

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 JANUARY 2019

Present: Councillor McGarry(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Ebrahim, Jenkins, Kelloway, Lent
and Molik

44 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goddard.

45 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A declaration of interest was received from Councillor Lent, who declared a personal in item 6 as her son is in receipt of residential care from the Learning Disability service.

46 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2018 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

47 : WELSH AUDIT OFFICE REPORT - WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD REVIEW INCLUDING TENANTS' VIEWS

The Chairperson welcomed Sara-Jane Byrne and Ron Price from the Wales Audit Office to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Members that this Item enabled them to carry out a performance review of the Wales Audit Office Review of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard including tenants' views for Cardiff.

The Item would be considered in two parts – firstly, the WAO would take Members through the report and answer Members' questions, followed by a short presentation and Q&A with the Cabinet Member and Officers.

Members were provided with a high level overview of the report with some key findings highlighted such as information on the fieldwork undertaken types of research used and who was interviewed; also information on commissioned focus group work undertaken by Tai Pawb and Diverse Cymru and Ethnic Minorities and Youth Engagement Wales (EYST) with Disabled Council Tenants and BME Council tenants.

Members were advised that the report was very positive overall and the conclusion was also positive; the Council had met the standards a few years ago and there had been a positive approach to how the standards have been maintained and also how the Council was continuing to address the acceptable fails. Members were informed that this was being achieved through an integrated approach, sustainable leadership, investment in housing stock, linkages of action plans, comprehensive information and data on the housing stock, using intelligence to support survey work undertaken to gather data and an understanding of non-traditional properties amongst other things.

Reference was made to the problems that had been encountered with contractors and that these had been addressed; tenants had been positive in their responses in the housing survey.

In conclusion, Members were advised that there were effective scrutiny arrangements in place; the Council had a strong customer care focus to the way it interacts with its tenants and that this was consistent with the finding of the Council's own survey that had been conducted a few years ago.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members made reference to the Focus Groups that were conducted and asked why there hadn't been representation from White working class people too. Members were advised that the representatives on the focus groups were those who were less likely to respond to the telephone survey. The telephone survey reached a wider range of people and there had also been a general focus group of tenants and no one had been excluded.

Members noted that from the results it seemed that the BME community did not feel involved in various aspects of the service. Members were advised that these were very small numbers but disappointing nevertheless, adding that the Council does do a lot with regards to engagement with the BME community, particularly through Hubs, translations and frontline staff.

Members asked how Cardiff compares to other local authorities with regards to benchmarking, and were advised that Cardiff met the standards years ago whilst some other Local Authorities are still trying to achieve them. Members were advised that Cardiff doesn't always compare itself to others even though they have the information/data to do so and this point had been referenced in the report.

With reference to engagement with the BME community and disabled people, Members considered that the engagement process should be more focussed from the start and if certain engagement routes were not working then others should be tried.

Members referred to the term 'hard to reach' and considered that this was inappropriate as better efforts to reach them should be made.

Members asked WAO representatives if they considered the report to be a true reflection of the situation in Cardiff and were advised that they can only go by the data they have, and the response rate at 5% was a satisfactory response especially when supplemented with the information gathered at the Focus Groups; it was also consistent with information gathered during a survey undertaken by Cardiff so they were confident it was reflective.

Members asked if there had been any more engagement undertaken with other vulnerable groups and were advised that the detailed results of the telephone survey could be provided if needed but there was no more information specifically for vulnerable groups.

Members considered that overall it was a very positive report and they were pleased with the opening statement and the reference to Scrutiny involvement, asking if there was anything else that could be done. Members were advised that it was important that the momentum continued, addressing the acceptable fails continues, further

investment, engagement with tenants and that Scrutiny continue to ask questions and challenge.

Members noted that 36% of tenants stated that they had problems heating their homes for a range of reasons and asked for more information on these reasons. Members were advised that the Council's own satisfaction data would have details of these reasons, however it was noted that there had been investment in heating homes and that the SAP ratings were higher than the standard that was required.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Communities & Housing; Sarah McGill, Corporate Director for People and Communities; Jane Thomas, Assistant Director, Housing & Communities; and Colin Blackmore, Operational Manager, Building Improvement & Safety to the meeting.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she said that she wanted to offer her thanks to the Welsh Audit Office for the report and for their professionalism in conducting the review. The Cabinet Member added that she was pleased by the very positive findings in the report and hugely proud of the service and the dedicated housing staff who deliver it. Having been the first authority in Wales to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) in 2012 Cardiff is now able to move on to deliver more for its communities. An example of this is the new build housing programme which is the largest in Wales.

