

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 7th July, 2021.

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

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

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

Also present: Ms. H. Smith (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel) and Ms. C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale Representative); Councillors Mrs. J.E. Charles and E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Legal, Regulatory and Planning Services).

187 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 live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

188 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor L.O. Rowlands; Mrs. W. Davies, Mrs. G. Doyle and Mr. A. Raybould (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representatives).

189 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June, 2021 be approved as a correct record.

190 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

191 ANNUAL CORPORATE SAFEGUARDING REPORT: 2020/21 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 7th June, 2021 was presented to the Committee by the Head of Housing and Building Services, with a particular focus on those areas under the Committee’s remit.

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The report highlighted the legal framework around safeguarding and drew the Committee's attention to:

- The Council's Human Resources Department had implemented an electronic and online transfer system for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks in order to speed up the process, with the outcome now being available in most cases within 24-48 hours;
- Since the Vale of Glamorgan Council adopted the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Regional Strategy, work had been ongoing in order to support this such as Housing staff continuing to attend Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings with other partners in order to tackle domestic abuse; and the ongoing capital funding for 'target hardening' of 97 homes of victims of domestic abuse within the Vale of Glamorgan over 2020/21;
- The pandemic had impacted upon service delivery; however safeguarding activity had continued during this time to ensure those most vulnerable within local communities were supported and protected. For example, despite the reduction of face to face or home visits by Housing staff to vulnerable tenants and others due to the pandemic, staff had carried out over 1,200 telephone welfare checks of vulnerable households over the last 12 months, which had also helped to identify persons not previously known as being vulnerable and had spurred on the implementation of a new Tenant Profiling project in order to identify needs, coupled with the support that could now be provided via the One Stop Shop;
- Housing staff had continued to be trained around safeguarding (such as implementing the Ask & Act level 2 of the National Training Framework training), as well as safeguarding being a standard agenda item at both staff meetings and monthly one to ones in order to share best practice and updates;
- Housing were also represented on the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board. A Housing Officer had also been trained to be able to undertake Child and Adult Practise Reviews, either as the Chair or Reviewer;
- The ongoing use of the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) and Adult Safeguarding referrals in order to share with partners (such as Social Services) thereby helping to provide support around housing and other needs for persons as soon as possible;
- There had been 1,481 referrals made to the Community Safety Team (CST) in 2020/21, broken down by various categories, and with various measures used by CST in order to address these, such as the use of Civil Injunction Orders;
- Channel Panel (Prevent) programme, which focusses on diverting vulnerable people from getting involved in terrorism, had seen 4 referrals adopted in 2020/2021 and 1 not adopted; this contrasted with 2019/20 where there had been no such referrals;
- Regarding Shared Regulatory Services (SRS):
 - SRS had dealt with 114 Doorstep Crime and 112 Scams cases (including those around fake COVID test kits being offered for sale) and they had been involved in a number of successful prosecutions of rogue traders and others as well as helping to gain compensation for the victims;

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- SRS had also used online, remote, training for partners, and front-line services in order to deliver key preventative advice;
- Finally, SRS had also installed the 'call blocker' service for 59 elderly and vulnerable households to prevent nuisance or malicious calls, as well as visiting and dealing with premises suspected of selling nitrous oxide bottles to children and their ongoing work around the licensing of taxi drivers.

Following the Officer's presentation and subsequent questions raised by the Committee, the Officer advised:

- Regarding the query raised by the Chairman, SRS had publicised the call blocker facility quite widely via social media, in conjunction with the work undertaken by the Information Commission in order to stop such scam calls at source, but this was difficult to eradicate due to the resourcefulness of the criminals involved and due to them operating primarily from overseas. For those tenants who did not use social media or were part of the 'digitally excluded', the Residents Boards had previously helped tenants to identify potential 'scams' online or via telephone and such panels would continue to disseminate information to residents, in tandem with the resumption of the quarterly newsletter for Council tenants as the pandemic eased. The Officer would also take back the concerns and feedback regarding raising the profile of call blocking to SRS for them to action.
- In relation to the Vice-Chairman's query, the Channel Panel also covered those individuals that were at risk of becoming involved in far-right wing terrorism and extremist activities.
- Concerning the Vice-Chairman's query on the allocation of properties to ex-offenders, the Officer explained that the Council was required under legislation to provide suitable accommodation and support to certain 'priority' groups with housing needs such as ex-offenders. As part of this a risk assessment would be required in conjunction with the Probation Service prior to their release. The greater the severity of the crime, the greater the level of risk assessment would be required, involving liaison with a large number of key agencies, including the Police. The aim was to 'break' the cycle of reoffending by providing suitable accommodation and support, working with Supporting People, the offenders themselves, Third Sector organisations and Probation in order to maintain their tenancy.
- Regarding the query from Councillor Mrs. Perkes on the target hardening scheme, the vast majority of users of this service felt much safer within their homes and remained in their properties as a result, with such measures acting as a deterrent. Where, in the small number of cases, perpetrators attempted to access a target-hardened property, the use of alarms and the other measures installed therein ensured a speedy police response and action. The Officer would also provide further details and statistics around the effectiveness of target hardening to the Committee.
- Concerning Ms. Smith's (Tenant Representative) query on call blocking, the service was available to all residents within the Vale of Glamorgan and the Officer would confirm if there were any costs incurred with installing this.

