

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9 MARCH 2022

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

59 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Carter and Gibson.

60 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

61 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 January 2022 and 21 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

62 : COUNCIL HOUSE REPAIR & MAINTENANCE PROCESS

Members were advised that when considering the Committee's Work Programme, Committee Members had expressed an interest in wanting to assess how the Council is managing the quality of its existing housing stock. Members requested a briefing from the housing team and commissioned the scrutiny research service to undertake a survey with council tenants.

The briefing note provided by the service area and the responses of the scrutiny research survey were contained in Members papers

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Helen Evans and Ellen Curtis from the People & Communities directorate for this item.

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement, after which Members were asked for any questions, comments or observations.

Members referred to the 62% of respondents to the survey being dissatisfied with the interior condition of their properties. Officers explained that this was a combination of the age of some Council housing stock and tenants' expectations.

Members referred to the difference in responses to the two surveys and the levels of dissatisfaction. Officers explained they welcomed the surveys and the tenant's responses to help improve the service going forward.

Members referred to the maintenance and repairs backlog and asked how Officers felt about the current situation. Officers explained it was not where they wanted it to be, they wanted a lower backlog figure and a faster response rate, they explained that they have a number of measures in place to address this such as more regular

management meetings, increased resources and an escalation process which should see improvements.

Referring to managing tenant's expectations, Members asked if tenants were advised of the delay and backlog when they reported a repair and were pleased to hear that they were.

Considering the increasing number of Council houses, Members were concerned whether there was enough resource in the service area. Officers advised that they can sub-contract work out and have contractors to bring in if needed.

Members were pleased to note that a small pool of contractors should be in place by July 2022 and reiterated previous requests that were possible and practical these contractors are local and pay the Real Living Wage.

Members asked for more information on the Repairs Academy as they considered this may be instrumental in reducing the use of contractors and increasing the resource in house.

Members were pleased to hear that repairs could be reported 24/7, 365 days a week and sought clarity on how this could be done before the implementation of the My Repairs service which was due to go live in Spring 2023.

Members asked if tenants were aware of the Council's responsibility in terms of repairs. Officers advised that tenants are provided with a copy of Responsive Repairs Standards at the start of their tenancy. Members considered this could be reissued to long standing tenants.

Members asked for information on the number of repair requests that the Council receives. Officers didn't have this information to hand but offered to bring it to a future Committee.

Members asked if preventative measures such as air vents were installed in properties. Officers explained that was not done routinely due to varying factors such as differences in properties and tenant's lifestyles. Members considered they could be installed in properties where there are issues with damp and condensation, especially if these properties become void in preparedness for the next tenant.

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

63 : HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN 2022-23

Members were advised that this item enabled them to carry out pre-decision scrutiny on the Housing Revenue Account's Business Plan before it is considered by Cabinet on the 10th of March.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Helen Evans, Dave Jacques and Gill Brown for this item

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement, after which Members were asked for any questions, comments or observations.

Members welcomed the fact that recommendations made by the Committee last year had been taken on board with regards to including information on financial matters, mitigation measures and sensitivity analysis.

Members considered there could be more information included on risks and how they are monitored and also more information on HRA finance monitoring. Officers agreed with this and Members welcomed Officers suggestions that the plan could also include more detail on governance arrangements.

Members stressed the importance of the plan being readable and accessible and considered it could be more succinct.

Members referred to decarbonisation and it being an amber risk rating given the challenge with scale and costs. Officers explained that it did not refer to the whole of the Council housing stock and Members thought the wording should be changed to reflect this.

Discussing the impacts of Covid-19, Members considered the green rating should be reviewed given that the impacts of the pandemic would be felt for some time.

Referring to homelessness, Members noted that the plan referred to reviewing how properties are allocated. Officers explained that it was being reviewed as part of the Rapid Rehousing Approach and offered to bring this to a future committee.

Members were pleased to see the criteria being used by the Council when purchasing properties reflected the changed needs of Cardiff residents.

Members discussed modular schemes such as Croft Street and were advised that such schemes would continue to be used going forward. Members noted that modular schemes were more expensive to build, at the moment but they are faster to build and deliver. Members noted that this helps bring in a rental income for the council on a faster basis whilst also addressing the need for Council housing faster.

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

64 : UPDATE ON NEW BUILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - CHANNEL VIEW & FUTURE DIRECTION

Members were advised that this item enabled them to carry out pre-decision scrutiny on the report before it is considered by Cabinet on the 10th of March.

Members were advised that due to confidential information contained in three of the Appendices, this item would be considered in two parts if required as any questions which relate to the costings or legal advice for Wyndham Crescent, would be taken in a closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Lynda Thorne, Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Helen Evans, Dave Jacques and Gill Brown for this item

The Cabinet Member was invited to make an opening statement, after which Members were asked for any questions, comments or observations.

Wyndham Crescent

Members noted that the scheme had previously been deferred due to planning objections and sought assurances that it could now be delivered. Officers advised that the previous issues had been resolved.

Members were concerned that the design of the scheme in the papers was different to the design previously seen by Committee. Officers advised that the final design was yet to be determined.

Members were pleased to hear that should modular build be used, then work should start on the scheme in 2022 with tenants moving in around 12 months later.

Channel View

Members noted that they had previously been advised that the scheme would be delivered in phases, with contractors being appointed for each phase; however, the papers referred to a single contractor for the whole scheme. Officers explained this change should shorten the process, be less resource intensive for the council and potentially less expensive too.

Members expressed concern over the increasing costs of the scheme and sought assurances about the deliverability. Officers explained that the current costs reflect the current markets conditions which were increasing and could potentially double. Officers added that a mitigation was the phased development of the scheme, meaning if the Council had to withdraw due to increasing costs, only parts of the scheme would be unfinished.

Members asked about the confidence in delivering the scheme and Officers stated they were confident, they had experience of delivering partnership schemes.

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

65 : COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Members were asked to note that the Environment Scrutiny Committee would be considering the findings and recommendations of the RLDP Task and Finish Group next week before it is submitted to Cabinet.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer advised Members that the Scrutiny Annual Report would again be a combined report of the five-scrutiny committee's this year. Each committee would have a two-page spread to outline key achievements and to take a retrospective look at the work undertaken by Committee. Members were asked to advise the Principal Scrutiny Officer of any amendments were required to the draft wording.

The Principal Scrutiny Officer explained that she would send an email listing all the Committee's topics and enquiries and Members could indicate which highlights they wanted to be included in the Scrutiny Annual Report.

66 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

67 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To be arranged.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm