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## GOHEBIAETH YN DILYN CYFARFOD Y PWYLLGOR

**Pwyllgor** PWYLLGOR CRAFFU GWASANAETHAU OEDOLION A CHYMUNEDOL

**Dyddiad ac amser  
y cyfarfod** DYDD MERCHER, 9 MAWRTH 2022, 4.30 PM

Gweler isod gohebiaeth anfon gan Gadeirydd y Pwyllgor ar ôl y cyfarfod , ynghyd ag unrhyw ymatebion a gafwyd

Am unrhyw fanylion pellach, cysylltwch â [scrutinyviewpoints@caerdydd.gov.uk](mailto:scrutinyviewpoints@caerdydd.gov.uk)

11 **Gohebiaeth yn dilyn Cyfarfod y Pwyllgor** (*Tudalennau 3 - 18*)

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins

10 March 2022

Councillor Lynda Thorne  
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities  
*Sent via e-mail*



Dear Cllr Thorne,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 MARCH 2022 –  
HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23 & CHANNEL VIEW & WYNDHAM CRESCENT  
CABINET REPORT**

Thank you for attending the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, to facilitate our consideration of the HRA Business Plan and the proposals regarding the Wyndham Crescent package deal and Channel View project. The observations and recommendations discussed by the Committee are captured in this letter.

**HRA Business Plan 2022-23**

Members firstly welcome and acknowledge that the recommendation we made last year, for the Plan to include more information on financial matters, mitigation measures and sensitivity analysis has been acted upon. It was pleasing to note that, in comparison to last years Plan, more detail has been provided, however it is still felt that owing to the importance of the Plan's purpose, the substantial finances it entails, more information, such as how risks are determined, analysed and monitored and greater detail on how the HRA finance is managed and monitored is still required. Although we were informed a more technical financial model sits behind this Plan, owing to the importance of transparency, we believe greater detail on finances, risk and mitigation is required for the key intended readership of this document, the general public.

Further, we note the from the discussion that in line with this point, officers felt further information on the governance arrangements could also be included in the Plan, and we would welcome this being acted upon. We acknowledge the suggestion that in future, it may be beneficial for the Committee to scrutinise the financial model which sits behind this Plan, and

so, I have tasked the scrutiny officer to take this suggestion to the new Committee, post-election, for their consideration.

On the topic of the Plan's overall format, although the point made by officers on the importance of the document being accessible and readable is acknowledged, it is felt that to make a document both accessible and appealing, it does need to be succinct and relevant. The "Business Plan" is over 70 pages long and it could be made much shorter. At the meeting, I provided the analogy of the presentation we received at the meeting, intended to provide an overview of the Plan, reflecting the Plan itself. Unnecessarily long with greater emphasis on the key financial and mitigation plans needed.

In terms of the decarbonisation agenda, concerns were highlighted regarding the costings and scale of this work, and it was questioned if the 'challenge of decarbonisation' risk being determined as amber, post mitigation in the Plan's matrix table, was realistic given the magnitude of this work which we explored in our February meeting. We note from the response that this risk included in the plan does not relate to the challenge of decarbonising the entirety of the Council's housing stock, and so, we **recommend** the wording on the challenge of decarbonisation in the matrix table, is reviewed, and amended, to ensure the detail of this challenge is clearly relayed to the reader; including that the risk does not relate to decarbonising the Council's entire housing stock.

In terms of the impact of Covid-19, we noted that in the Plan's matrix table this had been categorised as green post mitigation. From the discussion, we were informed that although the immediate impact of the pandemic has subsided, secondary impact, such as increased demand is still very much present. Given it is likely the knock-on effects from the pandemic will be around for some time, we would strongly urge this post mitigation rating be reviewed.

Given the importance of the Plan's matrix table, and its purpose to provide the Welsh Government, and members of the public, with a clear understanding on identified areas of risk and how the Council is working to address such matters, we wish to stress the importance of ensuring this table is an honest reflection of all areas of risk, and for it not to be seen as a failure if a risk is still categorised as red post mitigation, as it recognises there may be challenges and variables related to risks outside of Council control.

In terms of homelessness, we noted the reference in the Plan to review how properties are allocated, and from the response, we were informed as part of the Rapid Rehousing Approach,

the allocation policy will need to be amended and we welcome the offer that this Committee will be consulted with in the summer, as part of the process.

With regard to buying properties, Members explored how we determine properties to buy, and we note and welcome the range of criteria and consideration taken into account along with the emphasis on considering what type of properties is required most by Cardiff residents.