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Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Annual Corporate Safeguarding Report 2020/21 be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

192 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL TO 31ST MAY 2021 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager concerning the position of the revenue and capital budgets for this period. The Finance Support Manager informed the Committee that:

- The revenue budgets for the services under this Committee's remit were projected to outturn within budget at year end, although certain areas would need continued funding by Welsh Government (WG) due to the ongoing pandemic;
- The savings target of £75k for CCTV would once again not be achieved this year and unless this saving could be covered by underspends elsewhere within the service, funding would need to be drawn down from reserves in order to cover this shortfall and to break even;
- An efficiency target of £6k had also been set for services under this Committee;
- Regarding the capital budget, the approved budget, including slippage approved from 2020/21, was currently £48.652m;
- Of particular note to the Committee, were the three following capital projects:
 - Penarth Older Persons Village, with funding of £300k via internal monies carried forward from last year;
 - Barry Town Centre Gateway, which involved developing two sites at Gladstone Road Bridge compound site and Broad street clinic. This would entail bringing forward £100k from the 2022/23 Capital Programme into 2021/22 for feasibility and design works; and
 - ENABLE Grant funding of £177.3k for capital works on adaptations to help with those residents with assisted living needs.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the position with regard to the 2021/22 revenue and capital budgets be noted.

Reason for recommendation

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

193 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21 (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Finance Support Manager concerning the provisional outturn budgetary position for April 2020 – March 2021. The figures were provisional until the accounts had been audited by Audit Wales, and with the expectation that the Statement of Accounts would be approved by Full Council, following audit, during September 2021.

In addition, the Finance Support Manager informed the Committee that:

- The year-end revenue budget position would see an adverse variance of £7k after a net transfer to reserves of £132k, this being due to:
 - A favourable variance of £149k from the Youth Offending Service (mainly due to staffing budgets) and of £88k on the Regulatory Services base budget (which was transferred to reserves);
 - Breakeven for Council Fund Housing and Private Sector Housing Grants after transfers to and from reserves; and
 - An adverse variance of £156k for Private Sector Housing Rent Allowances.
- For the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) there was a £4m surplus for the year. As there was a budgeted deficit of £7m, there was an overall £11m favourable variance;
- The largest variance lay with the Capital Expenditure from Revenue Account budget, with an almost £10m underspend, as HRA capital spend was down due to the pandemic;
- The Capital Programme showed a favourable variance of £12m, largely due to the delays caused by the pandemic and had resulted in £10m being approved under emergency powers to be slipped into 2021/22;
- The schedule of reserves outlined the opening balance, movements during the year and the closing balance as of 31st March 2021 for the areas within the remit of this Committee.

Having considered the report, Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the report and the financial measures taken and proposed be approved.

Reason for recommendation

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

194 ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE 2020/21 (DEH) –

The performance report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, which outlined the Council's progress at Quarter 4 (1st April, 2020 to 31st March, 2021, as well as an overview of end of year performance) towards achieving

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its Annual Delivery Plan (2020/21) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The Head of Housing and Building Services highlighted that:

- Despite the challenges the Council had faced during the pandemic (including Housing and the other service areas that came under the remit of this Committee), the overall performance for the Council was 'Amber' which was exceptional and a positive development given the priorities and issues the Council had faced over the last year;
- 60% (141 out of 234) of planned activities outlined in the Council's Annual Delivery Plan had been attributed a Green performance reflecting the positive progress made during the quarter and under challenging circumstances. 40% (93) of planned activities were attributed a Red status. Of the 93 actions attributed a Red performance status at end of year, 91% (85) were directly as a result of service reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing pandemic;
- Of the 149 performance measures aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives, data was reported for 64 measures where a performance status was applicable. 62% (42) measures were attributed a Green performance Status, 9% (6) an Amber status and 29% (20) a Red status. A performance status was not applicable for 90, due to either the need to establish a baseline performance for the year or due to reprioritisation measures undertaken in response to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In relation to the 20 measures attributed a Red performance status at end of year, the impact of COVID-19 had contributed to missing the target in every case;
- In relation to the planned activities within the remit of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, 69% (24 out of 35) were attributed a Green performance status and 31% (11) Red status. Of the 11 attributed a Red performance status, the impact of the pandemic was identified as a contributory factor in the reported slippage for 10 actions. Of the 14 measures reported, 10 were attributed a Green status and 2 were attributed Amber status. Regarding the performance measures PAM/015 (average days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)), PAM/036 (affordable housing units delivered during the year per 10,000 households), and CPM/096 (percentage of all households where a positive prevention action succeeded in preventing/relieving homelessness) were all attributed a Red status. In relation to the two measures attributed a Red status, the impact of the pandemic had contributed to missing the target, such as residents' reluctance for works to be done in their homes during the pandemic as part of the DFG and delays to Capital Programmes around affordable housing.

