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## CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

**Committee** COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date and Time of Meeting** MONDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2022, 2.00 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)

10 **Correspondence following Committee Meeting**(Pages 3 - 16)

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Date: 14 Dec 2022

Cllr Chris Weaver  
Cabinet Member – Finance, Modernisation & Performance



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*Correspondence Sent via e-mail.*

Dear Cllr Weaver,

### **CASSC Scrutiny Committee 12 Dec 2022: Corporate Safeguarding Policy 2022-2025**

Our sincere thanks for attending Committee on 12 Dec 2022, to facilitate our consideration of the revised Corporate Safeguarding Policy. Please also pass on our thanks to your Cabinet colleague, Cllr Mackie, and officers Gareth, David and Rebecca for attending and providing a useful overview of the proposed policy.

#### **A Refreshed Approach.**

As detailed at the meeting, the policy proposed to Cabinet is a refresh of the Council's previous Corporate Policy. From this, we questioned how this policy differs from its predecessor. We note the various comments made, and welcome, in particular, the policy's introduction of a stronger corporate safeguarding self-evaluation. As explained to us, within this process, each of the Council's directorates will undertake an annual safeguarding self-assessment to critically consider their own practice and procedures. With detail on their self-assessment, and identified areas for improvement, being captured in their Directorate Delivery Plan. As a Committee, we look forward to monitoring and reviewing this analysis within the next Directorate Delivery Plans that come before us.

#### **Governance Arrangements**

Committee Members note the recognition in the policy toward strong governance arrangements, and so, we sought clarity, and assurance, on the governance, and collaborative working between the Corporate Safeguarding Board and that of the Cardiff & Vale RPB Adult Safeguarding Board.

## **Training**

In a previous Committee meeting, we raised our concern over the disappointing numbers of staff completing mandatory safeguarding modules in 2021/22 (65.29%). However, it was pleasing to note this figure has risen, with completion rates at 2022/23 quarter 2, being 80%. We also welcomed the overview provided at the meeting on the steps to offer wider methods within our corporate training offer. However, we do wish to seek assurance that there has been an increase in frontline staff completing the mandatory safeguarding modules; and wish to request data which details this.

When we explored the status of adult safeguarding referrals, we were informed the number of referrals over the past two years has increased by around a third. In line with this, we also questioned the effectiveness of the Council's whistleblowing policy, and if we have seen an increase in whistleblowing cases. We were advised this information would be held by the Council's HR department.

We concur with yourself and officers, that to ensure strong effectiveness of safeguarding, the process, and staffs understanding of it, needs to be as simple as possible. Along with the need to ensure quick points of access to safeguarding related information is available for staff (for example through workplace champions as proposed in the policy). As mentioned at the meeting, we feel it is imperative high-quality training is provided to staff, which allows the recipient to retain the information they learn and apply it (including months, or even years, after they have received it). We note and welcome that how we best evaluate the quality of training we provide, and its impact, is currently being considered.

We also enquired if we as a Council utilise and involve the third sector in our overall safeguarding training offer. From the response it appears the training is primarily done in-house. As a Committee, we would keenly encourage the utilisation of external offerings in this field, in particular, the sharing of the councils internal training programme with externals who specialise in this field to seek their feedback. We note and welcome the policy's commitment to wider working with partners.

## **Adult Safeguarding**

The Council's responsibility of safeguarding vulnerable individuals in receipt of Council support has been raised many times by this Committee (such as when we considered the management of Direct Payments). From our discussion, we note this policy will set out corporate matters relating to achieving safeguarding; but the detail specific to operational safeguarding matters, will be contained in each service area's Directorate Delivery Plan.

## **The Role of Councillors**

We noted the policy references Councillors important role and responsibilities in relation to Corporate Safeguarding. In light of this, we would like to request the Corporate Safeguarding Board reflect on if Cardiff Councillors should have DBS checks; allowing us as a local authority to lead by example and demonstrate a firm, overarching commitment to safeguarding.

To confirm, the information we wish to request is as follows:

- Information on if there has been an increase in frontline staff completing the Council's mandatory safeguarding training; and if available, the specific data which details this.
- Information on adult safeguarding referrals for the past 6 months, including where they came from.
- Information on the Council's whistleblowing policy and data on whistleblowing cases the Council has received for the past 6 months (such as how many there have been, the service area they relate to, and the source).