Questions were also raised regarding modular schemes, and, during the discussion, it was confirmed that the Crofts Street development was a pilot, largely in response to the Welsh Government push for local authorities to prioritise modular homes within development programmes. Further to this, it was also confirmed that modular homes will play a part in the overall Council house programme going forward. Regarding costings, we were informed modular is currently more expensive than traditional build. However, the benefits it provides, such as the homes being delivered quicker allowing the Council to house individuals sooner, and to also receive a rental income more quickly, can outweigh costs. During the discussion, officers offered to send Committee Members photos and a time lapse video of the Crofts Street scheme being developed, which Members would greatly receive.

In addition, the offer of visiting a modular scheme on Ferry Road was also provided to Members. Committee Members would like to accept this request, and, if possible, request the visit happen before the election. Please could we request your officers send through potential dates for the visit to the scrutiny officer, who can then liaise with the Committee to secure a date.

### **Wyndham Crescent & Channel View**

As you will be aware the Wyndham Crescent Package deal first came before this Committee in March 2021. However, as detailed in the Cabinet Report, the proposal did not proceed to Cabinet as the scheme was not accepted in planning terms and received local Member objections. When we explored this further, we were informed the issues which hindered its progression related to the loss of a tree and loss of an entry point into a car park. However, we were assured both issues have now been rectified in the revised plans.

In line with this, we explored the possibility of this package deal running into a further issue and being deferred once more, and, from the response, assurance was provided that the developers are confident no issues remain. From our discussion with officers, it also appeared

that should further preliminary issues arise, it may be the case that the package deal is not pursued.

Remaining on the Wyndham Crescent package deal, questions were raised regarding the design of the scheme, and we noted the disparity in the design proposal contained in this Cabinet Report, compared to the designs presented to us in March 2021. As you may recall, when this item previously came before us, Committee Members welcomed the overall design of the scheme. We note from the discussion held at this meeting that the final design is still to be confirmed and so we **recommend**, that where possible, Cabinet, and senior officers, exert as much influence as possible on the developer and planning case officer to proceed with the design shared with us in March 2021; as we feel this is more aesthetically pleasing for both the sites future residents, and its wider community.

In terms of residents moving into the Wyndham Crescent site, Members note it is anticipated work will commence on site in 2023 and it will likely take 12-14 months to be built, however if modular is used, this will lessen the time.

Regarding the Channel View Project, when this item came before us in November 2020, it was then intended to have different contractors for each phase of the project. Interestingly, in our November meeting, when we flagged our concern on the scale of the project and if this jeopardised deliverability, we were informed that as the site is being progressed in a phased approach, breaking the site down into small packages of work with a tendering process being undertaken for each phase, this should, in turn, reduce this element of risk. Given this was the assurance we have previously received, we explored the reasoning behind this change in strategy to now have one contractor to deliver the project in its entirety. We note that it is now understood, given the complexity of the project, having one contractor should smoothen the process, potentially lessen costs, shorten the process and be less resource intensive for the Council. Further, we note officers are confident with this proposal for a partnership approach with one contractor, given our experience with the Wates partnership.

Another disparity in the Channel View Proposal which came before us in November 2020 and the proposal put before us at this meeting related to cost. In November 2020, it was estimated that the total cost of the project would be in the region of £60million, however in this Cabinet Report the cost has increased by a substantial £25million; with estimations for the project now at £85million. Highlighting a concerning cost trajectory for this programme, one that could continue to escalate substantially.

Given the scale of the project, and the length of time it will take to complete, we sought clarity and assurance on what would happen if the cost continued to rise, particularly when considering the current market conditions. From the response, it appeared that the £85million estimate is reflective of current market conditions. However, even though we heard measures will be in place to try to mitigate escalating costs, the reality is if the market continues in its current trajectory, this scheme could potentially double in costings, raising questions on its viability. In line with this, we also explored the risk if the Council had to pull out of the Channel View project due to escalating costs and we were informed as the site would be developed in phases, it does provide mitigation toward this risk, as parts of the project would not be unfinished if the project ceased.

Although the need for great quality housing is very much championed by this Committee, we do have serious concerns about costs escalating further and so to ensure this project is not impacted, we **recommend** the Council, within its planning for this project, prepare for significant, unprecedented cost increases and worst-case scenarios, ensuring this project and its projected costings is reviewed frequently and Cabinet sets a figure, whereby if the projected costings exceed this figure, an in-depth cost analysis is undertaken to determine the project's viability.

Finally, due to the scale of the project we questioned if the project was too ambitious, meaning the Council could struggle to deliver it. We note the assurance provided by officers that they are confident this project can be delivered, partly due to the Council's experience in delivering the partnership scheme, which is on a similar, potentially bigger scale.

