

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 OCTOBER 2018

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

18 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ebrahim and Carter.

19 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

20 : MINUTES

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

21 : REGULATION & INSPECTION OF SOCIAL CARE (WALES) ACT 2016

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Susan Elsmore Cabinet Member for Social Care, Health & Wellbeing and Claire Marchant Director of Social Services to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised that this item enabled Members to gain an overview of the duties and responsibilities on the Council and its partners in relation to the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016 (RISCA). It would include a presentation setting out the implications of the Act on Cardiff Council and partners.

The Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member to make a statement in which she said that this was more of a technical briefing as the issue was in the early stages for Cardiff. She added that it was an important part of how we meet the needs of individuals in the Health and Social Care Wellbeing Act.

Members were provided with a presentation on RISCA 2016 after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members noted that currently only 30% of people had qualified to be registered and asked if people needed more training to be able to register. Officers explained that they would need the skills based competency qualification to be registered, this would be done through an assessment process. Officers noted that this was a considerable undertaking for some people, especially those who were not on set hours contracts.

Members asked if this would cause more problems in recruitment and retention of staff. Officers stated that this was a real significant risk. Officers added that Cardiff has an active Domiciliary Care market and is better placed than some other local authorities, but the risks shouldn't be underplayed and some people will not want to go through this process. It was important to determine if enough was being done to encourage people to get into Care as a career. Working with providers, further

education providers and assessors would be important to support people to get the qualifications. Direct communication with the Welsh Government would also be important whilst going through this process.

Members asked what would happen if the timescales are not met and officers stated that this is where good communication with Welsh Government would be important, if the timescales needed to be adjusted or if the risks become too great.

Members asked about the costs and how much time it takes to get the qualification. Officers didn't have the costs and timescale for the qualification and agreed to provide these after the meeting. Officers did state that the cost of registration is £35.

Members asked if there was a risk that some providers may drop out as the process may be too onerous, and asked of this risk had been assessed. Members were advised that no direct risk assessment had been undertaken but there were regular forum meetings and dialogue with providers. Officers added that the sector is engaged and wants to work with Cardiff and no one had indicated they wanted to exit the market as yet. The Cabinet Member added that she had not heard any concerns from providers.

Members asked who people needed to register with and were advised that people would register with Social Care Wales and providers would register with Care Inspectorate Wales.

Members asked if providers were reaching the wider demographic who need care services. Officers agreed that this was a wider issue and explained that there would still be lots of other individual support for people to stay independent without this registration process.

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.

22 : EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS TOOLKIT FOR COUNCILLORS ON ACCESSIBLE HOUSING

The Chairperson welcomed Geraint Rees from the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Ceri Meloy from Tai Pawb to the meeting.

The Chairperson advised Members that this item was a briefing to Committee Members on the contents of the soon to be published Equality & Human Rights Toolkit for Councillors on Accessible Housing.

Members were provided with a briefing on the toolkit after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments.

Members asked if this was a lobbying document and were advised that it wasn't, it was a toolkit to support Councillors in their role.

Members asked if the document would be sent to other parties such as Housing Associations and were advised that the intention was to share the document widely and to anyone who has a decision to make on housing.

Members noted the reference to a chronic shortage of accessible housing and asked if this was in relation to good quality accessible housing rather than generally. Members were advised that it meant there was a chronic shortage of accessible and adaptable housing, lifetime home standards were important to futureproof the housing stock.

Members asked what Cardiff needs to do to improve with regard to this. Members were advised that Cardiff doesn't need to do anything different to other local authorities. Some issues are national issues such as Housing standards. Geraint Rees added that the data local authorities hold is important, better data would help in decision making and planning.

Members noted that Cardiff is very different to other local authorities in Wales and asked what it does better or different to others. Members were advised that Cardiff has the accessible housing register and leads the way on many things. Cardiff was the first local authority to meet the Welsh Quality Housing Standards; the Cabinet Member for Housing was fully engaged and Cardiff's scrutiny meetings had been observed and were very positive.

Members noted that there used to be a problem whereby Council homes were adapted then when the tenancy ended, the adaptations were taken out and asked if this still happens. Members were advised that it does still happen across Wales but not in Cardiff anymore, the accessible housing register helps. Only 7 local authorities' have such a register and it needs a National definition.

Members asked how Scrutiny can support the toolkit and were advised that using the toolkit, sharing it and providing feedback would be useful.

Members asked how much the toolkit cost to produce and who funded it. Members were advised that it was funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and that is funded by the UK Government. There was no information on the cost available.

Members asked what the Welsh Government's response was to the document and were advised that National Service Standards that had been recently launched by the Welsh Government had come out of the evidence on disparity in the toolkit.

