

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 DECEMBER 2020

Present: Councillor Jenkins(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Gibson, Philippa Hill-John, Lent,
Lister and McGarry

105 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Norma Mackie as a new member of the Committee.

Apologies had been received from David Jaques and Sarah McGill advised that she would be late attending.

106 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

107 : MINUTES

The minutes of the 4th November 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

108 : HOMELESSNESS - AN UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND DELIVERING THE FUTURE SERVICE MODEL

The Chairperson advised that this item provided Members with an update on homelessness and rough sleeping following the initial outbreak of covid-19 and in the current winter months.

Members were reminded that due to confidential information contained in Appendix 1, 2 & 4 this item will be considered in two parts and any questionings relating to the detail contained in these Appendices must be asked during the closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities and Jane Thomas, Assistant Director Housing & Communities.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she said that the presentation will show the great work put in by Officers to respond to the pandemic to make sure that rough sleepers and those in emergency hostel accommodation were able to self-isolate. Councillor Thorne paid tribute to the Council's Senior Officers for their speedy response to the pandemic and the work of the homeless teams and the partner organisation team who have worked so hard to bring almost everyone in off the street.

Councillor Thorne noted that rough sleeping numbers had gone down to eight but had gone up this week stating that many of those were from outside of Cardiff.

Councillor Thorne paid tribute to Senior Officers who were putting measures in place to ensure there was no going back and to take the Council's vision forward of a no

first night out policy and that there would be no reason for anyone to remain sleeping rough.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

In reference to the YHA hostel, Members asked what date this provision had been extended to and were advised it had been extended to June with a break clause in March. Members further asked what the reason for the extension was and if Officers were confident in finances. Officers explained that they were confident up until March but they had Welsh Government assurances if they need to extend again. The reason for the extension is the level of need.

Members discussed the ASB/Crime issues reported in the press, asking if they had been resolved and also asking if Officer accept that sometimes third parties are adversely affected by the Council's decisions to temporarily house homeless people. Officers explained that the issues reported in the press related more to the OYO in Riverside where impacts had been felt more by the community and the Council took the decision to close it due to those impacts on third parties. In relation to the YHA, Officers explained it was in a more secluded location, not central to a community so there had been less complaints. Officers understand that these are difficult clients and understand community concerns; where there are complaints from residents, Officers take them very seriously and take prompt actions. The Cabinet Member added in relation to Tyndall Street that people have made it their home; there had been engagement with local Councillors and the Police; staff know to escalate issues; the hostel's number and email address with local residents so they can make direct contact with any issues. The Cabinet Member also noted that the issues experienced at Newport Road were caused by visitors rather than residents.

Members asked when Officers will know about funding and were advised they should know by the end of December when the Welsh Government gets its settlement from the UK Government. As contingency there is a phasing out of the smaller houses which will release funding over the next 3 years.

Members referred to homeless people from outside of Cardiff and asked which areas they are coming from; whether Cardiff is becoming a destination place for the homeless and if so what the other Local Authorities are doing about it. Officers explained that there have always been Out of County homeless people in Cardiff; they are not usually housed unless they are under the waiver system but at the moment Welsh Government are asking that everyone is housed. Cardiff offers a range of services but also begging opportunities. There are reconnection services run by the Salvation Army. Some people are have no recourse to public funds, again these would not normally be housed but are currently due to the public health crisis. With regard to the areas that they come from, it was a broad picture which could range from Cornwall, Merthyr and Bridgend; respective local authorities are supposed to house them.

Members asked why smaller houses are less successful and Officers advised that clients have changed; there are more substance misuse and mental health issues combined, to house these clients in a small house of 5/6 vulnerable people with no 24 hour support is not appropriate provision.

Members asked questions around capacity and noted there seemed to be a focus on short/medium term rather than long term. Officers explained that there are various move on schemes such as Housing First and SAIL; people need to be supported on different levels depending on need. There was also work to be done with the Private Rented Sector and single person units. There was a need for more move on accommodation and more supported accommodation as there are currently lot of people with high support needs.