Thank you once again to you and officers for attending Committee. For ease of reference, the recommendations and requests captured within this letter, which we request a response on, are as follows:

### **HRA Business Plan 2022/23**

#### **Request:**

- Photos and a time lapse video of the Crofts Street modular scheme being developed.
- To send the scrutiny officer potential dates for Committee Members to visit the modular scheme at Ferry Road.

**Recommend:**

- The wording on the challenge of decarbonisation in the matrix table, is reviewed, and amended, to ensure the detail of this challenge is clearly relayed to the reader; including that the risk does not relate to decarbonising the Council's entire housing stock.

**Wyndham Crescent & Channel View**

**Recommend:**

- Where possible, Cabinet, and senior officers, exert as much influence as possible on the developer and planning case officer to proceed with the design shared with us in March 2021; as we feel this is more aesthetically pleasing for both the sites future residents, and its wider community.
- The Council, within its planning for this project, prepare for significant, unprecedented cost increases and worst-case scenarios, ensuring this project and its projected costings is reviewed frequently and Cabinet sets a figure, whereby if the projected costings exceed this figure, an in-depth cost analysis is undertaken to determine the project's viability.

I hope you find the discussions held at committee, along with the comments, observations and recommendations captured within this letter of use.

Yours,



**COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS**

**Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**

cc. Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities

Gill Brown, Accountant

Dave Jaques, OM Housing Development

Leaders of the Opposition.

Chair of Governance & Audit

Tim Gordan, Head of Communications & External Relations

Cabinet Office



Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM47327

Dyddiad / Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Councillor Shaun Jenkins  
Cardiff Council  
County Hall  
Cardiff  
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Councillor Jenkins

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9TH MAR 2022 –  
HRA BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23 & CHANNEL VIEW & WYNDHAM CRESCENT  
CABINET REPORT**

Please may I thank you and the other Committee Members for your time in considering the HRA business plan, and Channel View and Wyndham Crescents cabinet reports.

With regards to the HRA Business Plan, officers will provide photos and a time lapse video of the Croft Street modular scheme in development. Potential dates will also be sent to Committee Members to visit the modular scheme at Ferry Road. I look forward to Committee Members visiting this scheme, so they can see for themselves this innovative development.

I accept in principle the Committee's recommendation to amend the wording in the challenge of decarbonisation matrix table. Future plans will ensure that it is clear that the risk does not relate to decarbonising the Council's entire housing stock.

Regarding the proposed development at Wyndham Crescent, I am pleased that the committee shared my view that this is an opportunity the Council should explore. With regards to the architectural design of the building, I can confirm that this responsibility rests with the Council's planning team who I know will work with the developer to ensure a scheme of high architectural quality is taken forward. I can confirm that options still include the type of design previously shared with the committee.

With regard to the recommendation in relation to the potential future increase in costs for our Channel View development, I can advise that the current Cabinet report seeks permission to procure a contracting partner and that a further Cabinet report will need to be submitted to conclude the procurement process and appoint a partner. This report will include a robust financial appraisal for phase 1 and the entire project based

**GWEITHIO DROS GAERDYDD, GWEITHIO DROSOCH CHI**

Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg, Saesneg neu'n ddwyieithog. Byddwn yn cyfathrebu â chi yn ôl eich dewis, dim ond i chi roi gwybod i ni pa un sydd well gennych. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

**WORKING FOR CARDIFF, WORKING FOR YOU**

The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh, English or bilingually. We will ensure that we communicate with you in the language of your choice, as long as you let us know which you prefer. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay.

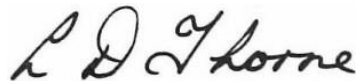
Tudalen 9



on tendered rates and will include a detailed viability assessment to ensure the project remains viable. Risk associated with on-going cost increases will also be built into the viability assessment.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present to the Committee on these issues.

Yn gywir  
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L D Thorne'.

**Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Lynda Thorne**  
**Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities**  
**Aelod Cabinet dros Dai a Chymunedau**

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins

5 April 2022

Councillor Lynda Thorne  
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities  
*Sent via e-mail*



Dear Cllr Thorne,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 9 MARCH 2022 –  
COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIR & MAINTENANCE PROCESS**

Thank you for attending the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, to facilitate our consideration of the Council house repair and maintenance process and for the information provided at the meeting, and in our papers. The observations and recommendations discussed by the Committee are captured in this letter.

