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CORRESPONDENCE FOLLOWING THE COMMITTEE MEETING

Committee COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time of Meeting MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2023, 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

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12th May 2023

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



Dear Cllr Thorne,

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 24 APRIL 2023 – CARDIFF COUNCIL’S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING AND PREVENTING STREET HOMELESSNESS IN CARDIFF

On behalf of Committee Members, a sincere thanks, to you, and everyone present, for attending our meeting and facilitating considerations on how the council is addressing and preventing street homelessness. Our thanks also, to the external contributors, who provided written submissions for Committee Members’ consideration.

We wish to begin by echoing the comments you made at the start of the meeting, and pay tribute to the vital work you, and everyone who contributed to the meeting, do to support the city’s most vulnerable. The number of partner organisations present, and the discussions held at the meeting, clearly demonstrates there is extensive, collaborative work in this area. Critically, this meeting helped take that recognition into the public arena, stimulating public awareness of the council’s progress; but also demonstrating the council’s recognition, and commitment, that more can and will be done.

The meeting highlighted the many complexities of those who may be susceptible to street homelessness, and it is clear, the council, and those present at the meeting, place emphasis on the importance of providing individually designed care and support. The range of challenges raised by attendees towards the end of the meeting also highlighted that addressing and preventing street homelessness is multifaceted, and sadly, no easy solutions can be made. Whilst it is clear there is an inherent focus on long term progression in addressing the issue, we note, unfortunately, due to the levels of demand, the council currently finds itself in a position of crisis management; supporting individuals with immediate offerings which may not always meet their specific needs.

Whilst remaining mindful to the complexities in which service provisions operate, the current demand levels, and challenges present, we offer our observations and recommendations to assist you, and relevant council officers, in progressing the council’s Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.

Committee Members Observations

- **Eligibility process** – whilst the council works within the criteria stipulated in the Housing (Wales) Act, it appears it takes additional steps to ensure a compassionate approach, in excess of statutory duty. Although this is welcomed by Members, concerns remain that parameters set by legislation, could still create difficulties for an individual's access to support.

In addition, in line with the level of demand on Cardiff Council, and its respective partners, we note the emphasis made at the meeting regarding the importance of all local authorities working collaboratively as a way of managing demand and capacity pressures.

Further, the unintended consequences of other legislation such as the Renting Homes Wales Act, and the difficulties this can generate in securing properties to help address capacity issues is also recognised by Members.

We consider that a national review of the eligibility process stipulated in the Housing Wales Act, and the potential repercussions of the Renting Homes Wales Act, would be beneficial. We recognise that this is a matter for Welsh Government, and so would encourage yourself and officers to explore and call for discussion with all appropriate personnel.

- **MDT & Outreach Services** – it is clear, these are valuable, effective services and we would champion growth and investment in their resource wherever possible. We would also encourage specific work on the pathways in place from these services to mainstream community services; particularly those relating to mental health.
- **Diversions Activities (DA)** – we note the crucial role of DA in engaging with individuals, safeguarding their wellbeing, and offering a positive alternative to street-based lifestyles. It was also pleasing to hear the recognised positive ramifications these activities have for other partners, such as the police and health.
- **Access to emergency provision** – we are pleased to note the acknowledgement that queuing systems to access emergency provisions are not ideal, and welcome the steps being taken to address this.
- **Time limit -** whilst the reasons for time limiting some emergency provisions in extreme circumstances are noted, in line with the evidence presented in our papers, we have concerns that time-limited provision may not provide individuals with a settled, secure solution. The pressures on services and the need for more trauma informed spaces is noted, along with the recognition that alternative provisions are offered to individuals who may be requested to leave accommodation during the day. However, we strongly encourage the council to move-

away from this practice, consider the additional resources required to achieve this, and how we might support relevant partners.

- Shared space – due to the significant increase in demand, and the council's objective to support all individuals, this has required a revert to shared spaces. We shared the concerns highlighted by yourself and partners regarding the use of shared space, and we note and welcome the confirmation that the future accommodation provisions currently in development by the council, will not be designed on the premise of shared spaces, and will be self-contained flats or rooms. Further, we commend the work that has already taken place to deliver an additional 360 self-contained accommodation provisions since the pandemic.
- Safety of provisions – we note reasons why individuals requiring support may hold genuine concern over their safety, and in turn not view offerings of provision as safe are complex and can sometimes be interlinked with the trauma they may have experienced, along with the complexities of their need.

