

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting held on 11th November, 2020.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#)

Present: Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes (Chairman); Councillor Ms. J. Aviet (Vice-Chairman); J.C. Bird, Ms. B.E. Brooks, Mrs. C.A. Cave, Miss. A.M. Collins, Mrs. S.M. Hanks, Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn and L.O. Rowlands.

Also present: Councillors K.F. McCaffer (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Arts and Culture) and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services), Ms. B. Hunt (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale Representative), Mrs. G. Doyle and Ms. H. Smith (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

172 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chairman 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.”

173 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor A.C. Parker, Mrs. W. Davies and Mr. A. Raybould (Tenant Working Group Representatives).

174 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 14th October, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

175 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

176 LOCAL HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT (LHMA) 2019 (REF) –

The Head of Housing and Building Services presented the report, which had been referred from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.

By way of background, the Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the Local Authority was required to consider its housing needs periodically under the Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, with the Local Authority required to undertake a review of their Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) every two years. This most recent LHMA followed on from the previous assessment in 2017 and provided an ‘in-house’ overview of the Vale of Glamorgan housing market at ward or major settlement level, following a methodology allowing assessment of the markets across all tenures – whether that be home ownership, private rental or affordable housing. The key aspect of the LHMA was that it gave the Council a view of the needs – shortfalls and surpluses – of housing in the Vale which in turn impacted both the Housing and Planning departments, such as their rationale for developing further housing and the consideration of Section 106 agreements. As part of this, the Council would not only be looking at traditional social rented housing but also other areas where subsidy or assistance were needed for people to get housing, such as ‘intermediate’ rented housing or ‘low-cost’ home ownership.

The Head of Housing and Building Services then highlighted the key areas of the report, based on the appropriate calculations outlined within, including:

- An increase of 320 units of affordable housing, since 2017;
- An annual requirement, of 799 units of social housing together with 21 units of low cost housing ownership and 70 units of intermediate rented accommodation, in order to meet the affordable housing needs for the Vale of Glamorgan. However, part of the social housing figures would consist of 489 units resulting from the anticipated turnover in existing stock;
- A net annual requirement of 890 affordable units in the Vale of Glamorgan during the next five-year period – which equated to 4,450 units over the full period;
- The figures quoted had been influenced by a number of factors – particularly the increase in the number of applicants on the Homes4U register, with 5,986 such applications in 2019 – an increase from 3,882 in 2017;
- The greatest need had been identified as general needs properties particularly within the Barry, Penarth and Llandough areas, with 1 or 2 bed properties being in the highest demand;
- The LHMA would also feed into other crucial reports around housing, such as housing needs for older persons within the Vale which would come to this Scrutiny Committee in the future;
- There were some surpluses in certain types of housing, such as 3-bedroom general properties, but these needed to be ‘net off’ from those areas where there was need, because it was not based on bedroom size but just on numbers of properties which could mask issues in some of the demographic areas and communities;
- These calculations were described by Welsh Government as “more of an art than a science” and therefore the net housing need figure should not be used as a target figure as the Vale could not achieve 890 affordable housing units a year over a five-year period. However, they were useful in giving a headline figure in terms of the actual needs identified for housing, as well as an evidence base and benchmark for options and solutions in

terms of building homes, as a point reference with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners and used as a planning aid in terms of our statutory duties for the Local Development Plan (LDP).

Following the presentation of the report and subsequent Committee questions, the Head of Housing and Building Services, with support from the Housing Solutions and Supporting People Team Leader, advised Members of the following:

- On the question of an increase in numbers of applicants on the Homes4U waiting list, the numbers involved were the highest they had ever been, and the figures detailed in the report would not reflect the possible increases as a result of the pandemic. The Homes4U list was updated on a regular basis, with the Council writing to every applicant asking if they wished to stay on the list and applicants would be removed if they did not respond to these regular canvases;
- Regarding Supporting People, its specialisms and any increasing demand, it was explained that the team was funded by the Housing Support Grant and the budget had been maintained by the Welsh Government. However, they faced ever increasing demands even before Covid-19, with this growing since the pandemic and in particular when it came to more complex requirements. The Supporting People Team worked closely with the Housing Solutions Team as the needs required by people were often more than just housing issues. A key area at the moment was the offer and provision by Housing Solutions of emergency accommodation to people during the pandemic. Part of the team were currently involved in the review of existing support contracts and looking at recommissioning services, as well as the annual needs mapping for housing support which had been used to look at the needs arising from the pandemic, in tandem with the ongoing complex needs faced in this area, such as prison leavers and those persons dealing with substance misuse or mental health issues. There had been no increase in demand for support to veterans during the pandemic, but they were considered a priority and the team worked with third party sector specialists to support them;
- On the subject of the letting of socially rented properties to persons from outside the Vale, the housing developments undertaken by the Council or Housing Associations in rural and less urban areas were based on Local Letting Plans which were focused on meeting local housing needs. These Plans were developed in conjunction with local communities which had resulted in the Plans being largely a success. Some issues had been seen on the eastern and western boundaries of the county initially, where local housing markets crossed county lines. Vale of Glamorgan residents would still be considered as the priority here but if local demand was met then residents from nearby counties would also be considered. Going forward, the Council was looking to ensure that housing developments would be undertaken in areas where there was considerable local demand. The Housing Solutions and Supporting People Team Leader would double check to see if there were any recent instances of persons letting Vale homes from out of county, but as far as they were aware this was no longer the case;

