potentially provide benefits and stated that it was an interesting question and perspective to bring to the meeting.

The Chairman queried a section of the report concerning young people in suitable accommodation and asked why there had been a drop in suitable accommodation in Quarters 2 through to 4 of the 2018/19 period. The Head Children and Young People Services replied that this was due to the inclusion of custodial sentences for youths where the accommodation used was considered not suitable. It was

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the Youth Justice Plan be noted.

#### Reason for recommendation

To meet the statutory requirements of grant terms and conditions provided by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales, to achieve continuing improvements in the performance of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and to ensure that Members can exercise oversight of this key area of work for the Council.

### 382 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: 12 MONTH PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019 (DSS) –

The Head of Children and Young Peoples Services outlined the report. She first wanted to state that unlike other reporting which was generally quarterly based these performance reports were always approximately one quarter behind because of the need for the Youth Justice Board to validate data before circulation and so more up to date information could not be included in this report.

The Head of Children and Young Peoples Services went on to mention the highlights of the report. The first area she mentioned was a national indicator around reduction

in first time entrants (FTEs). The aim here was for this to be as low as possible - for example, by looking at prevention. Looking at the Welsh young offender team comparisons, she noted that the Vale of Glamorgan's cohort size had dropped from 85 in July 2015 to June 2016 to 68 in July 2016 to June 2017 which were the latest figures available. She went on to caveat the data when looking at numbers of offenders and the numbers of offences that although the Vale of Glamorgan had a small cohort, the calculations meant that the numbers of offences skewed those figures - which could be seen by the fact that there had been a reduction in re-offending but also an increase in the frequency rate; for example, one youth in a care home had committed a number of offences there and/or against staff – which by the way offending was calculated per quarter had impacted significantly on the overall frequency rate.

The Head of Children and Young Peoples Services stated that the Youth Offending Service in the Vale try to do a lot through restorative justice for example to support the offender to speak to the victim directly. This was in order to ultimately help reduce the numbers of youths in custody. The Youth Offending Service always looked at alternatives to custody – this being the last resort. There had been an increase in custodial sentences but not all of this was related to repeat offences. She added that custody, if managed well, could also help to transition children back into the community.

The Head of Children and Young People Services went on to devolved Welsh indicators and talked about the indicator relating to the engagement with education, training and employment. She stated at this time the recommended hours for provision of this had not been met but this would be an ongoing area of focus in terms of improvement.

The Head of Children and Young People Services went on to mention access to suitable accommodation and also indicators relating to appropriate support for substance misuse and access to mental health services. In relation to suitable accommodation for the 12 month period, 23 children/young people had a closed community based penalty – all in suitable accommodation at the start with 5 children/young people in unsuitable accommodation at the end of the interventions. In respect of substance misuse, the majority of young people referred continued to engage in the assessment and treatment. Finally, referring to mental health services 18 children/young people were identified by screening as requiring a mental health assessment. 6 were already in receipt of mental health services. 12 children/young people were referred for an assessment. Following assessment 4 children/young people required treatment at Tier 3 and received this within 28 days.

The Head of Children and Young People Services also noted that within the area of substance misuse and mental health issues there was a multi-agency approach with access to CAMHS.

A Committee Member stated that this was a very full report and was interested in outcomes for children and young people. The Committee Member asked about the outcomes for those accessing substance misuse and mental health services, and also the impact on their access to education, training and employment.

The Head of Children and Young People Services replied that in terms of outcomes of young persons in receipt of such services, this was not covered within the report and she did not have this detail to hand. However, she would be more than happy to request such information for the Committee.

Another Committee Member asked what the potential impact of County Lines would have on the services as vulnerable youths were being targeted. The Head of Children and Young People Services explained that County Lines involved the exploitation of vulnerable adults and children in order for example, to use their property (cuckooing) in order to grow or supply drugs or young people to carry drugs. Individuals coming from big cities such as London or Manchester were coming into smaller towns. This was prevalent in Cardiff but also impacted areas of the Vale. The Head of Children and Young People Services went on to say that a lot of work had been done in terms of awareness raising via the Regional Safeguarding Board.

It was

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the contents of the performance report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

To ensure that Elected Members are able to exercise oversight of the Youth Offending Service Programme against designated indicators (UK, devolved and local).

**383 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL TO 31<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2019 (DEH) –**

The Finance Support Manager stated that the revenue position for 2019/20 was challenging with a savings target for the year for the Committee's services being set at £211,000. The capital budget for the Committee had been set at £23.737m. She added that the spend to the end of August 2019 is £2.45M. The Finance Support Manager went on to say that although it remained early in the financial year it was anticipated that services would outturn within budget at year end with a projected budget of £5.279m. Furthermore, in terms of savings all areas bar CCTV would be achieved.

