

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 DECEMBER 2019

Present: Councillor Jenkins(Chairperson)
Councillors Carter, Gibson, Lent and McGarry

51 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali Ahmed and P. Hill-John.

52 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

53 : COUNCIL HOUSE BUILD & DESIGN STANDARDS UPDATE

The Chairperson advised that item provided Members with an update on the Council House Build programme and Design Standards.

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Thorne Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities, Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities and Dave Jaques, Housing Development Manager to the meeting.

Members were provided with a presentation after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments;

The Cabinet Member stated that she has been speaking to the Cabinet Member for the Environment about recycling and waste collections; she has visited Stockholm to see how they do it and they are looking at the best way forward.

Members noted that the Data is from September 2019 so is slightly outdated, but the figures are quite a way off the 2022 targets with regards to onsite numbers; and asked if this was concerning. Officers stated that it is one of their KPI's and achieving it is one of their main drivers. There are always risks but plans show that they will exceed that target; it was important to note however that there can be delays with regards to Planning etc. There are various stages, planning, procurement, contractor etc. Cardiff Living will include the number on site. Members stated that they wouldn't want the focus on buy backs and new builds to slip. The Cabinet Member assured Members that they are only buying properties that are up for sale, not tenanted properties from private landlords; there are people on the priority and immediate housing waiting list and there are not any suitable properties available, buy back can address these needs.

Members considered that the design standards are not ambitious enough and could include such things as solar panels and wind turbines; Members considered that there seemed to be a closed door on modern technology in the standards. Officers acknowledged the push in that direction from Welsh Government, with carbon neutral ambitions etc. Officers stated that Cardiff is leading the way, with 0 energy standard homes on the Rumney High School site. They all have ground heat pumps, no gas and battery storage, amongst other things. This was exciting but there are risks, it's

the first time for a number of homes to be on sale with this technology; the risk is whether people will buy them. The standards were being moved on from 2015; still fabric first, but more technologies; it is real commitment from Cardiff.

Members mentioned place making and aesthetics, with 30 potential sites across the City that are all different; and that 2000 houses could be used to shape the architectural nature of Cardiff. Officers stated that the designs needed to suit the area it's in, they will all be to standard and a robust design and planning process. Members referred to Goldsmith Street in Norwich, which was seen as the hallmark of what Local Authorities can achieve and asked of Cardiff will have such a hallmark. The Cabinet Members stated that Goldsmith Street is Carbon Free but it doesn't meet the design quality standards and are very small properties; the homes being built in Cardiff would be better. Officers agreed and added that Goldsmith Street is a very dense scheme, 2 very long terraces and no detached or semi-detached properties. Cardiff is trialling PassivHaus; it is the ambition that every scheme is of a high standard, with a variety of housing types; Carbon Free but high quality, truly affordable to the local market and better quality build than private builds.

Members asked how it was possible to design out crime. Officers explained that public realm and its quality was very important. Properties need to be well overlooked and well lit; through routes need to be overlooked and lit too as well as parking areas etc. Designs are reviewed by the designing out crime officer at early stages.

Members referred to consultation with communities where the builds are proposed and asked if it informs and what feedback is sought. Officers stated that it depends on what is being done. Officers gave the example of Channel View and stated that the proposals deserve in-depth consultation with local residents. There have been 4/5 consultation sessions, with attendance being better at each session; feedback was better at each session too. Involving the community in the design process and shaping the scheme is important. Smaller developments such as 16 homes, still involved writing to local residents, engaging with local Members and holding public consultation sessions to understand any issues and provide the opportunity to feed into the design process. Plans are shared with local residents following consultation with local Members and there is the planning process to go through too. The Cabinet Member gave the example of Croft Street where the plans were amended following consultation with residents. Officers further explained that Croft Street was modular construction, it was generally supported at the initial stages. Following a 2 day event with the local community, it was evident there was fear around the scale of the development, the plans were reconsidered and the designs changed to reduce the numbers to be more appropriate to the local area.

Members asked if public realm and community gardens means low density development. Officers said it doesn't have to be low density to deliver public realm, it's about the quality of the space you provide, i.e. roof gardens and incidental growing spaces.

Members asked for an explanation of 'Care Ready'. Officers explained that this was evolving the sheltered housing scheme, it was independent living for older people. The flats are larger, with wide doors and level showers etc. and a communal space

for support. It means that people can remain at home for longer, with communal spaces and services which also helps tackle social isolation.

Members considered that it can seem very generic and not unique to Cardiff's identity; the biggest scheme could be exemplary in design. The Cabinet Member stated that it is exemplary in its design and standards, adding that people need choice, which is why there are variety of homes all over Cardiff. Members considered that each area of Cardiff has its own unique identity with inspiration to draw from. The Cabinet Member agreed saying that they pick out the best aesthetics from the area.

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.

54 : QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Chairperson welcomed Cllr Thorne Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities and Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities to the meeting.

Members were advised that they would consider Quarter 2 Performance in two parts: The first part would consider performance from the People & Communities: Housing & Communities directorate and the second part would consider the relevant performance from Social Services – Adult Services directorate.

Apologies had been received by Cllr Elsmore and her statement on the reports had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting.

People & Communities: Housing & Communities

The Chairperson invited Cllr Thorne to make a statement in which she said that she was pleased to see that Housing and Communities were making excellent progress against the corporate commitments and performance indicators.

There was some excellent news detailed in the report including that the Council's multi-disciplinary team won the Caer Las sponsored Commissioning Beyond Boundaries award at this year's Promoting Independence Awards, hosted by Cymorth Cymru. The team are based in the Housing Options Centre which brings together staff from the NHS, Substance Misuse Services and sections across the council.

Councillor Thorne noted that a venue for dedicated activities has not yet been secured, however it is now proposed to link the diversionary activities centre to additional emergency accommodation that is currently being sourced.

Councillor Thorne was pleased to see that plans for improvements to Whitchurch & Rhydypennau well-being hubs are finalised, and that following the demolition of the Maelfa shopping centre, Phase 2 is now underway, with 1 funding bid approved and further bids being investigated.

The Chairperson invited Sarah McGill to take Members through the results as set out in Appendix A of the report:

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked if there were any more innovative approaches being taken beyond LHA. Officers said it was about building confidence with local landlords, looking at a wide range of opportunities especially with second stage accommodation, a range of provision was needed. The Cabinet Member stated that there had been an independent review of all Council Hostels, looking at good practice across the country. She had visited Glasgow and Helsinki and realised that Cardiff has excellent provision but also picked up good practice from both Cities. The Cabinet Member stated that although Cardiff is doing extremely well there was always more to do. The Board and work stream below the independent review will begin to deliver on this. The numbers of rough sleepers is improving, this is partially to do with the work with hostels, Housing First and activities with the outreach team. There was greater engagement and trust.

Members commended the work of Officers, but considered that the targets are not ambitious enough, some are the same as last year and they were well exceeded, giving the examples of Housing First and Preventing Homelessness. Officers stated that Housing First is a very new scheme, the target for this will be reviewed next year. Preventing Homelessness was looked at last year but they also need to consider the increase in demand and pressures. Targets can be looked at with Committee going forward.

Members noted that the targets in relation to Universal Credit had already been exceeded. Officers explained that they had received additional grant funding and therefore provided additional support.

With reference to second stage accommodation, Members asked if the reliance on the Private Rented Sector (PRS) was flawed as it was the most challenging cohort to house. Officers explained that not all second stage accommodation was in PRS but it was where there are huge challenges with regards to accommodation and rent levels. The assessment process is crucial for housing and support requirements. All aspects need to be in place and assessment is key, it leads to a full range of options needed. Social housing does pick up most challenges.