Further, the discussion around the issue of 'home' and what this entails being extremely daunting for many service users was thought-provoking; and a concept, people who do not work in this sector may not initially realise.

We concur and champion the view presented at the meeting that there are many intrinsic nuances toward supporting an individual to feel safe and secure. We feel assured how this premise is at the fore. We note too, there are also individual dynamics at play, and certain individuals may not wish to access provisions for fear of seeing someone they do not wish to, or fear of being pulled back into street-based lifestyles. We feel a fundamental, permanent, move away from shared space accommodation may help alleviate this concern.

We note the recognition of the need to dispel the view that accommodation provisions and offerings are not safe within this cohort, and the significant efforts underway by council services, and providers, to build relationships and offer individualised support in a bid to address this perspective.

We note the comments around the use of SIA trained safety officers and the recognition that when this approach is deployed, it is done so in a sensitive, trauma-informed way, with support workers always working alongside them. Where the use of these measures is deployed, we strongly urge they continue to be done sensitively, and are continuously reviewed; with a careful, continued analysis of its outcomes.

We concur with the comments made around reducing or preventing ASB instances within provisions, and we note the steps being taken to build a sense of community, identify risk at early opportunities, implement effective risk management plans through supportive and restorative practice and provide good quality accommodation; we urge the council to continue this endeavour, and offer its support to external providers where required. We also consider it may be beneficial for the council, in partnership with providers, to review their eviction policy.

Although not explored at the meeting, we wish to use this opportunity to stress the importance of the council taking a proactive role in monitoring the quality-of-service provisions across the city, by ensuring a robust framework is in place to ensure the best possible support is on offer to individuals' and using its findings to map out areas for development and investment.

- Trauma-led Care & Training – we welcome the confirmation that the council's homeless services are seeing an improvement in staff recruitment. Along with the emphasis presented, regarding staff being offered effective training. We would encourage this commitment, to provide staff with effective trauma-informed training to remain at the fore. Further, we would also welcome consideration toward extending our offer of trauma-informed training to council staff who may not work in the sector, but whose work may be closely interlinked to supporting individuals with complex needs.
- Location of provisions – we note the council's plans for future accommodation to be provided across the city. Committee Members welcome this approach and are of the view this could help ensure safeguarding of individuals, support their wellbeing and strengthen the endeavour of creating positive community links.
- Housing First – through the performance monitoring work of this committee, we are acutely aware that Housing First is an effective model to help address the issue of 'revolving door'. However, we were unaware of the specific criteria in place which may limit an individual's access to such schemes. Once more, we strongly urge you to raise this issue with your Welsh Government counterparts.

Committee Members Recommendations

Following consideration of the evidence provided in our papers, and the discussions held at the meeting, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration:

R1 Provide a casework of evidence to the Welsh Government, citing the demands and pressures on homelessness services in Cardiff, which in turn requires additional investment.

The information provided must emphasise and evidence:

- I. The additional pressures placed on services due to the city status.
- II. The positive benefits of diversionary activities, MDT and outreach services, evidencing how they require expansion to offer wider intervention options by engaging other treatment services.
- III. Reasoning on the need to expand Housing First offerings in the city.
- IV. The recognised gaps in provision, and the need to develop more specific accommodation provisions and trauma informed social spaces.
- V. The need for more sustainable funding arrangements to strengthen an individual's access to primary health services¹.
- VI. Highlight the need for meaningful, cross-local authority discussion on shared experiences following the implementation of legislation, criteria for access to services and local authority partnership frameworks.

We strongly encourage the use of external stakeholder views within the discussions and preparation of evidence.

R2 Explore the possibility of supplementing an expansion in Housing First provision, particularly through the use of PRS Landlords.

R3 Explore the efficiency of sharing information for those leaving prison, with particular attention toward the process in place when an individual may be released quickly.