Members discussed Giving Differently noting that the initiative could have been more successful if better locations and public messaging had been used. Officers explained that Giving Differently had been set up by For Cardiff and agreed it had not worked very well. During the pandemic, Officers started the Real Change Campaign whereby people report where they see rough sleepers, rather being asked for money. Currently there are 2/4 reported weekly and the outreach team go to the rough sleepers straight away to encourage them into services and provide support. Members welcomed this but noted that some people do want to give money to help when they see rough sleepers and that an immediate way to give to a charity could work. Officers stated they did not rule out trying Giving Differently in the future but it was important that people report rough sleepers so that immediate help can be offered. The Cabinet Member shared Members' frustrations around Giving Differently, stating that where people did give the money helped with into work and into training. The slow roll out had not helped the scheme. She added that it was important that people understand that there is no need for anyone to sleep on the streets as there is enough accommodation and support and she encouraged all Members to share the relevant contact details on their social media.

Members asked if there was work being done with Cardiff University or other organisations to try and root out homelessness at the very early stages. Officers advised that there is a project with Llamau to work with schools looking at very early prevention which was of the utmost importance.

Members referred to the five year lease system and wondered if it was an opportunity to get other families into the scheme. Officers advised that landlords were keen for five year schemes.

Members wished to commend the wonderful work of the outreach teams.

Members were concerned about timings with regard to the closure of provision in Adams Court and sought assurance that individuals affected by the works at Adams Court would not be negatively impact and receive continuation in service. It was confirmed to Members that all individuals affected by the work had been successfully moved out of Adams Court, with some individuals housed in the flats next door, who also wished to move, being successfully supported to do so. Members were further advised that half of Adams Court is being used as a winter night shelter in order to ensure adequate winter provision, and that as work is complete on the building it will be returned to the council on a phased basis in order to help facilitate capacity.

Members were concerned about the church night shelters not being used as extra winter provision due to the pandemic and asked if this leaves any gaps in provision.

Officers shared the concern over winter provision but reassured members there was enough provision.

Members asked about security in Adamsdown and Hayes Place, Officers explained that it was not just CCTV, although there was CCTV in place that reports directly to the ARC; there were also 'night guards' which allow staff to focus on supporting clients 24 hours a day.

Members referred to the Private Rented Sector and provision being reduced due to regulation and asked if Officers were concerned. Officers stated they were very concerned about the reduction; there was a need for a 5 year scheme meaning less risks for landlords; Officers were keen to expand this.

Members considered that the lease scheme sounded similar to the Calon scheme by Cadwyn; asking where in the City the schemes would be. Officers explained the scheme would be more favourable to landlords than the Calon scheme and it was longer term accommodation. With regards to area, they would be looking at areas closer to the City Centre where there was currently a lack of stock and where people/families want to live.

Members referred to issues at Thornhill previously with temporarily housed clients and asked if accommodation was let and there were subsequent issues such as ASB, whether the tenants would be moved on. Officers stated that they always respond to ASB issues and are working toward a new model for family accommodation, such as moving from, for example the Gasworks to permanent accommodation. This means less impact on schooling. There would still be hostel provision but there will be less people in temporary accommodation. Whilst it was impossible to guarantee there would be no ASB, there was a team to work with them.

Members asked how people are supported during the day time; noting that having their own bedrooms does help, there would be a need for training and support and asked how committed are the Council with this. Officers explained that there would be TV's in all rooms, activities in hostels, although that was difficult during the pandemic. Charities and Faith groups would be involved and it was also important to channel the goodwill of, for example, local Boxing Clubs, Knitting Clubs etc. The Cabinet Members assured Members of the Council's commitment and wanted to reiterate the importance on involving local clubs, citing an example of people from a Llanrumney hostel starting a local Boxing Club which led to engagement and subsequently have been rehoused.

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.

109 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were updated on Committee correspondence sent and received.

Members discussed the work programme and were advised that the January meeting would focus on social isolation and its impact on every part of society. There would be a wide range of external representatives in attendance.

110 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

111 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 13 JANUARY 2021

The meeting terminated at 6.07 pm