The Cabinet Member stated that it was clear from the Welsh Audit Office Report that despite these ambitious plans the existing tenants remain at the heart of Cardiff's business, adding that it was quite difficult to find any negative feedback in the report, however staff are always looking at what they can do better and so despite the very positive nature of the findings, they have identified some possible areas for improvement which would be outlined in the presentation to Members.

Members were provided with a presentation on areas for improvement after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members noted that the reference to staff not being aware of the Wellbeing/Future Generations Act and asked why there was such a disconnect between staff and senior managers on this. Officers advised that the Acts are embedded in all the plans and staff would be aware of the principles of these plans in the service but they may not be aware of the legislation that covers them.

Members referred to damp and were pleased to see that there would be a review. Members asked how well Cardiff accesses funding/grants to deal with specific issues such as this and how Cardiff compares to other Local Authorities in accessing funding/grants. Officers advised that they meet monthly with sustainable energy colleagues and discussions are regularly held with Welsh Government Colleagues as well as officers from other Local Authorities. Cardiff is very good at improving properties and there are budgets for energy and specific issues however the real challenge is access, people can't be forced to have works carried out unless it's a Health and Safety risk.

Members asked if HRA funding would be used to fill gaps in Welsh Government funding or whether this was less of a priority as the standards had been met. Officers advised that most properties can be brought to standard with loft and wall insulation

from existing budgets, if more was needed such as over cladding and external wall insulation, for instance for entire estates, then they would look at opportunity costs and put in for large bids.

Members discussed wellbeing of communities as a whole in relation to Anti-Social behaviour and noted that the report doesn't touch on this, asking if this was something that could be looked at. Officers advised that lots of work goes on around this issue already, but noted that often incidents are not reported, but are identified during exit interviews. Officers added it was important to encourage reporting but also to look at the offending tenants too as they are often vulnerable.

Members noted that some tenants have problems paying to heat their homes and asked what the reach of the Money Advice Team had been. Officers advised that they report on the success of the Money Advice Team who are hugely successful in obtaining benefits for tenants, this service is taken out to the community too and into people's homes; noting that they could always do more such as advertising the service.

With regard to acceptable fails, Members asked if there was a maximum number per property. Officers advised that there could be multiple within a property, however these were being targeted which was reflected in the report and evidenced with the steadily increasing SAP ratings and that this would continue.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

48 : YOUNG PERSON'S SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION: COMPLEX NEEDS

Item Withdrawn

49 : THE SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICE FOR ADULTS WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore (Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Well-being); Claire Marchant (Director of Social Services); Emma Mulinder (Operational Manager - Learning Disabilities); and Denise Moriarty (Strategic Lead Planning Officer, Social Services) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the item enabled them to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of Adult Learning Disabilities Supported Living Services prior to consideration at Cabinet on the 24th January 2019.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she said that there were 311 individuals supported by the service through 100 schemes across 6 localities; there was a significant spend of £18.2million per annum, it was therefore essential to secure value for money and critically commissioning services that deliver high quality support services.

Members were provided with a presentation on the Supported Living Service for Adults with a Learning Disability after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members were pleased to see a detailed timeline in place for this process.

Members asked whether providers could apply for more than 1 area and were advised that they could either apply for 1 or 2 for efficiencies, however how this would work in practice in relation to which areas is still being debated. Members were advised that if a provider pulls out then what was awarded in tender process would be considered and the second provider would be awarded, this needed to be built into the process. Members were also advised that there would be an opportunity for small organisations/consortiums/cooperatives to bid.

Members asked whether the £18.2million included the Out of County Placements and were advised that the Out of County placements were 84 people and this sum was £11million. Domiciliary Care and Housing Related Support was a sum of £16.2million. It was added that it is not always appropriate for people to return locally, each case would be looked at individually; Closer to Home would be looked at in depth at the upcoming Task and Finish Group.

