

**CYNGOR CAERDYDD  
CARDIFF COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY & ADULTS SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**2 Dec 2020**

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**COMMITTEE BRIEFING - HOMLESSNESS – AN UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS AND DELIVERING THE FUTURE SERVICE MODEL**

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*Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of Appendix A are not for publication as they contain exempt information of the description contained in paragraphs 14 and 21 (Appendix 1 and 4) and paragraph 16 (Appendix 2) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. It is viewed that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.*

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Committee Members with an update on the council's response in addressing homelessness following the initial outbreak of covid-19 and its proposals for delivering the future service model.
2. The Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities will be in attendance at the meeting, supported by officers from Housing & Communities who will provide Committee Members with a presentation which will include; a summary and update on the proposals contained in the July Cabinet Report, including any known outcome of the Welsh Government funding bids and any subsequent changes to proposals. Insight into the current context of homelessness and rough sleeping in the present winter months and how this is being addressed and an update on the 'Real Change' campaign.

3. In order to provide Committee Members with the full context of how the Council is addressing homelessness and rough sleeping following the outbreak of covid-19, the Cabinet Report and its subsequent appendices which were taken to the Cabinet meeting held on July 16 is attached to this report. Members should note that **Appendices 1, 2 and 4** of the Cabinet Report (**Appendix A**) are exempt from publication. Members are requested to keep this information confidential, in line with their responsibilities as set out in the Members Code of Conduct and the Cardiff Undertaking for Councillors.
  
4. The Cabinet Report presents background information regarding the impact of the initial outbreak of covid-19 on homelessness and rough sleeping and the Council's subsequent response. In total, 182 units of supported accommodation were established during the initial outbreak of covid-19 crisis made up of:
  - 20 Isolation units (Shipping container developments in Ely and Butetown – recently completed and intended for family temporary accommodation, repurposed to meet this need.)
  - 2 Hotels (130 units between the OYO in Riverside and the Youth Hostel Hotel in Splott)
  - Move on accommodation (16 units in Countisbury House, Llanrumney)
  - Re-purposed building (16 units at the Parade in Plasnewydd)
  
5. Along with setting out the Council's response to the crisis, the Cabinet Report provides proposals to ensure continuation in provisions once the initial lockdown measures are relaxed along with a new vision for addressing homelessness and sourcing additional accommodation.

The proposals include:

- To enter into a partnership arrangement with POBL to use a 42 unit student housing block on Newport Road to provide supported accommodation for those with medium support needs.
- If deemed successful, look to secure and extend the 16 self-contained units established at the start of the crisis in Countisbury House, originally contracted for an initial twelve month period.

- The current level of need for specialist accommodation (which provides 24/7 support on site) in Cardiff is estimated to be 200 units. The Cabinet Report proposes that a site in Adamsdown, currently utilised as accommodation for homeless families and individuals, be repurposed to provide specialist supported accommodation – providing in total 152 units – work will be carried out on a phased basis with some occupation of the building intended by Autumn 2020.
- Due to the proposal to repurpose the Adamsdown facility from accommodation for homeless families to single people, alternative accommodation for homeless families needs to be sourced. It was proposed that 3 centres for family homelessness be established within the sites – Briardene (39 units), Harrison Avenue (19 unit) and the Gasworks site (50 units, new build).
- To approve new build temporary accommodation which is due to be delivered by year end 20/21. Scheme 1 Hayes Place – will provide 19 new modular units - due to be complete by Dec 2020 and operational by Jan 21. Scheme 2 – Gasworks sites will provide 50 new modular units and will be complete no later than March 2021.
- It is intended that along with providing short term emergency accommodation, Hayes Places will also include an Assessment Centre / Triage point for the multi-disciplinary team.
- An outline surrounding the intention to submit a funding bid to the Welsh Government to support these proposals.
- Framework on the new vision for addressing homelessness through a ‘Rapid Rehousing Approach’ – phasing out the ‘second stage provision’ over a 3 year period commencing in April 2021 – providing 220 units into the new model of service.
- Permanent change to service whereby Huggard continues to provide its services, such as the substance misuse and harm reduction service on a mobile basis directly where the clients are living. Work is ongoing with the Huggard and Health colleagues to fully design this new model of service.

