

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present: Councillor Jenkins(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Gibson, Lent, Lister, Mackie and McGarry

11 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received. Councillors Carter and Hill-John indicated they might need to leave the meeting early.

12 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

13 : MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record, as proposed by Cllr Mackie and seconded by Cllr Ahmed Ali.

14 : CARDIFF REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN - TO FOLLOW

The Chairperson advised Members that each Scrutiny Committee would consider the report as relevant to their own terms of reference. Members were requested to keep their lines of questioning in keeping with the Committee's terms of reference.

The Chairperson welcomed: Cllr Caro Wild, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport, Cllr Susan Elsmore, Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Andrew Gregory, Director of Planning, Transport and Environment, Simon Gilbert, Head of Planning, Stuart Williams, OM, Planning, Transport and Environment Directorate, Sarah McGill, People and Communities Directorate.

The Chairperson invited Cllr Wild to make a statement, during which he reminded Members that the Council was still in the early stages of the Replacement Local Development Plan process and expressed the Council's gratitude to Councillors and members of the public who had responded to the consultation.

Cllr Thorne welcomed the fact that Cllr Wild had been meeting with her and Officers to discuss housing needs.

Stuart Williams, OM, Planning, Transport and Environment Directorate, provided further details of the Replacement LDP, the consultation process, the responses received and the plans for further engagement. An update on population and household projections based on Welsh Government data was also presented.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members observed that the population projections had been revised downward since the previous LDP and queried as to whether this meant that enough land had already been allocated for housing. Members were advised that the review of the plan was an opportunity to ensure that the right amount and type of land was available for future development if required. The Replacement LDP would have a greater emphasis on quality of place in response to public demand as expressed through the consultation.
- Members were advised that while there may previously have been an over-projection of population and housing need, there was no certainty that there was not now an under-projection. It was important to take a middle position to provide a steady course to guide the longer-term vision for Cardiff. There was a need for balance between brownfield and greenfield sites, which were critical for Cardiff moving forward. Members were advised that the lower projection might be partly explained by the fact that people had moved out of the city because there was insufficient housing available. More housing is becoming available because of the development of greenfield sites.
- Members sought clarification on how the Replacement LDP would address the lack of affordable housing in Cardiff and the problem of developers using viability 'get-out clauses'. Members were advised that the LDP addresses the need for affordable housing through its allocations. Planning policy can secure affordable housing through robust policies but it is only part of the solution. The Council and RSLs also play a part in delivering affordable housing. On some developments it is not possible to deliver affordable housing because it would not be viable. Greenfield sites are delivering 30% affordable housing on strategic sites. There will be further engagement with the community on the delivery of affordable housing.
- Members were advised that on occasion the Council will use funding from developers to develop affordable housing elsewhere. Those seeking affordable housing may require it in particular locations as people may want to stay in their own communities. It was suggested that Section 106 finance should go to the Council as well as housing associations.
- Members were concerned as to whether the small numbers of respondents to the consultation might give an unrepresentative view of the wider community's opinions, and whether there were plans to get a broader view. Members were advised that Officers were pleased with the quantity and quality of responses, but would be seeking the views of a wider section of the community in the next stage. Specific efforts will be made to target groups who are traditionally under-represented in consultation responses.
- Members were concerned about density of population in some parts of the city and whether there were plans to set minimum standards for accommodation size. Members were advised that conversations had taken place with colleagues in other authorities regarding minimum standards. It was not yet possible to agree what those standards should be but Officers would be keen to include such standards in the LDP.

- Members sought clarification on whether there were specific plans for housing for young disabled people. Members were advised that this was a detailed policy area. In negotiations with developers there were often conversations about catering for lifetime homes and making sure that design is flexible. Good design should not prejudice people and young disabled people should be able to live in new homes without adaptation. Members were advised that the Council builds to a lifetime homes standard. The same standard should be required of the private sector.
- Members were concerned about whether the LDP would deliver communities with infrastructure and not simply large numbers of houses. Members were advised that development master plans include new centres and communities. It is necessary to build a sufficient number of houses in a development before local shops, GP surgeries, transport and other infrastructure become viable. Such infrastructure would be crucial in existing and new developments going forward. Members were invited to share their insights about their communities with Officers, and to request to see plans for future developments.
- Members were concerned to ensure that efforts were made to facilitate the representation of under-represented communities in relation to accommodation for young disabled people.
- Members discussed whether the Replacement LDP could be detailed and specific enough to enable the development of exemplar communities. Members were advised that the LDP establishes the vision and policies, but the Planning Team provides further details in its planning guidance. The Council expects high standards and quality from developers, and this would be exemplified in developments.
- Members sought assurance from Officers that they were confident the Replacement LDP would enable them to demand higher standards from developers. Members were advised that the previous LDP was explicit about the expectation upon developers in relation to the quality and infrastructure demands in regard to developments. Developers and landowners were required to sign Statements of Common Ground. The Replacement LDP would introduce additional agendas such as place making and access to community facilities, so the benefits would also be enjoyed in citizens in existing communities where there may be shortcomings.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

15 : COUNCIL HIGH-RISE OVERCLADDING - TO FOLLOW

Members were advised that due to confidential information contained in the appendices, questions relating to their detail would have to be taken in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Sarah McGill, Corporate Director of People and Communities, Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, Jane

Thomas, Director Adults, Housing and Communities, and Colin Blackmore, OM, Building Improvement and Safety, to the meeting.

