

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 16th September, 2020.

The Committee Agenda is available [here](#).

Present: Councillors Ms. J. Aviet, J.C. Bird, Ms. B.E. Brooks, Mrs. C.A. Cave, Miss. A.M. Collins, Mrs. S.M. Hanks, Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn, A.C. Parker, Mrs. S.D. Perkes and L.O. Rowlands.

Also present: Councillors N Moore and E. Williams.

22 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement:

“May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

23 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN –

RESOLVED – T H A T Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes be appointed Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

24 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN –

RESOLVED – T H A T Councillor Ms. J. Aviet be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Mrs. W. Davies, Mrs. G. Doyle, Mr. A. Raybould (Tenant Working Group Representatives) and Ms. B. Hunt (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale).

26 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 12th February, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

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27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

28 PRESENTATION – WORKING TOWARDS RECOVERY – SEPTEMBER 2020 -

The Director of Environment and Housing, in conjunction with the relevant Heads of Service, provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee which set out the vital work already undertaken by the Environment and Housing Directorate in response to the Covid-19 national pandemic and the transitional corporate approach to recovery going forward.

Officers apprised the Committee on key points for their service such as:

- Community Safety
- Building Services
- Housing Solutions and Supporting People Team

The Director of Environment and Housing emphasised the effective and pro-active response made by the Directorate – in particular, in key services such as caring for the most vulnerable residents and the ongoing cleaning of public buildings during the height of the crisis where the Cleaning Staff and Management had been exemplary in providing services under considerable pressure and had shown great flexibility and resilience. The work undertaken by the Refuse crews during the pandemic had also been outstanding – as evidenced by the praise received from members of the public as well as enabling the Council to carry on meeting its recycling targets even during this crisis. These efforts had been matched in the other service areas such as the efforts made in rehousing homeless individuals and families, providing ‘wraparound’ solutions for those with alcohol or drug dependency and ensuring ongoing community safety. Also, other areas such as the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and their work during the crisis and transition were relayed.

The Director also stressed that when transitioning to the ‘Recovery’ stage of this process, this would mean a return to a much-improved version of ‘normal’ – based on the lessons learned and efforts made by the Directorate and its staff during the pandemic. For example, the continued deployment of ‘mobile’ CCTV and its renewed importance in dealing with anti-social behaviour and crime, as well as continued remote working for staff in the Directorate wherever this was practicable and efficient. Also, to monitor and maintain the wellbeing and morale of Directorate staff – the example used was the decline in staff sickness levels and increase in morale of refuse staff due to strong, vocal, public support for their work during the pandemic – this being something that senior management elsewhere should take on board ensuring that their staff felt valued. The Director wished to caveat that there could not be complacency in this transition process, as recent events in other Local Authorities showed that at any time the Council could see a return to lockdown and the ‘Response’ phase.

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Following the presentation and subsequent Committee questions, Officers advised Members of the following:

- Housing Trading Account. It was too early yet to assess the budgetary shortfall in this area due to Covid-19, but there would be a better understanding of this by the end of the current year. Discussions were being held with the Head of Finance on how to plug these gaps.
- In terms of Building Services, the majority of clients were internal and had service-level agreements set-up in order to meet their needs and so it would be necessary to look at how best to support this internal Direct Labour Organisation and to return to profit next year. It had been a challenge as losses could not be claimed back and staff could not be furloughed.
- Enhanced cleaning of public buildings. The Directorate currently had two of the 'BREEZE' type spray / vapour cleaning machines – one static that could be rolled into a large room and activate / leave to clean and one mobile device which could be strapped to a cleaner's back and used in smaller classrooms or hard to reach areas. However, although these devices removed viruses they did not 'clean' the classrooms and so represented twice the work for cleaning staff who used viricidal products in order to clean anyway. The machines would be used instead in the event of a Covid-19 or viral outbreak.
- In terms of cleaning services, the Council had been more flexible than their competitors in terms of staff and charges, resulting in renewed interest from previous clients (such as schools) regarding the services they could provide.
- With regard to homelessness and the longer-term impacts of the pandemic, Housing and Building Services were still having to deal with issues in the 'here and now'. For example, they had successfully resolved issues around the use of temporary accommodation for homeless persons at the hotel near to Rhoose Airport connected with an uptake in the use of the hotel by people flying from the airport. Also, dealing with the challenges around the limited stock of one-bedroom housing through the ongoing Council Development, s.106 and Registered Social Landlord (RSL) programmes which would take some time. Also should the Phase 1 Welsh Government (WG) funding stop in March 2021 the Council would still be required to house current users of temporary accommodation. In order to tackle this, there would be a need to look at de-designating and converting Council housing stock, as well as continuing to work with the private sector and RSLs (which provided a lot of shared accommodation for single persons) in using existing or developing additional properties for housing and to support the more complex cases here with the Supporting People budget.
- On the question of modular homes, a report would be taken to Cabinet shortly about the bid for Phase 2 funding from Welsh Government (WG) for these. Funding was contingent on using modern methods of construction (MMC) and with a timescale for completion by the end of March 2021. Due to emergency legislation being in place they would not need a full planning application at this time, but this would need to be considered should the buildings be in situ for more than 12 months. A site had been identified for these homes (consisting of 14 units) at Court Road in Barry within the old