6. Prior to Cabinet considering the report, the proposals received pre-decision scrutiny by the Covid-19 scrutiny panel on 14 July 2020. Recommendations made to Cabinet by panel members following their consideration included;

- *A report on the outcome of the funding bids, any consequent changes to proposals, and the impact on partner provision be brought to the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee at the earliest opportunity.*
- *That you seek and take into account Ward Member input and guidance on the proposed mitigation measures for projects at Adams Court, Newport Road and Hayes Place.*
- *That a broader and deeper communication plan be developed and implemented. It should use both social and printed media and seek to change public perception and understanding of rough sleeping and begging. It should aim to and be capable of changing behaviours and raising the profile of the service using real-life success stories.*
- *That the Council work with partners innovatively in aiming to prevent and deal with anti-social behaviour proactively at sites for single and family homeless people.*
- *That the Council ensure there is excellent security provision on the proposed sites at Adams Court, Newport Road and Hayes Place, not simply CCTV.*
- *Officers explore how to boost sound insulation in the modular housing to the highest specification possible, rather than relying on building regulation standards.*
- *A full risk assessment is undertaken on the siting of modular housing for family homeless provision on the Gasworks site, Grangetown.*
- *That there is thoughtful selection of those who will live at the Gasworks site, who should be able to become integrated and feel comfortable in such a community setting.*

## **Structure of the meeting**

7. This item be considered in two parts: an open session, where Members will be able to ask questions on the briefing provided by officers at the meeting along with the attached papers that are in the public domain. Followed by a closed session, where recording will be ceased, for Members who wish to ask questions that pertain to **Confidential Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of Appendix A.**

## **Structure of the Papers**

8. To facilitate the scrutiny the following appendices are attached to this report:

**Appendix A** – Report to Cabinet, *taken to Cabinet in July 2020;*

*Homelessness – The Response to the Covid-19 crisis and delivering the future service model*

The following **appendices** are attached to Appendix A:

**Confidential Appendix 1** – costs associated to Gasworks & Hayes Place

**Confidential Appendix 2** – exempt legal implications relating to the Cabinet Report

**Appendix 3** – Revenue Costs

**Confidential Appendix 4** – Capital Costs

**Appendix 5** – Cabinet Response to CASSC recommendations regarding temporary and supported accommodation – the single persons gateway.

**Appendix 6** - Equalities Impact Assessment

## **Scope of the Scrutiny**

9. During this scrutiny, Members will receive a briefing on the current provision in place in addressing homelessness and rough sleeping following the outbreak of covid-19 and including the current winter months and explore:
  - a. Proposals for future services for homelessness and rough sleeping
  - b. Key factors shaping these proposals
  - c. Update on the status and schedule of proposals
  - d. Impact of proposals
  - e. Financial Implications
  - f. Risks to the Council
  - g. Next Steps and Timelines.
  - h. Current status of the 'Real Change' campaign and any known impact.

## Background

10. There are a number of services available for single homeless people and for homeless families, including hostels, day centres, temporary accommodation, supported accommodation and permanent accommodation, as well as support services. Cardiff Council and partners identified that services to single homeless people required remodelling, resulting in a report to Cabinet in December 2019.
11. In common with other major UK cities, Cardiff has experienced an increase in homelessness over recent years. Cardiff Council has set up a multi-agency steering group to work together to tackle homelessness. At the beginning of March 2020, there were 30 known rough sleepers in Cardiff, down from 84 the previous year. The key presenting need for these rough sleepers was substance misuse along with other challenging health needs. In addition to rough sleepers, there were 140 individuals in emergency accommodation and more than 600 individuals in hostels and supported accommodation.
12. The Cabinet Report sets out that Cardiff has 555 units of family temporary accommodation, 161 of which are hostel and supported accommodation and 394 of which are leased properties.