- Regarding the issue of people outside of the Vale who wished to move to the County and into social or other supported housing, these would be considered under the Council's priority scheme for housing (under Homes4U) – generally, these would be categorised as 'bronze' (the lowest form of priority) unless there was a more pressing need for external applicants to live within the Vale, for example if they were supporting a resident in the Vale who required essential support.

The Scrutiny Committee, having considered the resolutions of Cabinet

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Local Housing Market Assessment 2019, attached at Appendix A to the report, be accepted and the Policy implications be noted

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

177 SAFER VALE PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2020-2023 (REF) –

The Principal Community Safety Officer presented the report, which had been referred from Cabinet to the Scrutiny Committee for its consideration.

The Council was a statutory member of the Safer Vale Partnership with the Police, Health, Probation and Fire and Rescue Services. Since its inception in 1998, the partnership had evolved, with a greater focus on community safety. This required a standalone community safety strategy and as part of this a strategic assessment. This assessment (including data from the partner agencies) confirmed a number of areas and priorities that the Safer Vale Partnership were already looking at. This assessment would be reviewed annually in order to refresh the data and monitor progress. Wider consultation was also made with Council staff, the local community, via resident surveys and with Neighbourhood Watch. A key finding was that consultees did not have a full understanding of what the Safer Vale did and from Council staff there had been identified a need for greater information sharing at an operational level. This all fed into the Strategy, which shifted from the more 'stereotypical' issues or priorities previously focused on to a much broader range of priorities under the following titles:

- Prevent and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in order to keep people who lived, worked and visited the Vale safe and free from the fear of crime.
- Engagement – improve the way the Partnership connected with, involved and informed the community to increase awareness, the feeling of belonging and positive community cohesion in the Vale;
- Safeguarding – the Partnership would work to safeguard the most vulnerable in the community;
- Working together – the Partnership was committed to strengthening partnership working in order to improve efficiencies and problem solving.

In tandem with this strategy, a 'community facing version' was also developed which provided a 'summarised' version for ease of access for the public.

The Strategy had been adopted by the other partner agencies, but due to the pandemic adoption by the Council had been delayed. In the meantime, the pressures around Covid-19 had pushed the need for problem solving and collaboration within the Partnership.

The Principal Community Safety Officer laid out the key areas that the Partnership had carried on delivering during the pandemic:

- Prevent and reduce – the Partnership had to adapt quickly to spikes in anti-social behaviour through the deployment of mobile CCTV cameras at the main anti-social behaviour 'hotspots'. This had resulted in a reduction of anti-social behaviour and where necessary further action had been taken;
- Engagement – the Partnership had worked extensively with Neighbourhood Watch, Rural Watch and Airport Watch in order to keep in close contact with local communities, in conjunction with the use of sending messages to residents via the 'Vale Connect' system and the use of 'Zoom';
- Safeguarding – the move to MARAC meetings for high risk victims twice a week had allowed agencies to come together to discuss these a lot more quickly and had improved discussions on high risk persons so that action plans could be implemented as soon as possible. Such measures had received positive feedback from both victims and staff. Also, an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor was now embedded within the Community Safety Team thereby ensuring a faster resolution of such issues and to increase support for victims. Also, the recent implementation of the 'DRIVE' project (since September 2020), that worked with high-risk perpetrators of domestic violence in order to change their behaviour and to prevent further occurrences of abuse;
- Working together – since the start of the pandemic there had been greater collaboration between partner agencies and a need to problem solve creatively and quickly.