*(This information request regarding the Whistleblowing policy and its data will be sent to the Council's HR department by the scrutiny officer).*

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, thank you once again to you, Cllr Mackie and officers for attending Committee to facilitate our consideration of this item.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR BABLIN MOLIK  
CHAIR, COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee  
Cllr Norma Mackie, Adult Services  
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnership  
David Murray – Dickson, Adult Services  
Rebecca Brockway, Performance & Partnership  
Group Leaders  
Cabinet Office  
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit  
Ted Peskett, Wales Online  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations

14 Dec 2022

Cllr Lynda Thorne  
Cabinet Member – Housing & Communities

*Correspondence Sent via e-mail.*



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Dear Cllr Thorne,

### **CASSC Scrutiny Committee 12 Dec 2022: Council House Rent & Service Charge Setting**

Our sincere thanks for attending Committee on 12 Dec 2022, to facilitate our consideration of the Council House Rent and Service Charge setting proposals. Please also pass on our thanks to Jane and Helen for attending and facilitating our consideration.

Within our consideration, Members reflected upon the need for continued viability of the Council's HRA, balanced against the needs of Council tenants. The observations we made are captured below.

#### **Potential HRA Deficit**

At the meeting it was highlighted that the proposed 6.5% increase of Council homes rent (and some service charges) is below the current rate of inflation. For this reason, it is estimated, following the increase there would still be a shortfall of £2.213m on the HRA 2023/24. We recognise, there is a possibility this shortfall could be higher due to the current financial context and for this reason, we explored the contingency plans in place. We note, should the deficit be higher, the other proposed efficiencies may include increased digitalisation of services and review of services that are recharged to the HRA (et al.). We again wish to emphasise the view that although digital service or offerings may be useful for parts of society; there are certain cohorts where this offer is not suitable.

#### **Support for Council Tenants**

Although it is noted 84.62% of Council tenants are in receipt of benefits, we wished to seek assurance that those tenants who are not in receipt of benefit, would be adequately supported with the proposed increase of prices.

From the response we were informed officers have given a commitment to target tenants who are not in receipt of housing benefit, to ensure they are aware and have access to the Council's help and support on offer. In addition, we were further informed the Council has a wide range of financial help and support available, including the ability to assist tenants with access to funding streams such as those administered internally under the Council's Cost of Living Discretionary Schemes and the Council's Welfare Liaison Team, who work specifically with Council tenants, offering them financial related support and assistance (et al.). During the discussion it was also confirmed that these offerings can also help to ensure tenants do not fall into rent arrears, and where arrears may occur, we as a Council can work with the tenant to establish affordable arrear repayments or help through the Council's rent arrears pathway. It was also pleasing to note the Council would never take action against a tenant who was experiencing delays in their benefits, affecting their ability to pay rent.

We also raised concern for tenants who would be affected by both the rent and service charge increase, in particular, those who reside in community living schemes (sheltered housing) who may also see a heating increase of 101.60%. Within the discussion we were informed the Council will offer dedicated support to those individuals impacted.

### **Proposed Efficiencies**

Due to the estimated HRA deficit of £2.213m, a full review of the HRA has taken place and a number of areas have been identified where efficiencies could be made. One of the proposed efficiencies we explored at the meeting was regarding the reduction in staffing, either by deleting vacant posts or through the voluntary severance process.

We noted the Cabinet Report details this reduction would result in no significant service changes and we sought assurance of how that would be, given staff numbers would be less. From the response we were informed, this potential efficiency relates to the reduction of 7 FTE posts, and no adverse effect on service delivery would be achieved by ensuring stronger join-up of internal working than at present, which would potentially provide a better service at less cost. Given this, we do wish to



encourage wider consideration is applied throughout the service area on where integration of work, which results in better service could be applied.

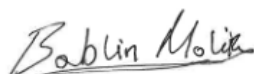
### **Tenant Survey**

We raised our disappointment regarding the response rate to the tenant's survey, the notable absence of response from certain cohorts along with the short time frame the survey was open. From the discussions we note the efforts made by the service area to secure a good response rate. It was also recognised by yourself and officers that tenants should be offered a longer time frame to complete the survey, however the timing of the survey related to parameters set by legislation. Along with the challenge of undertaking this survey (as required) at a time when the maximum rent increase rate (made by the Welsh Government Minister) was still unknown.

