

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins

8 November 2021

Councillor Michael Michael
Cabinet Member for Clean Streets, Recycling & Environment
Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
Sent via e-mail



Dear Cllr Michael & Cllr Thorne,

**COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 13 OCT 2021 –
NOISY NEIGHBOURS BRIEFING -**

Please accept my thanks on behalf of Committee, to you and officers for providing a detailed briefing on the process for noise complaints which derive from private, domestic properties. We note a 'noise policy' is currently being drawn, and with that in mind, we hope the comments and recommendations provided in this letter can assist in the policy's development.

Members note that due to the breadth of services offered by the Shared Regulatory Services, this undoubtedly results in a difficult balancing act in how its services and priorities are managed. During the meeting we referenced how, along with Shared Regulatory Services being responsible for noise pollution, it is also responsible for trading standards and consumer rights and the difficulties and conflicting priorities this could entail. We note the comments received at the meeting that there is ongoing work with Welsh Government and other bodies to ensure the Shared Regulatory Services role as an advocate for quiet communities is adequately managed.

As a Committee, and as democratically elected Members of the Council, we are acutely aware of the issues our residents face, and as detailed at the meeting, we too have also experienced noise issues and have personal experience of the Shared Regulatory Service's process currently in place. It is for these reasons why we believe that the current system is not fit for purpose to adequately meet the needs of Cardiff

residents and would benefit from a refresh. We understand the resource limitations however we feel more could be done within these constraints to ensure the service is more efficient. We feel the service is not widely advertised, there is confusion amongst residents about what responsible bodies they should contact, the resolution they can expect along with frustrations amongst residents on the ability to receive immediate support. We are of the view that the service and its remit should be better publicised through social media, detail in local hubs, holding local community events and so on. We feel this will ensure residents receive adequate information on what can and can't be done to ensure the right expectations are set.

We feel residents require clear, informative detail on the concept of a Statutory Noise Nuisance, the types of noise issues the service can and cannot assist with, the investigation process for addressing noise complaints and the solutions offered. We note it is the intention of the upcoming noise policy to provide this information and we wish to stress the need for the information to be provided to residents in a clear, engaging manner and to cover all of the key information. It is paramount that the information provided to residents sets realistic expectations and should also include a form of 'complainants pathway' providing clarity on who the residents should contact, how and when.

During the meeting we discussed in detail, the process for an individual making a complaint and sought clarity on the support offered to residents for one-off issues they encounter. We also note that at present, there is very limited provision to help residents in real-time and we again reference you to the example provided by our Committee Member who was unable to receive immediate support for their domestic noise issue. Although we understand that due to resource constraints this impacts the ability for residents to receive immediate support, we still feel this is unacceptable and would urge you to explore ways in which more real-time support can be offered and to accept our recommendation on a review detailed later in this letter. Further to this we also wish to reiterate the importance of ensuring strong, collaborative working is in place with all involved partners. We note the Night Time Noise Service use to previously operate on both weekdays and weekends, however due to financial pressures and resource limitations its operating hours have been reduced. We also understand due

to these limitations there is an ongoing challenge of targeting and focusing the limited resource on where it is most needed.

As a Committee, we are of the view that the matter of dealing with domestic noise complaints is a priority area which should receive additional funding to help address the resource limitations detailed at the meeting. During our deliberations at the end of the meeting, we considered the disparity in the service offered on weekdays and weekends and contemplated if work was required to understand what it would cost to revert to a seven nightly service. However, as the case study presented by our Member detailed their personal experience with the service at the weekend, it was agreed it may be better to instead invest in expanding the weekend service to provide residents with a wider service. We therefore **recommend** a review of the current service is undertaken to understand where investment would be of the most use and how much this would cost.

During the meeting the level of issues which can reside from student properties was highlighted and we welcome the information provided surrounding the level of work Shared Regulatory Officers do to address this matter. However, as stated at the meeting, we strongly advise more onus and responsibility is placed on universities in ensuring their students are aware of their responsibility toward their local community. We hope this can be reiterated in the Leader of the council's meeting with the university vice-chancellors.

We note with concern that at present there is no tool to measure the satisfaction rates of complainants who have received support from the service. From the discussion at the meeting, we are aware you are intending to initiate a survey during the next 2 to 3 years as part of the noise policy which is currently being developed. However, we feel it is essential that the service has insight into the current service standards and satisfaction rates of those who have used the service; providing critical information and insight into how the service is doing, and possible areas for development and have concerns in this not being developed for a number of years. To this end, we **recommend** that a survey with complainants is prioritised and implemented as soon as possible.

Recommendations to be Monitoring following this Scrutiny

The Committee makes two formal recommendation which are set out below.

As part of the response to this letter I would be grateful if you could state whether the recommendations are accepted, partially accepted or not accepted and summarise the Cabinet's response. If the recommendations are accepted or partially accepted, I would also be grateful if you could identify the responsible officer and provide an action date. This will ensure that progress can be monitored as part of the approach agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

Recommendation	Accepted, Partially Accepted or Not Accepted	Cabinet Response	Responsible Officer	Implementation Date
A review of the current service is undertaken to understand where investment would be of the most use.				
A survey with complainants is prioritised and implemented as soon as possible.				

Yours,



COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS

Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

cc. Members of the Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
Will Lane, Operational Manager Neighbourhood Services
Sian James, Team Manager
Tim Gordon, Head of Communications & External Relations