She also stated that in terms of Youth Offending, Regulatory, Council Funding Housing, Private and Public Sector Housing (HRA) services, there were no forecast variances and therefore would contribute to a balanced budget.

A Tenant Working Group Member stated that the wording/type of the appendices within the report were too small to read properly and asked in future if the text used in the appendices were much larger in order to easily view.

It was

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the position with regard to the 2019/20 Revenue and Capital budgets be noted.

### Reason for recommendation

That Members are aware of the projected revenue outturn for 2019/20.

### 384 QUARTER 1 2019/20 PERFORMANCE REPORT: AN INCLUSIVE AND SAFE VALE (DEH) –

The Director of Environment and Housing presented the report. He first stated that the two key objectives of the report were:

- Completion of actions
- Measurement of performance.

The Director went on to say that they would go through the ‘exceptions’ in the report as overall, in terms of performance indicators, 85% of measures were attributed a green performance status. There were a few areas of underperformance and officers were working to improve these by the next quarter. These included the 14% of indicators where a red status were recorded. He went on to refer to paragraph 2.5 of the report where there was a need to improve performance in relation to the average number of working days taken to re-let an empty property, where the target had been missed by 1.19. Average performance had been affected in this quarter by a small number of longer lets where properties had been held for people leaving hospital as well as several refusals which had added days onto the turnaround time. This was still an improvement on previous quarters, however.

A Committee Member referred to the pilot for the Domestic Abuse Referral and Assessment Service (DAARC) and asked if there was more information on this important area, for example, future funding. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services replied to the Committee Member stating that evaluation for this pilot was still ongoing. Funding for this project would be covered by Housing Services in 2019/20 and in future years it was hoped that it could be funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant, if it was eligible under the new Supporting People Guidance currently awaited from Welsh Government, but if not possible, other funding options would be explored.

A Committee Member asked when this evaluation report would be done to which the Operational Manager of the Housing Services stated they would feed back to the Democratic Services Officer in relation to when the report would be ready for this area – with a suggestion from the Director of Environment and Housing that this evaluation/report of a key service, which he felt passionate about, would include relevant case studies.

A Committee Member asked if there was any update on the CCTV services. The Director replied that he would be taking a report to Cabinet in November with regards to the internal review of CCTV and for making it fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Furthermore, he would be liaising with the Police and Crime Commissioner and South Wales Police in order to achieve this and to look at proposals for the future. He added that the new CCTV system would include a smaller number of cameras but would be

more targeted and would also use artificial intelligence. The Council would invest £350,000 of capital into this update, with a Task and Finish Group set up in order to complete its review by February 2020. The Director stated that he would be asking Cabinet for notice to be given to the current partners in the CCTV system in Bridgend in the near future. One of the options under consideration would be to house the new CCTV system in Barry Police Station as this would avoid the need for going to Bridgend Police Station in order to view CCTV or to monitor it. The aim was to get this in place by the end of the next fiscal year due to the need to give a 12 month notice to Bridgend Council.

A Committee Member noted the reference to Universal Credit in the report and asked the Operational Manager for Public Housing Services what her thoughts were regarding this. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services replied that arrears had started to go up since the implementation of Universal Credit. Arrears currently stood at just over £350,000 of which nearly £213,000 was Universal Credit debt (60% of the total arrears). There were 442 tenants in receipt of Universal Credit and 84% of these were in arrears. Average arrears for tenants on Universal Credit was £418, compared to £179 for tenants not on Universal Credit. She did note however that Universal Credit had not yet been fully rolled out in the Vale of Glamorgan and had only been implemented for new claimants and those people with a change in their circumstances. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services reiterated that the Vale of Glamorgan offered monitoring and support for Universal Credit claimants and was working with partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions to help mitigate the impact of Universal Credit both on individual tenants and on the Housing Business Plan.

A Committee Member asked the Director of Environment and Housing Services about the new technology for the new CCTV system and if the Council would be able to keep up with the speed of further technological changes in CCTV and other areas. The Director of Environment and Housing replied that one of the means that the Vale of Glamorgan Council would be keeping up with technological change would be through regional collaboration - for example, the current work on the new CCTV system in collaboration with South Wales Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner and would be looking to include 5G. Inevitably however, new technology would come in. He went on to say that the new CCTV system would have about 5 – 10 years life before potentially becoming obsolete but the Vale of Glamorgan could find ways of 'future proofing' this in order to prepare for subsequent technological change - for example, putting budgets aside in order to meet new technological change or challenges.