Cllr Thorne was invited to make a statement, during which she outlined the requirement for recladding Lydstep Flats.

Colin Blackmore, OM, Building Improvement and Safety, updated Members on the progress of the project and the options available. Members were also informed about a proposal to insulate the Council's BISF housing stock in Llandaff North and Rumney.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members expressed concern about the escalation in project costs and discussed whether it would be more appropriate to replace the flats with a new low-rise housing development. Members were advised that the cost escalation was due to the current extraordinary market conditions and there not had been an error in the original estimate. The contractors will guarantee the current estimate if the Council proceeds quickly. Members were advised that there are significant development constraints on the site. The increase in costs was due to exceptional circumstances and it is considered likely that the market pressures will ease. A delay to the project had been considered but the needs of the tenants must be taken into consideration.
- The Cabinet Member expressed their belief that it was incorrect to suggest any incompetence on the part of Officers, and that any delays and cost escalation were due to exceptional circumstances beyond the Council's control. The tenants are living in very difficult circumstances which need to be addressed. They are attached to their flats and would prefer to continue living in them.
- Members sought clarification on whether leaseholders would be required to pay towards the cost of the project. Members were advised that leaseholders are normally expected to pay a contribution towards works on Council properties. Leaseholders in this instance would be required to pay towards the replacement of their own windows and communal windows. The size of the contribution might need to be reassessed in light of the cost escalation. No contribution is expected towards the recladding.
- Members sought clarification on whether there was a ceiling at which it was considered the project cost was prohibitive. Members were advised that the next step would be a Phase 2 agreement with the Contractor which would contain guarantees on cost. The Contractor had said that if agreement could be reached soon the costs would be guaranteed.
- Members enquired as to whether Officers would consider alternative schemes for replacing the flats with a new development. Members were advised that alternatives had already been considered. It would be very difficult in current circumstances to rehouse the tenants in alternative accommodation while a new development was being built.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

16 : DEVELOPMENT OF THE CARDIFF DESIGN STANDARDS DOCUMENT

The Chairperson welcomed Sarah McGill, Corporate Director of People and Communities, Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, and David Jacques, OM, Development and Regeneration, to the meeting.

Members were reminded that the Design Standards Document is a working draft and the purpose of the session was to feedback comments that would assist in its development.

Cllr Thorne was invited to make a statement, during which she reminded Members about their previous involvement in the development of the Design Document.

David Jacques, OM, Development and Regeneration, updated Members on the development of the Design Standards Document and outlined the details of the Standards. Members were advised about the next steps in relation to the Document and its intended use.

Members were asked to comment or raise questions on the information received. Those discussions are summarised as follows:

- Members sought clarification on how the Design Document would contribute to the development of the exemplar communities that Cardiff aspired to as part of its Replacement LDP. Members were advised that the Council would like to encourage developers and housing associations to adopt the same Standards. The Document would be one of many guidance's that design teams and contractors would have to have regard to.
- Members enquired as to whether the Design Standard would be inspired by exemplar schemes in other places. Members were advised that councils across the country took best practice from examples of good design wherever they were. There is increasing consistency between design guides and schemes across the UK.
- Members sought clarification on whether Officers would be amenable to seeking comments from the Prince's Foundation. Members were advised that it was important to get a range of comments from different sources. The Prince's Foundation deliver a number of exemplar projects.
- Members sought clarification on whether planning permission would be refused or schemes required to be redesigned if they failed to meet the requirements of the Design Standard. Members were advised that the purpose of the Document was to inform design teams of the Council's minimum requirements. Every item within the Standard is intended to be deliverable within site constraints.

- Members enquired as to whether package deals would be measured against the Standard. Members were advised that the Council would not enter a package deal that it did not consider was a scheme it would want to deliver. Every scheme would have to meet the Council's quality requirements.
- Members sought clarification on the expected timescale for delivering the Document. Members were advised that it was intended to be adopted by the end of 2021 following a period of engagement and consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Chairperson writes to the Cabinet Member on behalf of the Committee expressing their comments and observations during the Way Forward.

17 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

No urgent items were received.

18 : COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021-22

The Chair invited Naomi Tomic, Principal Scrutiny Officer, to provide an update on the Committee Work Programme 2021-22.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the key Committee dates up to March 2022, and the key areas of the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: To accept the Work Programme and key areas.

19 : WAY FORWARD

Members discussed the information received and identified a number of issues which the Chairperson agreed would be included in the letters that would be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to the relevant Cabinet Members and Officers.

20 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 13 OCTOBER 2021

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 October 2021.

The meeting terminated at 6.30 pm