

COUNCIL: 24 OCTOBER 2019

HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Rent Smart Wales

Rent Smart Wales, as the lead body in a collaboration with 16 Welsh Local Authorities, has prepared and submitted a bid for Warm Homes Funding from the Welsh Government to improve the condition of properties in the private rented sector. The bid for £889,075 will result in 275 properties being improved. If successful, the scheme will still require a landlord to contribute towards the work, but will make a significant difference to the health and well-being of many vulnerable households in a sector that has traditionally found it difficult to access funding.

Rent Smart Wales is now undertaking audits of letting and managing agents. Over 50 audits have been completed and 40 are in progress. Significant concerns are being identified and addressed with agents on a regular basis. Partner Local Authorities that want to participate in the project have all been trained.

The Renting Homes (Fees etc.) (Wales) Act 2019 took effect on 1st September 2019. This sets out the fees which can be charged to tenants and is limited to rent, payments in default of a tenant, a holding deposit (which is refundable), a security deposit and payment for utilities (e.g. TV licence). Any other charge is now prohibited in law.

Rent Smart Wales is identified in Welsh Government marketing information as one of the advice centres to support implementation of this new legislation. All relevant staff have been trained and systems and procedures have been put in place. The legislation also makes provision for local authorities to delegate their enforcement powers under this legislation to Rent Smart Wales.

Tudor Street Business Improvements

A project to deliver improvements to the external condition of businesses in Tudor Street in Riverside has secured just under £1million of funding from the Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration and Investment Programme. Match funding from the Council will be used to deliver external improvements, including new shop fronts, new windows, rendering and rainwater goods. The project forms part of a wider action plan for regeneration in the business areas of South Riverside. All local businesses have been invited to take part in the scheme and over 90% have applied to take part. Design work has started and building work is due to start in March 2020.

European Day of Languages

An event to mark this year's European Day of Languages was held at Penylan Library and Community Centre and provided an opportunity to celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of Cardiff. Cardiff Hubs and Libraries provide books in 24 community languages and the event helped to provide a platform to promote the collections and engage with the local community. The day featured multicultural rhyme times in English, Welsh, Chinese and Urdu; a World language Café in Arabic, Italian, French, Chinese, English and Welsh; a multilingual choir; Chinese Tea Tasting; Papercutting; Painting; Calligraphy and Tai Chi. Language Academy Wales, the Confucius Institute, Cardiff University and Routes into Languages are just some of the partners who contributed to the event. Visitors to the Library were asked to mark their country of origin and these included China, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, Libya, Albania, Greece, Hungary, Poland, England and Wales, which demonstrates what a diverse community Cardiff is. The event was a big success and we will be certainly looking for further opportunities to engage with all of the communities in Cardiff.

Summer Reading Challenge

Cardiff Hubs and Libraries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the first moon landing with a host of fun packed events as part of the Space Chase 2019 Summer Reading Challenge. Over 760 events were held across Cardiff Hubs & Libraries during the 6-week summer holiday period with an overall attendance of over 13,400, which was over 5,000 more than last year. 6,536 children signed up to take part in this year's Summer Reading Challenge and a record 68% (4,406 children) of those finished it. This means that 26,436 books were read during the challenge. This year's Summer Reading Challenge also saw an increase in the number of new members joining the library to participate and 127,455 children's books were issued over the summer months. This demonstrates how Cardiff's Hubs & Libraries support the literacy agenda and encourage children to keep reading during the long summer holidays.

Assistance with Concessionary Bus Passes

From 11th September 2019, Cardiff Council ceased to be responsible for the administration and issuing of concessionary bus passes. This is now the responsibility of Transport for Wales; however, the Council has continued to actively assist our elderly and disabled customers with the online process of applying for replacement bus passes. The team has assisted approximately an additional 500 customers a day and, due to the high demand, this service has been moved to the ground floor of Central Library Hub.

Hubs and Food Benefits

With food poverty and poor diets being a problem for many families, the Hubs have been working in partnership with Public Health Wales to increase the take up of food related benefits such as Free School Meals, Breakfast Clubs, SHEP Food and Fun (School Holiday Enrichment Programme) and Healthy Start Vouchers. Over 100 staff have been trained to date in order to explain the schemes, help with applications and introduce conversations around healthy eating whenever possible. Staff from other services such as Housing are also receiving "train the trainer" sessions in order to deliver this training to their staff and to further increase awareness of the schemes so that we can reach and support additional families.

Butetown Youth Pavilion

Work is due to start on the remodelling of the existing Butetown Youth Pavilion building on Dumballs Road to establish a new creative hub for young people in the area. The facility is set to undergo substantial building improvements to deliver a new space where the current youth service provision will be complemented by the provision of additional services to help prepare young people for work, with a focus on careers in the creative industries, as well as helping to engage young people in a wide range of training opportunities. The creative industries sector is becoming the fastest growing area of the economy, often driven by the user generated content of young adults, and we have to ensure that we have the facilities and right pathways available in the city to equip them with the skills and confidence to enter the creative industries.

Funding has been secured from the Welsh Government's Targeted Regeneration and Investment Programme to part-fund the project, which will focus on delivering better employability services and skills development, particularly in the creative sector for young people. The project aims to create multi-use spaces and a relaxed atmosphere to enable young adults to express themselves and explore their creativity and to allow for the continuation of youth activities and events alongside facilities where young people can also develop their work skills.

The hub, which is expected to be completed in Spring 2020, will include a new and improved layout, incorporating a film editing suite, new social area and external landscaping work to enable a new side entrance to be used for the social youth space in the evenings. It will also assist people with training, volunteering opportunities, mentoring and money advice.

Libraries Week 2019

Libraries Week provides a great opportunity to encourage everyone in Cardiff to discover what their local library or hub can do for them. As well as thousands of books, ebooks, audio books and many more resources, the service also provides a range of activities and events for both adults and children throughout the year and Libraries Week enables residents to find out more about their local facility.

During this year's Libraries Week from 7th-12th October 2019, Cardiff Libraries and Hubs asked residents across the city to name their favourite book of all time. Adults and children who visit hubs and libraries across the city were asked about their favourite book, while customers were also able to complete a short online survey to tell the service which book was their favourite.

Visitors to Cathays Branch and Heritage Library on 9th October 2019 had the opportunity to experience the history of the Suffragettes by using virtual reality headsets borrowed from the BBC. An exhibition about suffrage, provided by the Museum of Cardiff, is also being held at the library from 7th-24th October 2019.

World Mental Health Day on 10th October 2019 also fell within Libraries Week and, to raise awareness of the day and the positive contribution that libraries and hubs can make to people's health and well-being, Cardiff Libraries Service hosted talking tables or 'Talking Points' at hubs and libraries across the city. Talking Points are aimed at

facilitating conversation and building closer support networks for people within their local community, which in turn reduces loneliness and improves mental well-being.

Roald Dahl Day

Central Library Hub celebrated Roald Dahl Day on 13th September 2019 by showing off a range of adult and child focused displays, as well children's activities. The Ground Floor played host to Roald's reading shed that lit up to show that he was in and writing, along with enlarged front covers of his adult novels and short stories. The Children's Floor also showcased his children's books and some of Quentin Blake's drawings.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
18 October 2019