The Committee Member asked about the other areas of the Council which were facing challenges regarding new technology and if there were options in terms of leasing equipment instead of buying and so on. The Director of Environment and Housing replied that the ICT department looked at new technology on an ongoing basis. Leasing could also be looked at, and in terms of the CCTV, the new technology that would be added shortly could be adapted and improved with new technologies and improvements as they come along. He went on to say that the current system of CCTV does still work but maintenance costs are very high.

Another Committee Member mentioned the potential risks or dangers with the use of CCTV and AI in the operation of this, to which the Director of Environment and Housing replied that these risks were recognised and the new CCTV system would be strictly controlled.

The Chairman referred to the area of the report concerning the pilot Domestic Abuse Referral and Assessment Service (DAARC) and stated that it was important to keep this specialist service and to investigate funding to keep the specialist staff on a more permanent basis, as yearly contracts could lead to them leaving and taking their specialist knowledge to another local authority. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services replied that this was an important service with a multi-agency approach in terms of sharing information and it was important for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to take a lead in this matter. The Director of Environment and Housing Services responded that this had been an excellent pilot and model, in fact it was an award winning one and had helped to protect significant numbers of women. He also went on to say that the Vale of Glamorgan Council would continue to support the service. The Chairman thanked the relevant teams for their support and emphasised the important work that had been undertaken by DAARC.

The Chairman also asked about the CCTV system and whether the relevant team or operators would be alerted to an incident occurring that had been viewed by the CCTV. The Director of Environment and Housing responded by stating that the CCTV system could have remote accessing and certain tracking capabilities without always there being a need for direct human control. Furthermore, the Vale of Glamorgan Council would be looking at a model where someone is not monitoring all the time.

Finally, the Chairman referred to the section of the report regarding households threatened with homelessness. The Operational Manager for Public Housing replied that the Vale of Glamorgan Council could not always stop homelessness occurring - for example if a private landlord ended a tenancy because they needed to sell the property. She went on to say that there were varying reasons for people presenting in this situation for each quarter; however, the Housing Team had been placed in the top quartile in Wales for their work in homelessness prevention.

It was

#### RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the performance results and progress towards achieving key outcomes in line with the year 4 priorities for the Corporate Plan Wellbeing 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 remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under performance and to tackle key challenges identified be noted.

(3) T H A T a separate report outlining the outcomes from the evaluation of the pilot Domestic Abuse Referral and Assessment Service (DAARC) be presented to the Committee.

### Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its Corporate Plan Well-being Outcomes aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.
- (2) To ensure the Council was 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 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the wellbeing goals for Wales.
- (3) To ensure the Council was effectively assessing the performance of the pilot Domestic Abuse Referral and Assessment Service (DAARC).

### 385 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT UPDATE (DEH) –

The report was outlined by the Operational Manager for Public Housing who stated that overall all outcomes had been achieved. Two case studies were included as part of the report concerning the Council's support of a young tenant in terms of training and work undertaken with Flying Start and its inclusion with the Vale Timebanking Scheme such as with the 'Men Behaving Dadly' Group. She also stated that in addition to the original funding provided by Housing Services, other funding had since also been levered in, for example through the use of Section 106 contributions. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services went on to say the emphasis needed to be on sustainability – ensuring the projects continued to run if Council staff ceased to be heavily involved by ensuring that tenants are empowered to be able to take over projects themselves to meet the needs of their respective communities. This would allow Community Investment staff to continue to develop new initiatives throughout the Vale of Glamorgan. She then went on to say that Housing Services with the approval of Scrutiny Committee Members would submit an overall report in March 2020 covering four strategies that were due to end, the Community Investment Strategy, the Tenant Engagement Strategy, the Customer Care Strategy and the Environment and Neighbourhood Strategy. This report would provide an update on the completed actions and future proposals.

A Committee Member stated this was a positive report with good case studies. The Chairman added the case study regarding employability was an excellent story and asked if there were any targets with regards this area. The Operational Manager for Public Housing Services replied that there were no targets as this was done on a case by case basis in terms of helping individuals to build specific skills or to undertake preparatory training such as learning to drive.

Another Committee Member stated that empowering people and the Council stepping away from this process needed to be done gently and cited the Mayor's Foundation that could provide funding for such groups to which the Operational Manager for Public Housing thanked the Committee Member for their input.

Therefore, it was

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the monitoring report in relation to the Community Investment Strategy be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Community Investment Strategy, the Tenant Engagement Strategy, the Customer Services Strategy and Environment and Neighbourhood Strategy reports be combined into an overall Annual Report for March 2020.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To ensure that the Community Investment Strategy is implemented effectively and key outcomes are achieved.
- (2) To ensure that an overall report can be provided for the various Strategies so that a combined, annual, review can be given to the Committee of these key areas.