Thank you once again for attending Committee and facilitating our consideration of these proposals.

A response to this letter is not requested.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR BABLIN MOLIK**  
**CHAIR, COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee  
Jane Thomas, Director, Adults, Housing & Communities  
Helen Evans, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities  
Group Leaders  
Cabinet Office  
Chris Pyke, OM Governance & Audit  
Ted Peskett, Wales Online  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations

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Date: 13 January 2023

Cllr Julie Sangani  
Cabinet Member – Public Health & Equalities

*Correspondence Sent via e-mail.*



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Dear Cllr Sangani,

**CASSC Scrutiny Committee 12 Dec 2022: Council Support for Asylum Seekers & Refugees**

On behalf of the committee, our sincere thanks for providing us with the opportunity to explore the council's support on offer for asylum seekers and refugees. We also wish to extend our thanks to Sian, Tom and Richard; all of whom contributed to making it a worthwhile session.

Although we recognise immigration is a matter reserved to UK government, with many of our concerns outside council control, we do wish to take the opportunity to state we would welcome equity across all schemes, particularly around the funding arrangements provided to the council. We recognise and commend the work the council is doing around funding arrangements by participating in the cost review exercise, and it was pleasing to be informed the Home Office recognises that the council's costs, particularly within the asylum seeker pathway, are not being met at present.

It is clear, extensive council work is ongoing in this area, and we welcome the proactive stance taken on internal workings, collaboration with partners and contributing our perspective on wider matters, in a bid to alleviate pressures and address challenges.

We note over the past 18 months there has been a significant increase in demand, which has resulted in client groups, inadvertently, colliding in terms of their access to support and provision. Whilst this challenge is concerning, it was pleasing to be informed of the council's recognition that we should not prioritise one migrant group over another. In the discussions, we were informed more work is required around access to accommodation, mainstream education opportunities and mental health services. It is imperative such work is achieved by collaborative working between the

council and relevant partners; with a focus on empowering individuals. We hope the discussions held at the meeting, and our observations captured in this letter, will help facilitate this work, and the other upcoming areas of work detailed at the meeting.

### **Council Support on Offer**

We were informed the length of council support offered to individuals will vary in line with their need and individual circumstance. With some individuals requiring support for months, whilst others needing years. From this, we explored how the council prepares for long-term demand, highlighting the importance of the council's sustainability; both in the support it offers, and its commitment. We note the main request for council support is around housing and so the council has, and is continuing, to focus on the move-on pathway in place. This includes the accommodation pathway with Welsh Refugee Council for those with a positive decision on their asylum claim, and the pathway of support for those who have had a negative decision; assisting them to access legal support.

We note, there has been an increase of those whose application for asylum have been refused, resulting in an individual holding no recourse to public funds and significant concerns around homelessness. We were informed this has been compounded by the Welsh Government ceasing the 'Everyone In' policy, leading to a significant ongoing issue with 'negative sensations'. We therefore strongly encourage you to highlight this concern with the Welsh Government to explore a resolution. We welcome the research projects the council has been working on with partners to explore solutions and support to individuals with no recourse to public funds; with the possibility of mirroring solutions seen in other European cities.

We were keen to explore the level of mental health support offered to individuals in receipt of services, and the level of mental health and trauma-informed training provided to council offers delivering services and support.

We note a multi-agency training model is being explored by the managers to ensure a core-training package is provided to staff. We would encourage this being deployed as soon as possible.

Within the consideration of support to families, it was pleasing to note the council's recognition of supporting mothers who may have trouble accessing services and

support due to childcare commitments. Along with the teams drive to stimulate equality of access to services. We note the council has a dedicated offering of support to families with children under 5, yet we would encourage this support being widened to children of any age.

### **Capacity**

In recognition of the continued increase in demand, we explored the city's overall capacity, and we were informed due to the level of demand and resultant pressures on services, the council could soon reach 'breaking point' in relation to the asylum system. It was concerning to be informed council capacity within the asylum system could soon reach 'breaking point', particularly when considering demand is likely to remain high, and so this 'breaking point' scenario could well be reached. We note and encourage officers to continue liaising with the Home Office to reform their model, ensuring it is fit for purpose for all stakeholders.