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civic amenity site. Initial appraisal work had started on the site – pending final approval from WG. Building costs were estimated around £1m. However, the challenge around MMC at present were issues with supply chains and a limited supply of manufacturers. However, due to the increasing emphasis on a carbon zero footprint from WG and Local Authorities, this method of construction would only increase in importance. Units would be a mix of one and two person units – self-contained, based on a ‘passive’ heating system. These sizes would offer the maximum flexibility and could cater for a family with one child also. This trial of modular housing, if successful, could be expanded to other sites. In terms of building contractors for this MMC project, this would need to go through a procurement process and could involve more than one contractor. WG also looked to contractors being sourced within Wales in order to help the Welsh economy. As part of this, the Housing Development Manager had been in contact with a potential local provider of MMC within the Vale. It was stressed that MMC was still an embryonic business in Wales however and would require further development in partnership with local government and others as use increased.

- The use of CCTV was also discussed – in particular the recently acquired five state of the art ‘re-deployable’ systems, which had proven to be of great benefit to local communities for day to day issues such as with targeting anti-social behaviour as well as dealing with crime. These had proven to be a lot more responsive, as control lay with the Local Authority as opposed to relying on the static, Bridgend based system. In terms of the traditional static CCTV, the issues around their age and the need to cannibalise existing cameras in order to repair others at key locations continued to be an issue. There was now a push to review CCTV - both as a report that would go to Cabinet and at an all Wales level, with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) appointing a strategic lead and co-ordinator for an all Wales body, and with the Head of Housing and Building Services attending meetings of this. However, this approach would take time and in the meanwhile the Council were looking at working with partners in order to share costs and resources around CCTV – for example, using the local Police Station and office-based Police Officers in order to monitor cameras. The Council made available £300,000 capital funding and S.106 funding for CCTV as well as close, effective, co-operation with the Neighbourhood and Enforcement Teams around this.
- There had been challenges around the Disabled Facility Grants (DFG), as the team handling this worked with householders in the private sector who needed to give permission to allow builders and occupational therapists into the household – which if they or other residents were shielding, would not be possible. This decline in demand, coupled with the furloughing of builders had meant that referrals had dried up during the peak of the pandemic and would put the DFG budget into deficit. Work had slowly started to come back (for example the installation of stair lifts or access modifications) and there was a pent-up demand for DFG works to be completed. Call-off contracts with agreed building contractors - set up in order to get works up and running quickly - would also be starting soon.
- Regarding the advertising for Homes4U, this would be done both digitally and via Social Services colleagues, Healthcare professionals, libraries and

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GP surgeries, as well as the Council's website so that everyone had equal access to this information.