Members asked about the number of days to deliver Disabled Facilities grant. Officers explained that they have taken on a new contractor and there would be a separate target for that work.

In relation to Voids and the challenge of bringing them back to use; Members asked if the development of the in-house team would reduce the time taken. Officers said yes that was the ambition, and they were very confident it would have the impact they wanted. Members noted that the voids were wide ranging and asked if the work was evenly spread out. Officers stated that they need to build on the strengths of some contractors and try and allocate swift response in the most appropriate way. More resilience was needed in this area to deal with the peaks and troughs. It was also important to look at the standards and there was some work being undertaken on whether some works could be carried out when tenants are in-situ.

Social Services – Adult Services

The Chairperson welcomed Claire Marchant, Director of Social Services and Louise Barry, Assistant Director Adult Social Services to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation to Committee, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members;

Members referred to Strength Based Approach, noting it was referred to mainly in the higher level documents and asked what it means for staff on an operational level to make a transformational change. Officers explained that it means putting people in the centre of the process, a collaborative opportunity to see what's best for them. Staff go on a training course for 2 days then have a follow up session to reflect on the learning. There are weekly meetings to see how this is reflected in care plans; it's a cultural change and Officers agreed to bring back examples of how it works in practice to a future Committee.

Members noted that sickness levels had increased and asked for the reasons behind this. Officers explained that they are looking at this on a granular level to see what is happening; it was largely around direct services. Officers are invoking actions to support people earlier and to help staff stay well in work.

Members asked if the Strength Based Approach was having an impact on this and officers stated that this was not what they are hearing from staff. The Director stated that they recognise the need to focus work on organisational development, away days etc. The preventative approach changes are coming so more needed to be done at the outset. If people are going sick then there was a need to look at mechanisms to help earlier such as flexi, secondment etc. and this remained an area of focus for the directorate.

Members asked what steps were being taken to deal with DToc's. The Director stated that she would bring a report on Winter Planning to a future Committee as it is very detailed. She added that there had been a significant increase in admissions which impacts on the whole system. They were working jointly with UHB and having daily and weekly conversations. The main issue was the flow through to long term domiciliary care. There has been winter pressure money from the Welsh Government but it came late in the year. It was noted that Cardiff and the Vale perform slightly better than the rest of Wales.

Members noted in relation to Direct Payments that the figures are 10% lower than last year then it builds slightly. Officers explained there would be various reasons for this such as people going into residential care, but they would analyse the figures.

Members asked what work was being done to mitigate the capacity of existing Day Centres to meet demand. The Director explained that there was a piece of work to plan and deliver day services across the City, this would be undertaken with the Alzheimer's Society.

Members noted that the Quality Assurance Framework was Amber and asked why this was and what was involved in embedding it. Officers explained that there is a QA framework, a panel etc. The one noted is the overarching framework of Children

and Adults, which they are looking to revise to ensure it meets all needs. The Director added that there was a flow of information from 2 parts of the directorate, she was confident that it would be Green by the end of the year.

Members asked what the Council's responsibility was with regards to the Regulation of Wales Social Care Act and were advised that there are various legal duties, to meet care plans, register workforce etc. as the Council is a provider. It is Red as it has been escalated to the Corporate Risk Register.

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.

55 : WORK PROGRAMMING

The Principal Scrutiny Officer requested that Members consider the proposed work programme for January to May 2020 and advise if there were any amendments required.

Members were advised that the CASSC Budget Scrutiny Committee meeting would take place on Monday 17th February 2020, at 10.30am in CR4, County Hall and that a diary marker would be sent.

Members were asked if they required any training on scrutinising the budget but Members considered it would be more beneficial for the presentation to the Budget Scrutiny Committee was tailored specifically to CASSC and its remit.

56 : CORRESPONDENCE STATEMENT

Noted.

57 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

58 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

8 January 2020, 4.30pm, CR4 County Hall.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 pm