Members asked how adaptable Cardiff homes are for disabled people. Geraint Rees stated that there was clearly a challenge with old housing stock but the focus should be on the building standards for new builds. The drive for smaller and cheaper homes will cause problems in the future and long term investment was needed to futureproof the housing stock.

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.

23 : BUILDING MAINTENANCE FRAMEWORK - VOIDS MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Thorne – Cabinet Member Housing and Communities, Sarah McGill – Director People and Communities, Jane Thomas - Assistant Director, Housing and Communities and Ellen Curtis - Operational Manager, Landlord Services to the meeting.

Before discussion of this item, the Chairperson invited the Cabinet Member and Officers to comment on the previous item and discussion.

Councillor Thorne stated that she welcomed the work being undertaken and that lifetime homes were on the Council agenda. Recognising it was an emotive subject Councillor Thorne explained that Cardiff is working hard on getting people out of hospital and back into their homes quickly and therefore homes need to be suitable.

Sarah McGill also welcomed the work, noting that the situation varies across Wales, especially in terms of accessible and adaptable homes. Members of the Committee were provided with some written information on homes being built and work with developer partners where accessibility is expected. Members were advised that it can be notoriously difficult to get developers on board and where the Council has that say they use their best endeavours to achieve this.

Jane Thomas stated that in relation to adaptations, the Council is meeting its target. The Independent Living Service which is soon to be rolled out to the North of the City, includes adaptations and a wide range of advice and services. In relation to the CHA, Cardiff are looking at the next generation now, looking at the people on the waiting lists and looking at what properties can be adapted for them.

The Chairperson thanked them for their comments and began consideration of this item.

Members were provided with a presentation on the Building Maintenance Framework- Voids Management Issues after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members considered that things had gone quite wrong since the item was brought to Committee last year and asked if the Officers agreed with this. Officers agreed that things had gone wrong, but this was an issue with the contractors that could not have been envisaged; the framework was fine. Officers explained that there were issues in the market with paying sub-contractors in the supply chain.

Members asked if there had been any issues with R&M Williams previously and whether officers were confident with the bids/teams etc. Officers stated that there had been no previous concerns and in fact they are delivering on another project for the Council very well. Officers added that due diligence had been given to the bids, and external advice had been taken from Geldards but R&M Williams had under-priced the contract. Officers assured Members that the framework was working as expected but the Council cannot make a contractor stay in the contract. The Director added that there was a culture issue and contractors needed to understand that performance penalties would be applied.

Members asked if adaptations were means tested and were advised that they were but small quick adaptations tended not to means test as a very small amount of people fail the means test, so due to administration costs they were considering scrapping it.

Members asked about compensation payments for people whereby an adaptation has been done but there have been problems such as redecoration needed. Officers advised that this would be dealt with through the complaints process and each case would be considered individually.

Members asked how much money in rent was expected to be lost and what lessons could be learned. Officers gave the ball park figure of £534k but stated they would confirm the exact amount, which would show in next year's budget. With regard to lessons learned, Officers explained that they would be looking at Swansea's in-house solution and possibly exploring a business case for Cardiff.

Members asked if this could have been anticipated, as Ian Williams had left behind a huge backlog which other contractors needed to pick up. Officers explained that they needed to end one contract to start another, and subsequently operatives leave and gaps are left. The new contract would now overlap and enable a handover time to the new contractor.

Members asked why contractors needed 'gearing up' time and Officers explained that they need to get their workforce together, get sub-contractors, the Council has to undertake Health and Safety assessments with them and also sometimes there were TUPE issues to deal with.

Members asked about the total number of void properties and were told there were currently 220 void properties which could take anywhere between 10-91 days to turnaround.

Members asked what rate the properties come in at and were advised that it is very difficult to predict, some weeks there are 5 and others there are 25.

Members referred to Calon taking on 8 of the properties and asked if this meant there were 8 fewer council properties. Officers advised that they were still council properties but it was about how they are used. Calon run a scheme using Council and Private Rented Sector properties for temporary accommodation for homeless families.

Members asked if this was the best assessment on the back of something that has gone wrong. Officers explained that they have been using the Calon scheme for years and it has enabled Cardiff to stop using B&B's for homeless people; this was just putting 8 more properties into that scheme and Calon would also undertake the void works.

Members referred to recruitment issues and asked if Brexit would impact this and cause problems for the future. Officers said it was difficult to predict but there was a real risk, officers were working with contractors to try and avoid this happening.

Members asked how the risk of things going wrong again could be mitigated and were advised that the new contract would allow contractors to take on voids anywhere in the City.

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.

24 : WAY FORWARD

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

25 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

26 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7 November 2018 at 4.30pm

The meeting terminated at 7.10 pm