- It was confirmed that the Council had achieved the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and had moved on to the next phase which entailed maintaining this status and regular returns made to WG. Due to Covid-19 there had been delays in external programmes, with contractors and building suppliers closing down which had set the Council back 4-5months - but work was ramping up now again.
- Finally, in terms of the current status of projects not funded by WG during the pandemic, the majority of these were ones where WG were reluctant to provide funding to landlords direct in order to purchase and/or develop housing properties. As a result, the Council would be looking to fund some of these projects using its Housing Capital Funding - such as the provision of self-contained, suitable accommodation that fall just short of the very high standards that WG have as a criteria for providing funding. This would need to be done in conjunction with utilising existing housing stock in partnership with private landlords and with the 'Empty Homes' strategy.

The Committee also wanted its thanks and appreciation noted to all the frontline and other teams within the Directorate and the wider Council for all the additional work they had done in keeping the Council going during the pandemic and the help given they had given to residents in the Vale. They asked the Director of Environment and Housing and Heads of Service present to pass their thanks onto the management and staff too.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Working Towards Recovery presentation for the Environment and Housing Directorate be noted.
- (2) T H A T further reports on the following areas referred to in the presentation - Housing Trading Account, Modular Housing, CCTV and Disabled Facilities Grants - be brought to this Committee in future.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) For consideration and comment by Members concerning the vital work already undertaken by the Environment and Housing Directorate in response to the Covid-19 national pandemic and the transitional corporate approach to recovery going forward.
- (2) To ensure the Committee is updated on the ongoing progress within these areas of interest.

29 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 1 PERFORMANCE 2020/21 (DEH) –

The Director of Environment and Housing presented the report, the purpose of which was to present to Members the Quarter 1 (Q1) performance results for the

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period 1st April, 2020 to 30th June, 2020 in delivering the Annual Delivery Plan commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objective. By way of background this arose from the new Corporate Plan which had been produced for 2020-2025 and the legal requirement to produce an Annual report on the Council's performance.

The Director of Environment and Housing noted that this was a new way of reporting performance on a quarterly basis and was not Scrutiny Committee based but rather cross-cutting throughout the various Council service areas.

Going forward, the Director of Environment and Housing or relevant Heads of Service would be presenting such reports with an additional presentation covering areas pertinent to the Committee only.

Despite the significant challenges of responding to the global Covid-19 pandemic which was at its height during the first quarter period, positive progress had been made in delivering the in-year commitments in relation to the Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21). The performance contributed to an overall Amber status for the Plan at Q1. The Director of Environment and Housing stated this was a clear testament to the continued hard work by the Directorate during these challenging times – for example the achievement in maintaining 70% in recycling performance.

The Director of Environment and Housing explained that the four Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives as well as the performance indicators / actions related to them were set out in the appendices of the report, with details outlining which of these corresponded to a particular Scrutiny Committee therein. Subsequent reports would be précised and have an accompanying presentation focusing on the actual requirements of the Committee which would also help inform the Committee's Forward Work Programme.

In summary, there had been reasonably good performance for the quarter despite the pandemic but there was more work to do as certain areas had seen lower performance due to staff being redeployed in order to support other areas such as Social Care and providing Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Furthermore, due to residents shielding and so on, performance around repairs had also dropped.

Several Members remarked on the size of the report, to which the Director of Environment and Housing replied that subsequent reports would include a summary and focused presentation around those areas of performance under the remit of this Committee. This would be based on the Committee's requirements in order for it to be able to scrutinise effectively and in depth going forward.

A Member referred to the performance of C1V in the report, noting that although 96% of customer enquiries to C1V were resolved at first contact, they had been informed of ongoing issues with members of the public getting through and the length of time in order to do this. The Director of Environment and Housing explained that due to the pandemic and the related changes around re-siting C1V staff, there had been an adverse impact on call lengths / waiting times. He would ask the Operational Manager for Customer Relations to bring to the next

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Committee meeting a report on the impact of the pandemic on C1V's performance in comparison to their performance pre-pandemic.

The Chairman sought clarification on the DRIVE programme - a partnership between the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff City Councils - referred to in the report. A Member was able to confirm this was an intensive intervention programme that worked with perpetrators and survivors of domestic abuse.

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H AT the performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 commitments as aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(2) T H AT the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.

(3) T H AT future reports on performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 have a summary and presentation attached highlighting those areas of performance directly under the remit of the Committee.

