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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee**                    COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time  
of Meeting**                WEDNESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2015, 5.00 PM

Please find below correspondence send by the Committee Chair following the meeting,  
together with any responses received.

For any further details, please contact [scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@cardiff.gov.uk)

9                    **Correspondence following the committee meeting** *(Pages 1 - 4)*

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My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr McGarry

3 December 2015

Councillor Susan Elsmore  
Cabinet Member (Health, Housing and Well Being)  
c/o Room 520  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



Dear Susan

### **Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 2 December 2015**

Members thank you, Sarah McGill and Jane Thomas for your attendance at committee for pre-decision scrutiny of the report to Cabinet on amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy. This letter captures the agreed comments and observations of the Committee with regard to these items.

Overall, Members are broadly supportive of the proposed amendments to the scheme and understand the reasons for these. Members note the new bands, the requirement for those in the higher needs bands to choose two higher areas of social housing availability at the time of application, the changes to local connection criteria, the changes regarding overcrowding and under-occupation and the proposals to use the private rented sector to meet housing needs. On this latter point, Members are scheduled to scrutinise this at their meeting on 2 March 2016 and will be asking for more detailed information and figures to be provided to inform our scrutiny.

Members note that the above amendments are within the context of detailed housing options advice interviews with all applicants; we commend this approach and the work undertaken by these officers, which undoubtedly helps to ensure applicants understand the reality of the housing situation in Cardiff. Members understand that Cardiff has very high housing need with limited affordable housing supply; this is why we chose 'Meeting Affordable Housing Need' as one of our first Inquiry's in 2012. It is pleasing to see work progressing across housing to meet these needs, as cited at the Committee meeting, including the Housing Partnership Programme, quick turnaround voids project and working with Social Care and Health colleagues. With regard to the need to work together to tackle hospital bed-blocking, Members note

Sarah McGill's point that more step-down accommodation is needed and that funding for this will need to be discussed and agreed across partners, including Health.

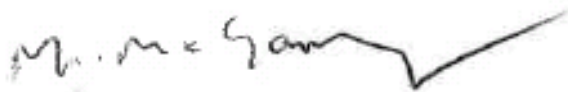
Members heard about the proposals to have clear letting requirements for each Older Person's scheme which will recognise the importance of community by prioritising applicants who live in the local community. Members note that this will not be at the expense of those applicants in high housing need but will instead be used where applicable to prioritise between those at the top of the high housing need bands.

Finally, Members note the monitoring arrangements in place to track the impact of these amendments and to check whether further amendments are required in order to ensure the scheme remains fit for purpose. Members note that the success of these amendments will be seen if those in highest housing need with a local connection are rehoused more swiftly than at present, whilst retaining sustainable and balanced communities.

A more general point which Members have asked that I raise with you concerns the timescales for pre-decision scrutiny. Members are aware of the huge volume of work being undertaken across the Council and are particularly aware of the high workloads that Communities & Housing staff bear. Members appreciate this and the pressures this brings, and appreciate that this is alongside other pressures such as waiting for Welsh Government guidance. However, Members ask that officers and Cabinet do all that they can to avoid, wherever possible, a repetition of a scrutiny committee only being able to carry out pre-decision scrutiny the day before the Cabinet makes the decision. I am sure we can all agree that this is not the best timescale for pre-decision scrutiny.

This letter does not require a response, thank you, as there are no recommendations or requests for further information at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARY M<sup>C</sup>GARRY**  
**Chairperson - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: Sarah McGill                      Jane Thomas  
      Claire Deguara                Liz Patterson                      Nick Blake

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr McGarry

3 December 2015

Councillor Daniel De'Ath &  
Councillor Susan Elsmore  
Cabinet Member (Health, Housing and Well Being)  
c/o Room 520  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW



Dear Both,

**Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 2 December 2015**

Members thank you, Sarah McGill and Jane Thomas for your attendance at committee to update us on work underway to develop the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2016-17 and to recommission Domestic Violence services. This letter captures the agreed comments and observations of the Committee with regard to this item.

Members note the work underway and the principles being used to inform the identification of savings for 2016/17 and that three levels of savings are being prepared for, following the advice of the WLGA, of 5%, 10% and 20% respectively.

Members wish to raise their concerns about potential reductions in homelessness services given the known increases in demand for homelessness services and the increased duties that local authorities have with regard to homelessness, following the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. Members accept that efficiencies should be made and improvements made where the needs of homeless people can be better met; however, any monies made from these should be recycled back into providing more services to meet the increasing homeless need in Cardiff. This not only helps to meet our Corporate Plan commitment of supporting people in vulnerable situations but should help to reduce the pressures on city centre businesses, caused by some street homeless people, which will help our economic growth.

Members also note that consultation is on-going with floating support providers on possible savings. Members note that these services play a preventative role reducing longer term spend and that there are concerns that reducing spend in this area could cause problems in the future.

However, Members recognise the need to find savings and we reserve our final thoughts on this until we have seen the draft Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2016/17 and can see across the range of proposals.

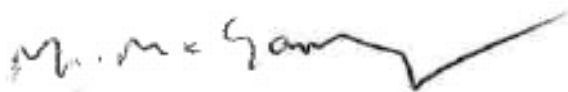
Members note that the South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner, Alun Michael, has commissioned Safer Lives to prepare a report to inform future commissioning of domestic violence services and that this is due to be available shortly. Members thank Councillor De'Ath for his commitment to brief Members on the findings of this report at their next scheduled meeting regarding this, on 2 March 2016.

With regard to both the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2016/17 and recommissioning of domestic violence services, Members queried how a 'race to the bottom' could be avoided. We note the responses that this can be avoided by having a good specification that places quality on an equal footing with value for money.

Members thank Councillor Elsmore for her offer to attend Committee at a later date to discuss the scheme to resettle Syrian and Afghan individuals and families, agreed at Cabinet on 17 September 2015. Members would very much welcome this and suggest that this be scheduled for our 2 March 2016 meeting, when we are also due to further scrutinise the impact of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2016-17.

This letter does not require a response, thank you, as there are no recommendations or requests for further information at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARY M<sup>C</sup>GARRY**  
**Chairperson - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

Cc: Sarah McGill                      Jane Thomas  
      Claire Deguara                Liz Patterson                      Nick Blake