Members were pleased to see the reference to rural settings and were pleased to see that the service in general was developing, however some concerns were expressed over peoples' choices not being agreed and how care plans are then arranged especially when the choice is to not return locally. Members also made reference to Welsh Government Funding people for 3 years and that this policy hasn't changed, whereas Cardiff funding for past that 3 year period had. Officers noted that this was a very important area that the Task and Finish group would look into in more detail along with the expanding role of Education.

Members noted the recommendation that referred to delegating authority to the Director of Social Services for all aspects of the process but asked if some decisions had already been made. Members were assured that they had not.

Members referred to the 60/40 split proposed and asked what this meant in monetary terms. Officers explained that the banding would not change it was more about increasing the rating on the demonstration of quality. The Cabinet Member added that the 60/40 split was something that Committee had asked for in the past.

Members considered that this was a substantial delegation that would be better delegated to Cabinet.

Members noted that there was no reference to the 60/40 split in the recommendations and considered it should be there. Officers noted this.

Members considered that there should be more detail in the Cabinet Report to enable informed decisions to be made.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance and Chair of the Corporate Safeguarding Board); Claire Marchant (Director of Social Services); and Alys Jones (Operational Manager, Safeguarding) to the meeting.

Members were advised that the item enabled them to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of Safeguarding prior to consideration at Cabinet on the 24th January 2019.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which he said that it was important to recognise that every aspect of the organisation has responsibility for Safeguarding; the Cabinet Member was in attendance to reflect the corporate responsibility that everyone takes ownership of this issue and to support this training had been developed and was being rolled out as mandatory training for all staff as an e-module. The policy now needs updating and it was important at this stage to hear Scrutiny views.

Members were provided with a presentation on Safeguarding – Progress Report and Policy Review after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked if the widening of the scope of Safeguarding was exclusively due to the Social Services and Well Being Act. Officers explained that the Act had brought about significant changes in legislative terms, including strengthening the position with regards to vulnerable adults and duty to report. Members asked if it was perceived as better since the introduction of the Act and if so why it took the Act to have these issues on the radar. Officers explained that over many years there had been increased recognition that Safeguarding needed to be strengthened; there had been serious incidents that had occurred nationally and incremental escalation over many years; the Act consolidated all the previous legislation and makes the position with regards to Safeguarding clear.

Members expressed concern over the significant changes mentioned and wondered whether this would mean there would be diluting of the wording of the Act in years to come as challenges are faced. Officers stated that this would not happen, the Act gives a statutory responsibility to the Director of Social Services to work across Directorates on Safeguarding; the Act will continue to be strong legislation over the next 5/10 years and puts Adults on the same basis as Children.

With reference to Duty to Report, Members asked whether incidents recorded at, for instance, Schools or Supported Living accommodation were reported and recorded centrally to the Council, as this had not been the information provided to them previously. Officers explained that there was reference to Safeguarding referrals in the report and the aim was to ensure that everyone fully understands the duty to report. There was work to be done in looking at the sources of referrals and emphasising the importance of sharing the reported incidents to the Council as this is what should be done.

Members asked whether there was a central database whereby all referrals were recorded, and if so, how this was managed if the referrals had been mistakes or misunderstandings. Officers advised that there are records of all referrals and risks identified, professional concerns are escalated to DBS and Police if necessary. If it was considered there was a mistake or misunderstanding there would be an outcome meeting and decision, if unsubstantiated then this would be clearly recorded.

Members were concerned over the reference to unbudgeted costs in the report and sought clarification on this. The Cabinet Member explained that the Corporate Safeguarding Board wasn't created with a budget; Alys Jones was now in post and there may be a need for another post to be created but in the whole it was up to directorates to include Safeguarding in their business as usual, training staff through the e-module, Directors taking a lead and everyone understanding risks so there should be no costs involved; if however this changes then it would be brought to Scrutiny Chairs.

Members made reference to the previous Corporate Safeguarding Board disbanding and asked how sustainable the new Board is. The Cabinet Member stated that he had no intention of letting it disband, the Policy has been to Senior Management Team several times, there was Chief Executive and Corporate Senior Management buy-in; it would be embedded and now there was there legislative context and requirements too.

Members were advised that Audit committee had proved very useful in this area and that it was hoped that Scrutiny would be involved too.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee when discussing the way forward.

51 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None

52 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21 January 2019 at 4.30pm in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Cardiff.

The meeting terminated at 7.20 pm