## Impact of Covid-19

13. The Covid-19 crisis highlighted the need to ensure single homeless people were able to socially distance, self-isolate and/ or shield, as required by government i.e. that they had self-contained accommodation as opposed to rough sleeping or shared sleeping spaces. Additional funding was made available by Government to meet the costs of this. The report to Cabinet states, at **point 12**, that 182 units of self-contained accommodation were established during the crisis and 71 individuals were referred for substance misuse services (**point 16**).

14. The report to Cabinet also details the impact of Covid-19 on homeless families, at **point 51**. This states that, with the temporary ban on evictions and mortgage holidays, there have been fewer families presenting as homeless. The Council and most Housing Associations in Cardiff have worked on vacant properties during the Covid-19 crisis, meaning properties have been available for families to move into out of temporary accommodation. However, **point 63** stresses that family homelessness is likely to increase when lockdown measures are over and evictions recommence.

### **Issues identified in the Cabinet Report**

15. The report to Cabinet sets out a number of proposals, as follows:

- a. **Points 20 – 49** set out a new vision for homeless services for single people in Cardiff and how this vision will be implemented.
- b. **Points 50 – 63** detail a new vision for homeless services for families in Cardiff and how this will be implemented
- c. **Points 64 – 78** detail provision for temporary accommodation.

16. In terms of **single homeless people**, the report states:

- a. There has been a significant increase in presentations, with an average of 45 new cases a week, compared to 25 a week prior to the pandemic.
- b. The OYO hotel has been commissioned until September 2020.
- c. The YHA hotel has been commissioned until December 2020.
- d. The Council has entered into a partnership with POBL housing association to use a 42-unit student housing block on Newport Road and 16 units in Countisbury House, Llanrumney to provide shorter term accommodation.
- e. The Council will lease Hayes Place, Riverside for 10 years, from Taff Housing Association to provide a multi-disciplinary assessment and triage centre.
- f. Emergency accommodation will be provided to the rear of Hayes Place, via a Direct Award contract for Beattie Passive 'Haus4studio pods' modular housing units.

- g. Substance Misuse harm reduction services and welfare advocacy services delivered by the Huggard will be delivered on a mobile basis in hotels and hostels rather than at a drop-in day centre.
- h. Provision will move away from shared community housing with limited support towards a rapid rehousing approach with appropriate support based on individual need. There are circa 220 units of accommodation that will be phased out over three years, from April 2021 – March 2024.

17. With regard to **specialist accommodation**, the report to Cabinet states that there is estimated to be a need for 200 units of self-contained accommodation. The report proposes to refocus provision at a facility in Adamsdown to provide circa 152 units of high quality specialist accommodation. Discussions have taken place with United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA), which owns the building, police, health and other partners. It has been agreed that a stronger, more formal arrangement will be put in place between the Council and UWHA.

18. The report states that, in conjunction with Health, there will be a review over the coming year of the abstinence/ substance misuse pathway projects. This will include reviewing the specific needs of women (**point 44**).

19. In terms of **family homelessness**, the report states that:

- a. Three new centres for family homelessness will be established
  - Briardean, North Road – 39 units by end of this financial year
  - Harrison Avenue, St Mellons – UWHA building – 19 units
  - The Gasworks, Grangetown – 50 new build units
- b. These three sites will have staff on site during the day and other services, such as Flying Start and health services, will be provided on site.
- c. The aim is to move families quickly from this accommodation directly into a settled home, including in the private rented sector in both Cardiff and the surrounding area.
- d. The Council is piloting a new Welsh Government scheme to lease 66 properties directly from the private rented sector, with 5-year leases.

- e. There are ongoing discussions with a Housing Association regarding their existing lease scheme and these properties may transfer into the Council.
- f. It is proposed to Directly Award the contract for the new build units at The Gasworks, Grangetown to Beattie Passive.

20. The report to Cabinet highlights the interconnectedness of the above proposals and the need to move quickly, in order to ensure alternative accommodation is available to prevent a return to rough sleeping. This is particularly urgent as the arrangements with the OYO and YHA hotels will cease in September and December 2020.