Following the presentation of the report and subsequent Committee questions, the Principal Community Safety Officer, with support from Head of Housing and Building Services, advised Members of the following:

- The Vale's seemingly high figures of children receiving care with substance misuse issues for 2017/18 in comparison with other Welsh Authorities, was explained as possibly the result of 'skewed' data due to changes in the data collection method used by the Area Planning Board and this was being looked into. The Principal Community Safety Officer would also look into providing the Committee with more up to date information on this topic;
- On the issue of self-harming, there had been a noticeable increase in alcohol and drugs misuse among young people recently during lockdown and these issues with self-harming were monitored in conjunction with partners in Health and Youth Offending Services. More information on this would be sought from partners and brought back to the Committee;

- It was suggested that a regular, six monthly update on the Safer Vale Partnership Strategy Action Plan be brought to Committee for its consideration due to these actions having an impact on all the communities within the Vale and it being a living, evolving document in terms of new or updated priorities as these emerged;
- In terms of the DRIVE Project, this was confirmed as being delivered by a third sector organisation and had seen some success already since its commencement in September 2020. The Principal Community Safety Officer would share a presentation from the DRIVE Project to the Committee via email.

The Scrutiny Committee, having considered the resolutions of Cabinet

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Safer Vale Partnership Strategy 2020-2023 and Action Plan, attached at Appendices 1 and 2 respectively to the report, be endorsed and noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee receive a report on the Action Plan on a six-monthly basis.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) To enable the Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the progress of the Action Plan.

178 HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION STRATEGY 2018 – 2022 – MONITORING REPORT (DEH) –

The Head of Housing and Building Services presented the report, and in particular highlighted the activity undertaken by the Housing Service during the pandemic with regard to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy:

- Housing Solutions and Supporting People Services have been under considerable pressure, receiving 2,300 homelessness enquiries for advice and support;
- At the time of the report, 86 units of B&B accommodation had been procured; since then, this had risen to over a 100 and growing. These included persons who indicated they were homeless and under the revised legislation the Council was required to house these in emergency accommodation;
- Over the period since the start of the pandemic in March, 269 households had been placed in B&B accommodation. Some people had moved on through the system and had found alternative accommodation, although a small minority had been removed due to causing damage to accommodation or causing significant anti-social behaviour;

- Work on the Action Plan and Strategy had been ongoing. The Council under Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 was required to produce a Homelessness Strategy – with partners – in order to address the prevention of homelessness, the availability of suitable accommodation and the availability of appropriate support and assistance for people who are or may become homeless;
- As part of the Strategy and Action Plan, certain outcomes needed to be delivered to key vulnerable groups such as young people leaving care and those people receiving mental health services in the community;
- Housing and Building Services had adopted the recommendations of the LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales Report 'Out of The Door'. The department had appointed a LGBTQ+ champion and have training to be undertaken via Stonewall for the Directorate over the coming weeks;
- Despite these challenges and pressures, the actions in the Homelessness Prevention Action Plan had continued to be progressed and a number of new actions had been identified in relation to the recovery from the first phase of response to Homelessness and Covid-19, with a report due to go to Cabinet on 16th November which highlighted the work under Phase 2;
- There had been an increase in hotel provision, with block booking of hotel provision until the end of March 2021, with guaranteed funding until that date and with the expectation that the Welsh Government would extend this funding due to the Council having to still house significant numbers of people after this date;
- Housing and Building Services continued to work closely with private sector landlords in order to save tenancies, particularly in light of the partial lifting of the restriction on enforcement of evictions (the notice given for this being extended to six months (from three) after September 2020);
- Ongoing work with the Communications Team to provide promotional information and initiatives and undertaking private landlords' surveys to see where there were tenant issues and to have a communication route here in order to prevent homelessness;
- Many actions were still open, with higher actions being prioritised and lower ones being 'parked' due to the pandemic;
- The Citizens Advice Representative stated that they had a private rented sector debt helpline which would assist those tenants with concerns over rent arrears and invited Members to let their constituents and others know about this service;
- Due to Covid-19 there had been increased cooperation between agencies, including a central co-ordination cell that regularly met (including the Council, Probation, Health and Social Services, Registered Social Landlords and Community Safety) to discuss homelessness issues. Work done with support providers such as Pobl were also referred to, such as the 'One Stop Shop' and other initiatives;
- There had been a number of new social housing developments, such as the 'Goodshed' development providing 24 units of accommodation which took people out of temporary accommodation;
- Overall, whilst this had led to there being no homelessness 'backlog' or homeless waiting lists for emergency accommodation within the Vale area,

the Council needed to maintain its response – with on average 8 people a week still needing to be housed in emergency accommodation.