The Council's Responsive Repair Unit is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the Council's 13,776 housing stock. On average, 4,532 repairs are raised monthly, with approximately 54,000 repairs raised last year. With most works completed by the in-house team of 140 skilled operatives. During the past year, as we have monitored the service area's response to the pandemic, we became aware of the backlog created in the housing repairs team, and so, we wanted to explore it further. To understand and assess what is being done to address the backlog and how the Council manages the quality of its existing housing stock overall.

**Tenant Satisfaction**

To inform our considerations, the Committee commissioned the Scrutiny Research Service to undertake a survey with Council tenants', to hear their views and experience with the service, along with their overall satisfaction with the quality and condition of their council property. The Scrutiny survey advised that 62% of respondents were dissatisfied with the interior condition of their property and it was questioned what this implies of the Council's effectiveness as a landlord. During the discussion, it was highlighted that the age of some of the Council's stock must be taken into account, along with the challenges the Council faces in meeting tenants' expectations.

The results from the Tenants Satisfaction Survey, presented at the meeting, also suggested that ¼ of respondents to that survey were unhappy with the general condition of their property. To us, both surveys signify a notable element of respondents unhappy with the overall condition of their home, and so, we would strongly urge rectifying this matter by reviewing the frequency of the planned maintenance service and the team's resources within the ongoing 'full-service review' mentioned at the meeting.

We also highlighted the general disparity between the Scrutiny Research Survey and the Tenants Satisfaction Survey, as the Scrutiny survey highlighted a number of challenges in the service and condition of current properties. Whereas in the Tenants Satisfaction Survey, it appeared issues seemed a lot less prominent amongst the respondents. We note from the discussion, that any intelligence provided by tenants' is valued, as it helps to provide insight to areas of the service, which may require improvement.

### **Backlog & Use of Contractors**

As detailed at the meeting, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the Responsive Repairs Unit, and, when our meeting took place, there were 3,900 follow-on routine works and 1,824 new jobs outstanding.

In addition, the briefing note provided by the service area, advised that from March 2021, and May 2021, the timeliness of the internal team completing urgent and routine repairs has deteriorated. As of Dec 2021, urgent repairs completed on time by the internal team was at 46.2%, and routine jobs at 57.17%. We note the admission by yourself and officers that the service is not where it should be and there are a range of measures now in place, to address the backlog and its subsequent repercussions.

Members note, and welcome, the additional measures now in place, such as frequent management meetings, an escalation process and additional resources in the scheduling team. So, we sought assurance that because of these measures, the backlog, and timeliness of work will improve. In the discussion we were informed the total number of jobs has decreased over the past few weeks and the assurance provided at the meeting that response rates will not worsen. Although this is pleasing to note, we do hold some concerns over the amount of time it is taken to rectify. As we note the timeliness of a job being complete on time by the internal team, has been on a downward trend since March 2021 (one year).

In addition, we also sought confirmation that when a tenant contacts the Council to report a repair, they are informed of the backlog and potential delay. It was pleasing to be informed they are, and of the cross-directorate working with c2c to ensure continuity in the message to tenants, at every opportunity.

Given the number of Council house stock, and the ongoing expansion of stock through the Council House Build Programme, we questioned if 140 in-house operatives was enough to adequately deal with the workload. We note from the response that the use of contractors can help ease demands and that they sometimes sub-contract work out. We do however wish to raise our concerns that the solution, to increase the use of contractors, could prove costly for the Council, and if contractors then sub-contractor works out, we hold concerns that sub-contractors may not be at the approved level. As such, we **recommend** when work is allocated to a contractor, if the contractor sub-contracts the work out, they must inform the Council. The Council must also be involved, or informed, of the vetting process for the sub-contractors to ensure the companies used are at an approved level, adequately trained to deliver high quality work, familiar with the Welsh Housing Quality standards and relevant health and safety protocols.

We also explored the Council's intention to procure a small pool of contractors to assist with peaks in demand, and we note it is hoped this will be in place by July 2022. As mentioned at the meeting, when using contractors, we see the merit of using smaller companies for the benefit of the company itself, and for the local economy. However, as mentioned at the meeting, we wish to urge the Council does all that it can to ensure the contractors we enlist, pay their employees the 'Real Living Wage'.

Although we welcome the use of small companies to assist with the current backlog issue, we are of the view that once the backlog subsides, should the usual workload be difficult to manage, instead of increasing the use of external contractors, the Council should instead expand the numbers of our in-house team, or look to upskill our in-house workers through training. From the presentation delivered at the meeting, we note the introduction of a new Repairs Academy by Summer 2022, and we would like to **request** more information on this Academy, such as its purpose, objectives and how it will operate.