(4) T H AT an additional report be brought to the next meeting of the Committee regarding the impact of the pandemic on the performance of C1V.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) To ensure the Council clearly demonstrates the progress being made towards achieving its commitments in the Annual Delivery Plan 2020/21 aimed at making a positive difference to the lives of Vale of Glamorgan citizens.

(2) 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 2015 that it maximises its contribution to achieving the well-being goals for Wales.

(3) To ensure the Committee is updated on the specific areas of performance that fall within its remit and to help inform the Work Programme.

(4) To update the Committee on the issues and challenges that C1V faced during the pandemic.

30 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST JULY, 2020 (DEH) –

The Finance Support Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to advise Scrutiny Committee of the progress relating to revenue and capital

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expenditure for the period 1st April to 31st July, 2020.

The revenue position at year end still forecasted a balanced budget but going in to Winter this could change with a further lockdown, etc.

The current budget position was as outlined in the report, with the main issues being:

- With regard to tackling homelessness, a lot of work and expense had been involved in housing homeless residents safely during the pandemic. This would be funded by WG until the end of March 2021, but the challenge would be after this time whether the Council could put something in place in order to mitigate these costs;
- The Community Safety team had been heavily involved in dealing with increased anti-social behaviour during lockdown, with an impetus on CCTV equipment provision. The team were currently looking at rolling out the replacement programme using the £350k capital funding set aside last year;
- Disabled Facility Grants – due to the lack of access to vulnerable persons' properties during the pandemic the DFG team had not been able to get the works done which had an impact on the capital budget and the fee target on the revenue budget had also been significantly reduced (the Quarter 1 fee income was £5k, against a profiled target of £36k) – it was hoped that the situation would improve but with Winter and a potential lockdown on its way, these could impact any recovery.

The Finance Support Manager then referred to the Capital Programme, which at the start of the year had a £33m approval budget but due to delays, reprofiling etc. Officers had taken the early decision to slip or move forward £9m to next year's Capital Programme.

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2020/21 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

That Members were aware of the projected revenue outturn for 2020/21.

31 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY DECISION TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND UPDATED WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2020/21 (MD) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report, the purpose of which was to report progress on the Scrutiny recommendations for 2019/20 as would have been received in May 2020 and to confirm the Committee's Work Programme for 2020/21:

- 4th Quarter January to March 2020 (Appendix A);
- 3rd Quarter October to December 2019 (Appendix B);

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- 2nd Quarter July to September 2019 (Appendix C);
- April 2018 - March 2019 (Appendix D)
- Suggested Work Programme Schedule for 2020/21 (Appendix E); and
- Emergency Power Decisions relating to the remit of the Committee (Appendix F).

A Member had a query in relation to Appendix B, Min. No. 520 - a report identifying an appropriate housing solution for the Traveller community - and when this would be brought to the Committee. The Head of Housing and Building Services replied that no further work had been done since the start of the pandemic and would clarify with colleagues in Planning who were leading on candidate sites and that a report had been due to go to Cabinet in May. It was requested that the Head of Housing and Building Services – in conjunction with the Operational Manager for Planning and Building Control – provide the Committee with an update on the current status of this issue.

Another Member referred to Min. No. 589 – Digital Inclusion Update - and whether there was an update on the digital tablets in the community and if these could now be wiped and re-used. It was requested that the Head of Housing and Building Services – in conjunction with the Operational Manager for Customer Relations - provide the Committee with an update on this query.

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed as completed in Appendix A of the report be agreed and the actions listed as ongoing in Appendices B, C and D of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the updated Work Programme Schedule attached at Appendix E be approved and uploaded to the Council's website subject to the following amendments:
 - (i) Reports on the following areas referred to in the Working Towards Recovery presentation - Housing Trading Account, Modular Housing, CCTV and Disabled Facilities Grants - be added to the Work Programme Schedule;
 - (ii) A report on the impact of the pandemic on the performance of C1V – as referred to in the Annual Delivery Plan Monitoring Report - be added to the Work Programme Schedule.
- (3) T H A T the Emergency Power Decisions taken during the national lockdown at Appendix F be noted in context to the Committee's Forward Work Programme planning.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.
- (2&3) For information.