Following the presentation of the report and subsequent Committee questions, the Head of Housing and Building Services, with support from the Housing Solutions and Supporting People Team Leader, advised Members of the following:

- Housing Solutions continued to have a healthy relationship with the private rented sector, with the most recent Landlord Forum attended by a significant number of landlords and having a dedicated officer dealing with private sector landlords in order to help increase the supply of such properties. Housing Solutions had also reached out to other Local Authorities in order to help them build similar forums with landlords.
- In terms of driving actions within the Action Plan forward, it was currently very challenging to progress these due to the primary focus for Housing Solutions still being around the issues raised by the pandemic and the related housing needs. Going forward, further reports and action plans on this topic would show which actions were 'parked' or had been moved forward. Looking forward, a key focus for Housing Solutions and the Committee would be phase 2 recovery planning, general housing provision through a potential Task and Finish Group in the new year and the challenge of supporting persons in temporary accommodation and their transition to more permanent forms of housing.

The Committee wished to thank the Housing and Building Services staff for their hard work in helping to prevent homelessness during the pandemic.

Having considered the report it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the progress to date of implementing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan be noted.
- (2) T H A T the new actions implemented and the additional significant pressures on the service, its staff and resources as a result of the COVID pandemic be noted.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) For noting.

179 YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE: TRANSITION AND RECOVERY PLAN DATED 8TH SEPTEMBER 2020 (DSS) –

The Youth Offending Services (YOS) Manager presented the report, the purpose of which was to inform Committee about the plans for transition and recovery as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report brought the Committee's attention to the YOS Transition and Recovery Plan 2020.

The report highlighted how the YOS, which was designated as a key public service, planned to continue to deliver services during the pandemic.

The report was also designed to enable Elected Members to have effective oversight of the work of the YOS and how this was being delivered during the pandemic.

By way of background, the YOS Manager explained that the Youth Offending Team was designated by legislation, the purpose of this was to provide relevant Youth Justice Services across the Local Authority area. Under section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the Local Authority was required to produce an annual Youth Justice Plan, but this had been put on hold due to Covid-19. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) had asked instead for a number of other documents to be produced such as a Business Continuity Plan, this Recovery Plan and a Position Statement related to Youth Justice National Standards.

The key points of the Recovery Plan, as raised by the YOS Manager, were as follows:

- The Recovery Plan provided an overview of the impact of Covid-19 based on local circumstances and looked at how the YOS would transition to recovery based on the child's journey underpinned by the outcomes outlined in the National Standards for Youth Justice. The Plan set out the Vale of Glamorgan Council's and therefore the YOS' position which was "where you can work from home, you should work from home". It was important to note that the YOS would not, therefore, be operating under 'business as usual';
- The Recovery Plan set out the Governance arrangements, the operating model and how the YOS was using its resources to support and intervene with children, families and victims engaged with the YOS. The YOS was carrying out the majority of its duties remotely, unless it identified a need to undertake face to face contact with children and young people and it would then need to complete a Covid-19 risk assessment in order to justify the necessity for this;
- Services were being delivered across all five Youth Justice National Standards, looking at the needs of the child, the needs of staff delivering the services, and how strategic partnership arrangements were supporting the delivery of services;
- The Plan identified the ongoing need for effective partnership arrangements in order to deliver quality services and positive outcomes, with partners

taking the lead in specific areas in order to take forward the actions within the Plan. The YOS was also part of the Local Authority suite of prevention and early intervention services and works alongside Flying Start, Families First and others to ensure that children and families received the right support at the right time to address their identified needs;

- Recommendations and outcomes identified for each area were outlined in the report under the following sections – Appropriate Adult Duties, Out of Court Disposals (OOCd), Attendance at Court, In the Community (for children subject to Statutory Court Orders), In Secure (where children were held under secure establishments), and Transitions (where children moved from one service or setting to another);
- The YOS Management Board met on 8th September, 2020 and agreed the Plan, subsequently, it would be looking to develop an action plan to take forward the agreed recommendations.

Following the presentation of the report and subsequent Committee questions, the YOS Manager advised Members of the following:

- The Case Management Team, which provided services to the Court and managed statutory cases, was at its full complement of six practitioners. Overall the YOS Team numbered approximately 30 practitioners;
- In terms of waiting times for Court cases for young people, initially at the start of the pandemic all Court cases were adjourned until May. Cases restarted in June on a weekly basis and the backlog had now been cleared. Court cases were now being listed on a 'staggered' time slot basis due to social distancing and it could in some instances take up to 10-15 days to list a Court case for breach but no longer than that.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee has sight of the Action Plan going forward.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To enable Elected Members to have effective oversight of the work of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and understand what and how services were being delivered during the Covid-19 pandemic, as Youth Justice Services had been identified as a key public service.
- (2) For the Committee to have oversight of the Action Plan.