### **Reporting a Repair**

We note the main avenues for a tenant to report a repair, is via c2c and, being mindful that c2c is not a service available 24/7, we sought assurance that tenants could report a repair over the weekend; particularly ones deemed as an emergency. From the response, it was pleasing to note that emergency repairs can be reported 24/7, 365 days a year and it was implied that there is an emergency number tenants' can call to report repairs 'out-of-hours'. However, as this out of hours number was not directly confirmed at the meeting, Members do wish to **request** confirmation on the exact arrangement for tenants' who need to report a repair outside of usual hours.

It was also pleasing to note that as part of the 'Housing Online' initiative, the service area is working on the introduction of an online tool, 'My Repairs', which will allow tenants' to remotely report, view and book repairs through a self-service system, and this is due to be implemented in Spring 2023.

In line with this, and given our comments mentioned at the start of this letter on the importance of tenants' feedback, we **recommend** that as part of the 'My Repairs' service, there is a dedicated area on the tool which allows tenants' to provide feedback on recent work they have received, or general condition of their property. Providing the service area with critical insight into what is working well, or elements of the repairs and planned maintenance service which may require improvement.

### **Tenants Expectations**

At the meeting, we explored how tenants' expectations are managed, and we questioned if the Responsive Repairs Standard is shared with tenants' to ensure they are aware of their, and the Council's, responsibilities, and to also ensure information is readily available to them. We note, this information is provided to tenants at the start of their tenancy and officers have discussed this information being reissued to tenants, particularly those who have resided in their property for a substantial length of time. As a committee, we are of the view that this information should be readily available to tenants and so **recommend** that the Responsive Repairs Standard is reissued to tenants at specific junctures of their tenancy, and is also made available for tenants in a designated area on the upcoming 'My Repairs' tool.

In line with this, we also requested insight into how many of the repairs requests the Council receive may be caused by tenants, albeit directly or indirectly. We note from the discussion at the meeting that this information is not necessarily logged in every repair request, or

inspection, as it may be difficult to determine. However, officers will consider the data we do hold to see what insight can be provided to Committee on this matter.

### **Preventative Measures**

At the meeting, Members highlighted the importance of the Council undertaking preventative work to prevent repairs arising, or deterioration in Council house stock. As part of our questioning, we specifically asked if we install air vents to stop condensation issues arising. We note from the response, preventative measures are not always installed as circumstances vary from property to property, and so to, the tenant's lifestyle. As a result, should a specific issue arise, the service area offers advice and assistance to the tenant, and a decision on if additional apparatus is required, is made in conjunction with the tenant.

Although the importance of working in partnership with tenants' is welcomed by Members, we do feel more emphasis should be placed on preventative measures, particularly when a property becomes void with no tenant in situ. For instance, if the history of the void property's repairs list shows continuous issues with damp and condensation, a preventive measure should be in place before a tenants arrive, as, not only would this provide the tenant with a better-quality property, but also strengthens the longevity of the Council's housing stock.

### **Recommendations to be Monitoring following this Scrutiny**

The Committee makes three formal recommendation which are set out below.

As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendations are accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet's response. If the recommendations are accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

<b>Recommendation</b>	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Implementation Date
When work is allocated to a contractor, if the contractor sub-contracts the work out, they must inform the Council. The Council must also be involved, or informed, of the vetting process for the sub-				

contractors to ensure the companies used are at an approved level, adequately trained to deliver high quality work, familiar with the Welsh Housing Quality standards and relevant health and safety protocols.				
As part of the 'My Repairs' service, there is a dedicated area on the tool which allows tenants' to provide feedback on recent work they have received, or general condition of their property. Providing the service area with critical insight into what is working well, or elements of the repairs and planned maintenance service which may require improvement.				
The Responsive Repairs Standard is reissued to tenants at specific junctures of their tenancy and is also made available for tenants in a designated area on the upcoming 'My Repairs' tool.				

**The Requests for information captured in this letter are as follows:**

- More information on the Repairs Academy, such as its purpose, objectives and how it will operate.
- Confirmation on the exact arrangement for tenants' who need to report a repair outside of usual hours.
- Insight into how many of the repairs requests the Council receive may be caused by tenants.

I hope you find the discussions held at committee, along with the comments, observations and recommendations captured within this letter of use.

Yours,



**COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS**

**Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee**



cc. Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities  
Jane Thomas, Director Adults, Housing & Communities  
Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities  
Ellen Curtis, OM Housing Services  
Chair of Governance & Audit  
Tim Gordan, Head of Communications & External Relations

Mae'r dudalen hon yn wag yn fwriadol