

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 10 February 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan - Task and Finish Group - Scope
Purpose of Report:	To appoint the membership of the Task and Finish Group and to approve the scope for the Group.
Report Owner:	Rob Thomas, Managing Director
Responsible Officer:	Mark Thomas, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	None
Policy Framework:	The report is a matter for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee identified, on the 14th October 2020, that housing and homelessness provision as part of the recovery from COVID-19 should be reviewed by the Committee and consideration be given to setting up a Task and Finish Work Group in order to achieve this. • The report asks the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee to confirm the membership of the proposed Task and Finish Group. • The report asks the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee to approve the proposed scope, meetings/sessions required and timescale for the review. • The subsequent report(s) produced by the Task and Finish Work Group will be referred back to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and any recommendations or comments approved be referred on to Cabinet. 	

Recommendations

- 1.** That the Committee confirms the membership of the Task and Finish Group, to comprise of at least 6 Members (from Labour, Conservative, Plaid Cymru, Llantwit First Independent and Vale Independents political groups, as well as co-opted members on the Scrutiny Committee) and that the first meeting of the group be undertaken as soon as practicable following its establishment.
- 2.** That the proposed scope and timescale for the review be approved as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.** That reports of the Task and Finish Group be referred to the Scrutiny Committee (Homes and Safe Communities) for consideration.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.** To progress the review.
- 2.** To progress the review.
- 3.** To seek comments / approval on any recommendations of the Group prior to referral to Cabinet.

1. Background

- 1.1** All five of the Councils Scrutiny Committees in considering their work programmes for 2020/21 were requested to put forward items for consideration for review and the most appropriate forms of scrutiny for each of these, including "task and finish".
- 1.2** At its meeting on the 14th October 2020, the Scrutiny Committee, identified housing and homelessness provision as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's recovery from Covid-19 as an area that should be reviewed by the Committee and consideration be given to setting up a Task and Finish Work Group in order to achieve this. This recommendation is in line with the councils adopted Coronavirus Recovery Strategy (min C334 21st September 2020) where an action specifically was agreed to work with partners to sustain the reduction in homelessness achieved during the crisis.
- 1.3** In undertaking the review, it is envisioned that the following meetings/sessions will be arranged:
 - 1.3.1.1** Looking at the legal and financial considerations and framework as well as the general background and scope to housing provision during Covid-19 and beyond with briefings from Housing, Legal and Finance Officers of the Council;

- 1.3.1.2 To review allocation priorities and the provision of help and support with briefings from the relevant Council Officers, partners and (external) expert witnesses (such as Citizens Advice and Pobl);
- 1.3.1.3 To review the governance arrangements around housing provision, with briefings from Council Officers and external partners from the multi-agency 'coordination cell' (such as Probation, Health and Social Services, Registered Social Landlords and Community Safety);
- 1.3.1.4 To review the current house building programme and homelessness policy and strategy; and
- 1.3.1.5 To look at 'best practice' from other similar local authorities as well as potential testimony from 'expert' witnesses within the Council or externally (such as Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice Bureau);
- 1.3.1.6 Collation of findings and evidence, to agree recommendations and suitable conclusions by the Work Group to refer back to the Committee.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is a proposed review scope outlining the objectives and desired outcomes for the review, the information that would be required, the methods to be employed in undertaking the review and details of the timescales, including start and finish dates.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 Looking to the long term - the review of housing and homelessness provision will offer recommendations and a strategy around the Council's approach to this provision in order to ensure that such services are sustainable and that future need and demand for services is understood.
- 3.2 Taking an integrated approach - the review of housing and homelessness provision will include looking at the current multi-agency arrangements in place around housing as well as engagement with partners and other external parties in order to carry out this review and ensuring the review takes into account the wellbeing objectives and goals of the Council (such as 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale').
- 3.3 Involvement and Collaboration - the review will involve potential contributions from a variety of external parties such as expert witnesses and other partners or third sector organisations.

