
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Crime & Coffee Festival 2019

From 3rd to 8th June 2019 in Hubs across Cardiff, the Hubs & Libraries Service successfully delivered the second instalment of the Crime & Coffee Festival, securing its position in Wales' literary calendar with a host of the biggest names in crime fiction.

The festival promotes Welsh crime writers, reading and, of course, the Hubs and libraries themselves. Topping the bill this year were the Man Booker Prize longlisted authors, Belinda Bauer and Jasper Fforde, who were joined by many more established and emerging Welsh crime writers. The festival featured 30 authors across 11 events city-wide, with talks, readings and panel discussions, plus a workshop where writers were able to work with a published author.

Built out of the success of Open Space literary events within our Hubs and a hugely popular crime fiction book group within Central Library Hub, the Crime & Coffee Festival has delivered the opportunity for crime readers to engage with authors and learn creative skills for their own writing. I am pleased to be able to report that the festival attracted large audiences, with some incredible feedback being received from those who attended. I am really looking forward to next year and seeing the festival go from strength to strength across the Hubs and libraries within the city.

Over the last 10 years, a wealth of research has shown the link between reading for pleasure and doing well in life. Reading delivers many benefits including improved health and well-being. I am therefore really pleased that we continue to offer free access to reading through our Hubs and our libraries, as well as events and activities that aim to inspire and engage Cardiff's citizens.

Housing First

I am pleased to confirm that the Council has now extended the existing Housing First pilot, run by the Salvation Army. The project utilises properties within the private rented sector, aiming to increase the stock of housing available to those sleeping rough, providing intense holistic support to ensure individuals with especially complex issues can have a successful pathway out of homelessness. These individuals are often entrenched and repeatedly move through mainstream services unsuccessfully.

Since the implementation of the pilot in September 2018, 7 service users have successfully transitioned into accommodation of their own. With effective support, all 7 are still maintaining their tenancies and are all reporting general improvements to their overall health and wellbeing and a reduction in crime and street activity. Due to the initial success of the scheme, plans are now being considered to expand this service over the coming financial year.

By way of a case study, the Council's Housing First team is currently supporting a client to maintain a tenancy in the private rented sector after a long period of rough sleeping. Before entering the tenancy, the client was in a cycle of homelessness and would move between periods of rough sleeping, prison sentences and emergency overnight stay (EOS) provision.

The client's support needs prior to the scheme involved criminal justice, mental health and substance misuse. Within a few weeks of starting the tenancy, the client spent time in prison; however, this was only for a short period and they retained the tenancy during this time. Staff picked the client up from the prison gates on release and, since then, the client has gone on to achieve positive outcomes. The client has also utilised the individual budget to decorate and furnish the flat and to make it more homely.

Since leaving prison, the client has addressed their substance misuse and is now presenting negative drug tests on a weekly basis. The client has not had any criminal justice issues for the last four months. The client's mental health has also stabilised, with the individual feeling better within themselves and beginning to exercise more. The client has skills in painting and decorating and has recently started to do some work experience with a painter and decorator to build up a CV with the aim of securing employment in this field in the future.

Cardiff Living Programme

I am delighted to announce that Cardiff Council and Wates Residential were recognised for the innovative Cardiff Living Programme on 7th June 2019, winning the Integration & Collaborative Working Award at the Constructing Excellence Wales (CEW) 2019 Awards. Cardiff Council and Wates were shortlisted against five other construction projects for the award and were announced as the overall winners in the category, with CEW commending the approach to partnership working and collaboration between client and developer in delivering quality, energy efficient and well-designed homes for council rent, low-cost home ownership and market sale.

CEW were impressed with the approach taken to enable difficult sites to be developed for much needed new homes whilst ensuring the developments have place-making at their heart, helping to regenerate communities and build affordable homes for sale targeted at local communities. Having won the Integration & Collaborative Working Award in Wales, the project now gets shortlisted for the National CEW awards that will be held in London in November 2019.

Cardiff Community Safety Partnership

The Cardiff Community Safety Partnership will be holding a conference on 19th September 2019 at City Hall. The conference will focus on the Community Safety Partnership's priorities of City Centre and Street Sleepers; County Lines and Exploitation of the Vulnerable; Prevent & CONTEST; and Area Based Working. The aim of the conference is to bring the wider partnership and other stakeholders together to further explore opportunities under each of the priority areas.

The Cardiff Community Safety Partnership is also committed to tackling the issue of discarded needles. A report on drug litter within Cardiff was considered by the Community Safety Delivery Board on 30th May 2019 and the Board has committed to undertake further work to understand the issue in more detail. This work will be considered at the next meeting of the Board in July 2019.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
14 June 2019