R4 The work of the council's homelessness services, and relevant partners, in supporting this cohort is vital and it deserves widespread recognition. There must be greater promotion of its services on the council and local media outlets. Further, as part of the Digital Inclusion Officer's work, workshops with all Cardiff Council Elected Members should be offered. Providing Members, with an opportunity to learn about the work of the teams, build relations and encourage Members to engage, share stories and champion the work of the team on their social media outlets.

¹ Committee Members note evidence has recently been provided to the Cardiff & Vale Regional Health Board detailing the plans and need for an integrated, sustainable model and encourage this be incorporated into the evidence presented to Welsh Government.

R5 As part of the workforce development, establish specific wellbeing support offerings, in addition to the corporate offer, for staff within the council's homeless service. In developing the offers, you should consult with frontline staff, and partners, to understand need and learn from external offerings.

R6 Ensure established, accessible routes are in place from council services, and partner organisations, to allow the views and experiences of individuals in receipt of services to steer and inform the council's strategic approach and subsequent actions.

R7 Progress with the development of specific accommodation provision in line with known clientele need, such as women only provision, LGBTQ+ and learning difficulties. Further we would encourage specific analysis be undertaken between the supported living opportunities on offer for those with learning difficulties and those who may be experiencing street homelessness.

Committee Members Requests

- We wish to accept your offer for Committee Members to visit the Single Person Assessment Centre, and other relevant sites, and understand officers have already started liaising to secure this opportunity.

- We would gratefully receive a snapshot of the MDT weekly reports on contact with street homelessness as offered at the meeting. We would also encourage this information being shared with all Cardiff Councillors as part of the workshop recommended in R4.

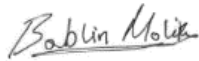
- For clarity purposes, we would appreciate insight into:
 - I. how the number of street homeless present in the city is collated and verified.
 - II. how much of the current provision in the city consists of floor space / shared accommodation.
 - III. how the council supports individuals to access services where English may not be their first language, including if resources such as language line are utilised.

To confirm, a response to this letter is requested which advises if the recommendations made are accepted and also responds to the information requests, captured above.

We wish to end by once more paying tribute to all staff who work in this sector.

Their dedication is clear, and our discussion with individuals at the meeting leaves us in no doubt that they make a real difference to many people's lives.

Yours,



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

Matthew Evans, Operational Manager Supported Accommodation & Assessment

Adrian Price, Assessment & Support Services Manager

Gareth Edwards, Senior Diversionary Activities Co-Ordinator

Cardiff & Vale Health Inclusion Board

Crisis

Huggard

Shelter Cymru

South Wales Police

The Salvation Army

The Wallich

YMCA

Cardiff Council Chair of Governance & Audit

Tim Gordan, Head of Communications & External Relations

Cabinet Office

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Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM49673

Dyddiad / Date: 12th September 2023

Councillor Rhys Taylor
Chair
CASSC
Cardiff Council
County Hall
Cardiff
Wales
CF10 4UW

Annwyl/Dear Councillor Taylor

CASSC - April 24th 2023 - Cardiff Council's Approach To Addressing & Preventing Street Homelessness

Thank you for Cllr Molik's letter dated 12th May 2023 following Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee on the 24th April 2023 regarding Cardiff Council's approach to addressing and preventing street homelessness in Cardiff.

Please find attached at Appendix 1, a response to the recommendations which were set out in the letter.

I was pleased to be able to accompany Committee members to the Single Person Assessment Centre, the Huggard and Adams Court in May, so they could see first-hand the work that is taking place to support single homeless people across the city. I hope the visit was informative. I understand that a further visit to some of our family homeless accommodation is also being arranged.

As requested, I have attached five weekly Rough Sleeper reports, one from each month since April 2023, which detail the contact made with those who are experiencing street homeless by the Outreach and Multi-Disciplinary Teams. We will of course share these with all Cardiff Councillors as part of the workshop recommended in Recommendation 4.

I can also provide further information on the following:

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.

How the number of street homeless present in the city is collated and verified.