Within the discussion, we were informed the main pressure points in the council's offering of support lie around housing and education. It was interesting to explore how the council is working to address these pressure points, including the strength of the team's relationship with relevant council departments and its work with external organisations.

However, it is clear the issue of capacity and its subsequent pressures is also shared by external organisations. With the issue of limited available resource for third sector organisations being raised at this meeting. This in turn, leads to the possibility of a limit on an external organisations ability to deal with a continuing increase in numbers. Being mindful that third sector organisations within this field are also facing pressures, we explored if we as a council are confident these organisations are still able to provide a valuable contribution in their offer of support. We note the council is mindful of the existing pressure on externals, and in recognition, has made a number of additional commissions through various funding awards.

Due to the growing demand and issues around capacity, we strongly encourage the council continues to support external organisations wherever possible. In particular, the council must remain mindful, and clearly, and continuously, relay to local and national government that this growing demand, and its resultant pressure, is

producing capacity related repercussions for both the council and third sector organisations and so extra support is vital.

### **An 'All Wales Approach'**

It became clear that a way to manage the current challenges around capacity and demand was through robust partnership working, and it was pleasing to be informed by Richard this his organisation's relationship with the council is positive and works well.

It was also interesting to explore the 'All Wales Approach' currently being deployed and the importance of promoting Wales as a 'whole nation', with local authorities working together to address demand and capacity pressures. Encouraging individuals to commute into Cardiff for work (or other needs) whilst utilising housing stock outside the authority. We recognise the benefits this approach could create by alleviating certain pressure points and reducing the amount of time an individual is waiting for help. We recognise the need for work in this field to centre around a long-term perspective, embedding individuals into society as 'future citizens' and the positive ramification that can ensue. We feel it is vital the council builds robust, effective relationships with other local authorities, local and national governments and third sector organisations in addressing challenges and ensuring effective results and sustained support. We recognise such work is already in place however there was an admission that collaborative working can be strengthened, so we would request managers evaluate current partnership arrangements to determine how they can be reinforced.

### **Housing Support**

Within the meeting, we sought clarity on the council's role and responsibility when an individual enters a 'move on' period from Home Office provided accommodation. Including how the decisions are made, and if we can proactively prepare. We note that preparing for demands related to the 'move on' period is difficult as the council does not receive early notification of the application decision, along with the challenges which sometimes occur in trying to engage with the individual within the 28-day period.

At the meeting, it was mentioned hotels are currently being used to house asylum seekers and refugees. We would appreciate further information on how many individuals are currently in the migration pathways in Cardiff, and how they are being housed. Including if they currently reside in hotels or are homeless, particularly given the short window provided in the 'move on' period from Home Office accommodation.

We note the council's primary approach to sourcing accommodation, within the resettlement schemes, is by utilising private sector housing. We were informed typically local authorities tend to avoid using social housing to ensure community cohesion and no opportunities are taken away from those on the social housing waiting list. However, given the demands set out at the meeting, utilising the private rented sector as the primary source of accommodation for individuals may not be adequate. We note the authority is adapting the 'All Wales Approach' to address this challenge and the 'Capital Programme' referenced at the meeting which looks to utilise other avenues such as suitable empty or new properties.

We are unsure if the authority only uses private sector accommodation for all, or some, of the pathways and would appreciate clarity on this matter; for example, clarity on the accommodation used within all migration pathways.

Thank you once more to yourself, council officers and Richard for providing us with this briefing. We look forward to monitoring the progression of this work and working with yourself and officers over the course of the administration.

To confirm, we wish to request further information on the following:

- ❖ How many individuals are currently in the migration pathways in Cardiff (disaggregated by scheme)
- ❖ A breakdown of how individuals within the Cardiff migration pathways are currently being housed – including if they reside in hotels or are homeless.
- ❖ Clarity on the accommodation sources the council uses for all migration pathways.

Yours sincerely,



**COUNCILLOR BABLIN MOLIK**  
**CHAIR, COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee  
Gareth Newell, Head of Performance & Partnership,  
Sian Sanders, Head of Community Safety & Cohesion  
Tom Dodsworth, Policy & Immigration Manager,  
Richard Eynon, Deputy CEO, Oasis Cardiff  
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations  
Governance & Audit Chair