
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Reviewing Our Services for Homeless People – a Partnership Approach

We have done much in recent years to improve our homelessness services, and we can be proud of the help and support that is available in Cardiff for homeless people. However, everyone will be aware that there are still people sleeping rough on our streets, even though accommodation is available. We are still not meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and complex individuals. There is clearly a need to re-think the way that we provide services. This is why we have commenced a full review of homeless services for single people, including a review of best practice from all over the world.

Over the summer, I joined officers from Housing, Social Services, Health and the Third Sector in visiting Glasgow and Helsinki to learn about the good work that those cities are doing to tackle this difficult issue. We saw examples of good practice and some innovative approaches to addressing complex needs. While neither city has solved the problem completely, we learned a great deal and were inspired by the work being done there. I was very impressed by the enthusiasm of the group and the clear will to work in partnership, across service boundaries, to address this issue in Cardiff.

The review will continue into the autumn and will include a further search for best practice and partner consultation. We will also be seeking the views of those with direct experience of homelessness and rough sleeping to help us develop a clear vision for future service provision.

Vacant Property Repairs Team

I can confirm that 12 additional operatives have, this week, joined the Council's Vacant Property Repairs team, bringing the team up to 21 staff. These employees have moved across to the Council following the withdrawal of a second contractor from the Building Maintenance Framework.

Unfortunately, completing the work on vacant properties remains a challenge. In addition to the issues that we have experienced with the contractors, the number of properties becoming vacant has also increased, with a 16% increase in 2018/19 and a further 20% increase in the first quarter of this year. Many of these properties have become vacant following a long period of occupation and are in need of full updating, including new kitchens and bathrooms. I have invited members from the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee to visit some of these properties to see the challenges that officers are facing.

The remaining contractor on the Building Maintenance Framework is working well and we have recently commissioned an additional contractor. Early indications are that

their performance is also good. These two contractors, together with our expanded in-house workforce, will allow us to significantly improve the turnaround of empty properties in the coming months.

Butetown Youth Pavilion

Butetown Youth Pavilion will undergo substantial building improvements to provide additional services for young people. The project will build on current service provision and address problems of youth disengagement by introducing a wider range of Hub services, focussed on the employability agenda. These will include 'into work', skills development, training, volunteering, mentoring, and money advice. Welsh Government regeneration funding has been secured to enable the project to proceed and works will commence later this month.

Rent Smart Wales

The Renting Homes (Fees etc) Wales Act 2019 came into effect from 1st September 2019. The 22 local authorities in Wales are the enforcement authorities, but can and are delegating their powers for implementing the requirements of the Act to Rent Smart Wales in specified circumstances. This will have a dramatic impact on the fees which are permitted to be charged to tenants, making renting in the private rented sector much more affordable. The number of private rented properties registered with Rent Smart Wales has now exceeded the Welsh Government dwelling stock estimates. There are currently 203,507 properties held by 100,520 landlords across Wales.

Ely & Caerau Hub's 5th Birthday

The Ely & Caerau Hub arranged various activities to celebrate the Hub's 5th Birthday, which included a health and well-being week. The main health and well-being open day was held on 26th July 2019 and was attended by approximately 350 people. The idea was to bring together many different types of health and well-being organisations into one place so that members of the local community could access lots of information and activities. On the day, there were 23 different service providers each running stalls and chatting to the community, including Goldies Cymru, Dewis Cymru, Independent Living Services, Sherman Theatre and Grow Cardiff. The event included Tai Chi taster sessions and launched Elder Fit exercise classes at the Hub. A circus workshop suitable for all abilities was provided by No Fit State Circus and a Cake, Tea and Local History Event was also held with the support of Cathays Heritage Library.

Secret Garden at Rhydypennau Library

The official opening of the Secret Garden at Rhydypennau Library took place on 17th August 2019. Funded by the Inclusion Fund, the Secret Garden offers an outdoor space for story times, reading groups, games and a gardening club, as well as a place to just sit and be. The event was well-attended and included activities led by BugLife and the RSPB, which was made possible by the generosity of partners and volunteers.

Cardiff Hubs and Libraries Service Survey

There's still time for residents to have their say in the Cardiff Hubs and Libraries Service survey and help shape the future of Hub and Library Services in the city. The Council is committed to providing services in our Hubs and Libraries that meet the needs of local communities and we want to hear people's views on what resources and activities they would like to see provided. The survey is open until Friday 13th September 2019 and can be found online at: www.cardiff.gov.uk/haveyoursay

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Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
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