The Targeted Outreach Team, a partnership between Cardiff Council, the Wallich and Salvation Army, are on the street daily from 7am until 10pm to engage with people who are rough sleeping. Whilst on patrol, if the Outreach Team identify a new individual as rough sleeping, their details are recorded and information such as their name, location and their support needs are placed on our internal database.

The public can also provide information to us if they identify an individual sleeping rough, via the council webpage, Street Link, via Real Change or by directly contacting the Outreach Team. Once the location of the rough sleeper is provided the Outreach Team will endeavour search for the rough sleeper to record their details and establish how they can be supported.

This system is used to provide a weekly report that outlines the number of rough sleepers in the city as at each Friday, alongside information on work that is being taken forward to support that individual into accommodation or any other support services.

How much of the current provision in the city consists of floor space / shared accommodation.

As at July 2023, the following shared bed spaces were being used to support and accommodate single homeless people. The Council is not using any floor space to accommodate those who are homeless.

Accommodation	Number of Shared Bed Spaces
Out of Hours Accommodation	
Housing Options Centre	39
Ty Countisbury	5
Ty Tresillian bed space	6
Huggard bed space	3
Litchfield Court	1 x 3 bed flat
Single Person Gateway Accommodation	
Adams Court	9 x 2 bed flats

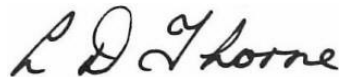
This is in addition to 338 individual units of temporary accommodation for single people.

How the council supports individuals to access services where English may not be their first language, including if resources such as language line are utilised.

If an individual who is sleeping rough has any language barriers, Outreach staff will initially attempt to converse using Google Translate on their phones. For more lengthy conversations Outreach will utilise Language Line to support the client. Existing language skills of staff within the team may also be drawn upon.

Hopefully the information requested has been set out in sufficient detail in this letter, however if you would like further information, please do not hesitate let me know.

Yn gywir
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynda Thorne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and 'T'.

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

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Appendix 1 - Response to Recommendations

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
R1	<p>Provide a casework of evidence to the Welsh Government, citing the demands and pressures on homelessness services in Cardiff, which in turn requires additional investment.</p> <p>The information provided must emphasise and evidence:</p> <p>I. The additional pressures placed on services due to the city status.</p> <p>II. The positive benefits of diversionary activities, MDT, and outreach services, evidencing how they require expansion to offer wider intervention options by engaging other treatment services.</p> <p>III. Reasoning on the need to expand Housing First offerings in the city.</p> <p>IV. The recognised gaps in provision, and the need to develop more specific accommodation provisions and trauma informed social spaces.</p> <p>V. The need for more sustainable funding arrangements to strengthen an individual's access to primary health services.</p> <p>VI. Highlight the need for meaningful, cross-local authority discussion on shared experiences following the implementation of legislation, criteria for access to services and local authority partnership frameworks.</p>	Accept	<p>To strengthen Cardiff Council's position, we will contact Welsh Government and provide a casework of evidence citing the demands and pressures on homelessness services to highlight the areas of additional investment needed in both the short and longer term.</p> <p>Senior Managers meet with Welsh Government officials every two weeks to keep them updated on pressures and demands on the service, including any financial issues faced.</p> <p>There are also a number of regular partnership meetings in place with external partners and stakeholders that gather and share information and use views to inform and shape service delivery. The Cabinet member for Housing</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
	We strongly encourage the use of external stakeholder views within the discussions and preparation of evidence.		& Communities also communicates with Welsh Government via letter on any specific items relating to homelessness. She also attends the WLGA joint cabinet members for housing meeting this meeting is frequently joined by the Minister for Climate Change and other relevant ministers.
R2	Explore the possibility of supplementing an expansion in Housing First provision, particularly through the use of PRS Landlords.	Partially Accept	<p>The Housing First team are always actively looking to expand the scheme, particularly through the use of private landlords, and are supported by the Council's Private Rented Sector (PRS) team to do this. However the privately rented market in Cardiff is currently extremely competitive and sourcing suitable privately rented accommodation is proving challenging in the current economic climate.</p> <p>Fewer rental properties has the effect of driving up rent prices which have increased</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>by 16.1% since 2015. In Cardiff this increase is resulting in very few properties being let at, or close to the LHA rate. The average shortfall across all property types according to Property Engine is £60 per week (£264 per month), Affordability is a therefore a significant barrier.</p> <p>Despite these barriers we will continue to try to secure accommodation in the PRS where this is possible.</p> <p>Further options to expand the scheme by working closely with our Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners has already begun with the newly launched Young Person's Housing First Scheme.</p>
R3	Explore the efficiency of sharing information for those leaving prison, with particular attention toward the process in place when an individual may be released quickly.	Accept	The issues with the Prisoner Pathway are well documented. It is acknowledged the difficulties in receiving homeless applications in adequate time