- 3.4** Prevention - the review will help to address issues around housing provision that could occur and impact on the ability of the Council to house tenants as well as addressing reasons behind homelessness within the Vale of Glamorgan as we move on to a recovery phase.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications in respect of this report.
- 4.2** The establishment of a time limited Task and Finish Group is considered to make optimum use of limited resources. In view of the fact that no new group would commence work on a review prior to other work being finalised, it is recommended that the Task and Finish Group undertake its first meeting as soon as practicable following its establishment.

Employment

- 4.3** There are no employment implications in respect of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** There are no direct legal implications in respect of this report.

5. Background Papers

Welsh Government guidance to local authorities, housing services and social landlords regarding COVID-19

Letters from the Welsh Government Housing Minister on the extension of emergency legislation for COVID-19

Appendix 1: Checklist for Scoping

Task and Finish Group		Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan
Chairman		TBC
1	<p>Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of housing and homelessness provision as part of the recovery phase ('Phase 2') that the Council will be undertaking due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 	
2	<p>Objectives and Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review will look to cover the key areas of current and future housing and homelessness provision and policies – allocation priorities, governance, resources, house building strategy, emerging legislative and funding challenges or developments – and to offer recommendations on how to approach, implement or to improve on these. 	
3	<p>Desired Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the staffing and resources as well as funding required by the Council in order to deal with these challenges. • To understand the legal status around housing and homelessness provision – what the Council can and cannot do legally in this area once emergency legislation has been removed and what the potential impact of such changes will have on housing and homelessness provision currently in place due to COVID-19. • To review allocation priorities around housing and homelessness provision and to suggest improvements if required. • To review, understand and to suggest improvements to the provision of help and support for vulnerable and similar groups in order to aid them with permanent accommodation. • To review current governance arrangements. • To review the current house building programme and surplus land or land disposal for housing development. • To review homelessness policy and strategy and how these could be improved, or new ones developed. • To review 'best practice' from other and/or similar local authorities as well as potential testimony from 'expert' witnesses within the Council or externally (such as Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice Bureau). 	
4	<p>Information Required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous legislation on housing and homelessness provision. • Emergency legislation on housing and homelessness provision during COVID-19 (including Welsh Government guidance to local authorities, housing services and social landlords regarding COVID-19). 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming amendments and changes to the Housing Wales Act 2014 and their potential impacts as well as competing challenges to funding and resources for Local Authorities resulting from these. • Letters from the Welsh Government Housing Minister on the extension of emergency legislation for COVID-19. • Audit Wales: Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (October 2020) • Housing Business Plan. • Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 and monitoring reports. • Local Housing Market Assessment 2019. • Coronavirus Recovery Strategy. • Housing Strategies Update Report. • Welsh Government regulation and legislation concerning social housing and its supply. • Evaluation of the current system of housing allocation. • Cost and statistical analyses on housing provision. • Funding options. • Review of research or work undertaken in other parts of UK to improve housing provision. • Relevant Annual and Service Plans.
5	<p>Format of Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing reports. • Presentations. • Background information – current Policies. • Site visits. • Consultation. • Interviews with Service Users and/or Expert/External Witnesses.
6	<p>Methods to be Employed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings. • Visits. • Interviews. • Research analysis. • Discussions with External Witnesses and Council Officers. • Develop an action plan.
7	<p>External Witnesses and Council officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Users. • Officers from Housing, Legal, Finance and any other relevant service lines. • Representatives from Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale (CACV). • Representatives from Shelter Cymru and Pobl. • Representatives from external partners from the multi-agency ‘coordination cell’ (such as Probation, Health and Social Services, Registered Social Landlords and Community Safety). • Other relevant stakeholders to be determined throughout the review.
8	<p>Timescales (including start and finish dates)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meeting to consider scope and current practices and options.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final report to be determined by the Scrutiny Committee by no later than March 2022.
9	Resources and Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VOG Officers and Elected Members time.
10	Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to be submitted for consideration to Scrutiny Committee and, if appropriate, recommendations to be made to Cabinet.