Following the Officer's presentation and subsequent questions raised by the Committee, the Officer advised:

- Concerning the Vice-Chairman's query on the identification of anti-social behaviour and crime 'hotspots' and the deployment of the mobile CCTV, Safer Vale identified such areas using intelligence gleaned from the local community, police reports and knowledge of areas that have had issues

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previously. Deployable CCTV (which can be attached and moved to various locations and attached to items such as lampposts) had been used in 'hotspots' such as Chicken Wood, Ogmere by Sea, Rhoose Point and Romilly Park. An additional deployable CCTV camera would be purchased in the near future and an existing CCTV camera had been loaned to the Council's Cleaning Services in order to monitor areas impacted by 'fly-tipping'. Unlike the older fixed cameras, the deployable CCTV were agile and could be deployed where needed. Members were asked to provide the Officer with information on any 'hotspots' of anti-social and other activity (such as graffiti and vandalism) they felt existed within their communities in order to deploy the mobile CCTV and identify any perpetrators involved.

The Committee also wished to thank the Housing Team and the other services under the Committee's remit for their work during the pandemic and, despite the challenges they had faced, for scoring an overall 'amber' in performance, as well as achieving 'green' in some areas and their continued work in addressing those areas of performance that were considered 'red'.

Having considered the report, Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T 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 A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of under-performance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee be noted.
- (3) T H A T the progress being made through the Council's Recovery Strategy in response to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic be noted.

Reason for recommendations

(1-3) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

195 1ST QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2021/22 AND UPDATED COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2021/22 (MD) –

The report advised Members of the progress made in relation to the Scrutiny Committee's historical recommendations and the updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2021/22 for the Committee's consideration.

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer drew the Committee's attention to the following:

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- Regarding the uncompleted recommendation from the April 2021 meeting, relating to the DAARC service and engagement with support groups, the Head of Housing and Building Services explained that the newly commissioned provider for domestic abuse services, Atal Y Fro, would be looking to help build a 'Seeds' group or groups within the Vale of Glamorgan in conjunction with partners. These groups have been established elsewhere within Wales and the UK, consisting of female survivors of domestic abuse, who formed self-support groups. The Head of Housing and Building Services stated that he would be in contact with those Committee Members, such as the Vice-Chairman and Councillor Mrs. Perkes, who had expressed an interest in helping to build such a self-support group. This recommendation would remain uncompleted until there had been further updates and progress made on it;
- For the uncompleted recommendation from 2019 for the FestiVale event, the status would now be changed to completed as it would not be going ahead in 2021 and would be part of a future report to the Committee;
- The recommendation, also from 2019, for a report identifying an appropriate housing solution for the Traveller Community would remain as 'ongoing', with the Head of Housing and Building services saying this was due to the Council's ongoing search for alternative sites and to approach land agents, as well as looking at ways to develop the existing site. Following the comments made and queries raised by Councillors Mrs. Cave and Parker, the Head of Housing and Building Services stated that an Internal Officer Group had been set up to recommission a new study of the housing needs of the Traveller Community. Also, no definitive timetable could be made for this process at this time, due to the need to review the feasibility study and the ongoing search for alternatives. He would, however, raise Members' concerns on timescales at the next Strategic Housing Group meeting.

Having considered the report, Scrutiny Committee subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A and B to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the action listed as ongoing in Appendix B to the report (18th September, 2019, Min. No. 299 – Tenant Engagement Strategy – Monitoring Report, Recommendation (2) That the Scrutiny Committee be notified of the next FestiVale in order to attend) be marked as completed.
- (3) T H A T the Committee's updated Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2021/22 attached at Appendix C to the report be approved and uploaded to the Council's website.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.

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- (2) The recommendation is deemed as no longer requiring consideration due to the event concerned being re-evaluated as part of future reporting to the Committee.
- (3) For information.