21. At **point 63**, the report to Cabinet states that *'it is proposed that social housing lets continue to focus on homeless cases and emergency moves to create the capacity needed to facilitate this change.'*

### **Financial Implications**

22. The report to Cabinet states that the above work is predicated on successful allocation of additional Welsh Government funding, from the Covid-19 response fund, a new 'No Going Back' homelessness fund, and repurposed Innovative Housing Fund Year 4.

23. The report to Cabinet states the following in relation to specific proposals:

- a. Hayes Place – Welsh Government grant funding sought to fund minor building adaptations. A bid will be made to build membership of the triage team. Innovative Housing Funding sought for emergency accommodation.
- b. Newport Road – Welsh Government funding sought to fund some changes to the building, whilst revenue costs will be met through Housing Benefit and existing grant funding.
- c. Countisbury House – cost currently being made by a combination of Housing Benefit and Welsh Government Covid-19 grant.

- d. Adamsdown Facility – Welsh Government funding sought for building changes. Revenue costs for this scheme are significant and are set out in **Confidential Appendix 2**.
- e. Second Stage temporary accommodation – phasing out this accommodation will release significant level of resource to fund the new model of service; however, this will not be immediately available and discussion is ongoing with Welsh Government on longer term transitional funding.
- f. Family homelessness – funding to support the transition to the new model is being sought from Welsh Government
- g. The Gasworks – Innovative Housing Funding sought for Beattie Passive housing as well as Welsh Government Capital Grant covering Covid-19 related homelessness recovery plans.

24. Members' attention is drawn to the Financial Implications at **Points 86-97**, as well as **Confidential Appendix 1, Confidential Appendix 2, Appendix 3** and **Confidential Appendix 4**, which set out further details of the financial and legal implications of proposals.

### **Previous Scrutiny**

25. In December 2018, the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee considered the proposed Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022. Following the meeting, the then Chair, Councillor Mary McGarry, wrote to Councillor Thorne<sup>1</sup>, Cabinet Member – Housing & Communities, making the following points:

- a. Members noted the planned review of rough sleepers services
- b. Members main concern was the supply of suitable accommodation, in terms of:
  - o the stability of the private rented sector
  - o access to private rented sector properties proving problematic in terms of persuading landlords to let properties to those on Housing Benefit or

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Cllr McGarry, Chair of CASSC, to Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member, dated 6 December 2018

Universal Credit.

- The need to communicate that the Huggard Centre and other hostels in Cardiff are safe and secure

- c. Members decided to hold an additional meeting dedicated to homelessness, focusing on: the single person's gateway, winter provision, how hostels work together, supported accommodation and overall support services.

26. During 2019, the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee held a meeting dedicated to homelessness, hearing from frontline providers and partners. In September 2019, a Committee report on temporary and supported accommodation and the Single Person Gateway was presented to Cabinet. This report recommended changes in approach and operation to assist effective transitioning through the housing system to reduce unsuccessful moves.

27. Cabinet agreed a response to this report at their meeting in December 2019. Out of nine recommendations, Cabinet agreed seven in full and agreed two in principle. Attached at **Appendix 5** are the Committees recommendations following their 2019 meeting dedicated to temporary and supported accommodation and the Single Person Gateway, along with the Cabinet's response.

### **Way Forward**

28. Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member, Housing and Communities), Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People and Communities), Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Housing and Communities) and Dave Jaques (Operational Manager, Development and Regeneration), will attend to provide Members with an update on July proposals and how homelessness and rough sleeping is being addressed within the current winter months.

29. All Members are reminded of the need to maintain confidentiality with regard to the information provided in **Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of Appendix A**.

## **Legal Implications**

30. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/ Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

## **Financial Implications**

31. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Members are recommended to:

- i) Consider the information in this report, its appendices and the information provided during the meeting relating to the approach in addressing rough sleeping and homelessness; and
- ii) Determine whether they would like to make any comments, observations or recommendations for consideration.

**DAVINA FIORE**

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26 November 2020