

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr McGarry

20 February 2019

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member Communities & Housing
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW



Dear Lynda,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 FEBRUARY 2019
DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2019-22 AND DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2019/20**

As Chair of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I wish to thank you and officers for attending Committee and providing Members with an opportunity to consider the draft Corporate Plan 2019-22 and the Draft Budget Proposals for 2019/20 relevant to your Portfolio. Members of the Committee have requested that I feed back the following comments and observations to you.

- Members expressed their concerns that the rent increases of 2.4% will have a dual effect. Firstly, the rent increases which were lower than planned due to the cap imposed by the Welsh Government in advance of its review of Rent Policy would decrease the funding available to develop new homes. Secondly, this increased the burden on low income tenants who may not be able to afford this rent increase and result in the level of unpaid rent to increase. The committee welcomed the debt management arrangements and the explanation of the ongoing review of rent policy by the Welsh Government. Members were also supportive that the quality of new buildings would not be diminished with the reduction in funding.
- The Committee queried the proposed rise in Council Tax, which would result in an increase in arrears and reduce the overall collection rate and expected income. The explanation was that the collection rate was quite high and that the number of properties was increasing which enables the financial position to be

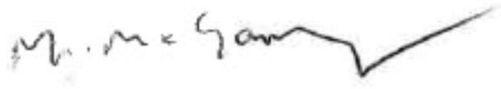
maintained. The support for those low income families who were experiencing financial difficulties had increased with the Hubs providing support to claim £11m in benefits over the last year. It was acknowledged that further work was needed to promote this support which was available to everyone and not just the unemployed.

- The Committee were keen to ensure that homeless people in Cardiff were provided with support rather than having enforcement action taken against them. The Committee welcomed that tents were not being taken and that Outreach and Highways Officers were working together to engage with rough sleepers to identify and provide the support they needed.
- Members queried if further funding was being sought from Welsh Government to support Cardiff Council with the additional austerity it faced as the Capital City. The Committee were grateful for the work that was ongoing to identify possible grant funding opportunities from the Welsh Government. These grants provided short term funding or possible additional financial support at the end of a financial period. Grant funding could not be guaranteed, but at present was supporting Housing First which provided opportunities for the Salvation Army and the authority to provide flats and enable homeless people to get off the streets.
- A reduction in the availability of the private rented sector housing was identified and the Committee queried how this could be addressed. It was explained that the Private rented sector was being engaged and encouraged in those locations where there was no social housing available.

Finally, Members were very reassured by the work you and Councillor Elsmore are doing together across Portfolios (and further) in ensuring that the Council continues to develop a more joined-up, communicative culture in delivering services.

Thank you again to you and officers for attending. I hope you find the Committee's comments useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary McGarry', followed by a large checkmark.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR MARY M^cGARRY

Chairperson - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Cc: Christine Salter, Corporate Director
Ian Allwood, Head of Finance
Allan Evans, OM Accountancy
Councillor David Walker, Chairperson Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee
Nicola Newton, Principal Scrutiny Officer
Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People and Communities
Jane Thomas, Assistant Director Communities & Housing
Nick Blake, Business Support Manager, Communities Housing & Customer Services
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