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>to be able to meet with prisoners and carry out assessments is an ongoing issue.</p> <p>The Council's Prevention Team have recently met with colleagues in both HMPPS Probation and Prison Services and have started a twice weekly surgery from probation offices on Westgate Street. This facilitates working alongside Probation Officers to plan jointly for release dates.</p> <p>The Prevention Team have also met with the Resettlement Team within the Prison, and from later this year, will also be working from the Prison to engage with prisoners in preparation for release dates, mediating with families for a return to their homes, securing alternative accommodation or linking in with the Single Person Gateway.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>By having a presence inside the prison, it is anticipated that relationships and trust between the Prevention Officer and prisoners will be established, and engagement with the housing and homeless services will increase. By co-locating alongside the Resettlement Team and Forward Trust, it is projected this process will speed up, allowing greater time to work with the prisoners.</p>
R4	<p>The work of the Council's homelessness services, and relevant partners, in supporting this cohort is vital and it deserves widespread recognition. There must be greater promotion of its services on the council and local media outlets. Further, as part of the Digital Inclusion Officer's work, workshops with all Cardiff Council Elected Members should be offered. Providing Members, with an opportunity to learn about the work of the teams, build relations and encourage Members to engage, share stories and champion the work of the team on their social media outlets.</p>	Accept	<p>We would be pleased to offer workshops to elected members to provide them with an opportunity to learn about the work of homelessness services in the city.</p> <p>We already utilise the Council's social media channels to promote and, share good news stories, however we will endeavour to utilise this medium further in the future.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
R5	As part of the workforce development, establish specific wellbeing support offerings, in addition to the corporate offer, for staff within the council's homeless service. In developing the offers, you should consult with frontline staff, and partners, to understand need and learn from external offerings.	Accept	A Workforce Development task and finish group is in place alongside a Frontline Worker Forum. These groups will take forward this specific recommendation.
R6	Ensure established, accessible routes are in place from council services, and partner organisations, to allow the views and experiences of individuals in receipt of services to steer and inform the Council's strategic approach and subsequent actions.	Accept	<p>Current routes allowing the views and experiences of individuals to inform the Council's approach will be reviewed to ensure they are accessible.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement with service users is a required element of contract and service delivery. We undertake regular strategic reviews on all services. As part of these reviews, the team determine if the services have developed and maintained opportunities for staff and service users to engage and feed in views on their experiences of the services they received. Case studies for service users are regularly collected and used.</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			<p>Compliments and complaints are also useful to inform approaches.</p> <p>There are a range of partnership meetings taking place that share information and allow for partners and stakeholders to feed into the Councils approach.</p>
R7	<p>Progress with the development of specific accommodation provision in line with known clientele need, such as women only provision, LGBTQ+ and learning difficulties.</p> <p>Further we would encourage specific analysis be undertaken between the supported living opportunities on offer for those with learning difficulties and those who may be experiencing street homelessness.</p>	Accept	<p>There are currently separate workstreams for the development of specific accommodation and support projects including gender specific services, and those with learning disabilities. We will continue to develop these workstreams, including better use and correlation of the data we collect to inform service development.</p> <p>An initial meeting has taken place with key providers of services for young people to scope a potential piece of work, but we accept that more work needs to be undertaken to identify the needs of</p>

Number	Recommendation	Accepted / Partially Accepted / Disagreed	Comment
			LGBTQ+ people and how homelessness affects them. This work will be taken forward as part of an Equalities Action Plan that we are developing for the directorate.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12 of Part(s) 4 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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