
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Housing Solutions & Prevention Services

Cardiff is currently facing increased demand for housing and homelessness services and requests for housing assistance. In response, we are investing considerable additional resources into those services that need it most. Our primary focus remains in providing timely support at an early stage so that we can stop households from becoming homeless in the first instance. As part of this, we are rolling out our Prevention Services city-wide so that all households can receive straightforward access to support, whilst also linking up with the wider support available in our Hubs such as Money Advice and Into Work Services.

Positive progress has been made since the alignment of the Housing Solutions and Prevention Teams at the end of September 2022. Using the rent arrears pathway and homeless prevention funds, 451 evictions have already been avoided. The team has also helped to secure privately rented properties, by paying the bond and rent in advance. They also negotiate rent guarantees with landlords for customers who previously failed reference checks.

Alongside this, we are also investing in our Homeless Assessment Team who are now providing targeted support to families in their homes where they might be unable to access support over the phone or in our Hubs. This is particularly helpful for cases where homelessness may be prevented through mediation, such as family breakdown, or in assessing home conditions such as suitability or overcrowding. The team is now actively engaging with the community and offering these households advice on the services available to them and providing practical assistance to help alleviate their situation.

An essential component in resolving the housing concerns of those seeking assistance from the Council is increasing the availability and supply of settled accommodation. This is why we have recently launched our new Private Rented Sector Team – the Landlord Enquiry and Tenancy Service (LETS) – which is working actively with landlords across the city and providing incentives to encourage landlords to support those with the greatest housing need. We are also participating in the Welsh Government’s Leasing Scheme, which hopes to provide secure, long-term lets to households at affordable prices. The Council manages the properties in this scheme, where landlords can claim up to £5,000 for repair works to the property. Cardiff has secured 22 properties as part of this scheme so far and we hope to secure a further 10 properties before the end of the financial year.

Responsive Repairs Update

Members will be aware that the Responsive Repairs Service has been under an immense amount of pressure due to works that were put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to the creation of a taskforce to address this backlog and improve ongoing issues.

In February 2022, 5,720 requests for repairs were in a backlog, but I am pleased to say this figure now stands at 604 and will be removed over the coming weeks. In addition to this, our ongoing works are now at a level seen pre-pandemic, so as well as reducing the backlog, we are making good progress on new works. In addition to this, to improve our workforce, a number of exciting new developments have taken place. One of these developments is the creation of new, qualified Technical Manager posts who will use their training, knowledge and experience to support the teams they manage and check the work carried out by their operatives.

The new Responsive Repairs Academy for apprentices and trainees has also been developed and will link with the Into Work Onsite Construction Academy, creating an excellent career pathway into a trainee or apprenticeship role. A total of six apprentices will be employed across various trades. Four apprentices are already in post within the heating and plumbing, carpentry and plastering sectors, all of which are trades where there is high demand. The apprentices will also attend college to obtain a NVQ so that they will be fully qualified at the end of their apprenticeship. The service will also be recruiting an additional five new trainees who will spend two years learning various trades 'on the job' across the service, providing them with a good knowledge of the building industry. For those that want to, this can lead on to an apprenticeship or on to one of our new maintenance person posts.

The service has recently employed an additional five maintenance persons. These maintenance persons are used for non-skilled small-scale works. This allows the qualified trades persons to be utilised more effectively. Recruitment is taking place for five new additional maintenance persons and we hope these posts will be filled by the end of December 2022.

Warm Welcome Spaces

Warm Welcome spaces are now open in our Hubs, Libraries and at Llanover Hall. So far, more than 1,790 people have accessed these spaces. Cardiff Third Sector Council (C3SC) have received 48 bids from local organisations for Isolation and Warm Spaces Funds, which are currently being assessed. Successful applicants will be notified shortly. This will help to ensure that there is the best coverage of help across the city.

Local Action Team – Community Action Celebration Day

Last month, the Local Action Team attended Fairwater Hub for a day to celebrate the work that they do within the community offering help and advice to local residents. The team worked alongside the local PCSOs and colleagues from Waste Management and other council services. The day included a colouring competition for children who were tasked with creating posters to promote recycling and disposing of waste correctly. Despite the wet weather, attendance was great and local residents were able to offer their thoughts on issues in the local area, which the Local Action Team can now look to improve.

Proud Coffee Morning

I am very pleased to announce that Cardiff Central Library Hub hosted its first LGBTQ+ Coffee morning in partnership with Pride Cymru on 7 November 2022, which will now be a permanent addition to the events programme and will take place on the first Monday of every month. The morning was a great success with 13 attendees enjoying a warm, friendly, safe environment. Moving forward, the café will also be a space where people can find further support, if needed, with their physical and mental health & wellbeing as well as practical support from council services and partners.

Community Safety Update

Street Based Lifestyles

- Dumballs Road “Safe Guard” Initiative – early feedback from the Safe Guard warden scheme on Dumballs Road has been positive and well received. Staff managed by the Huggard and fitted with both high visibility jackets and body worn cameras have had an immediate effect in lowering local levels of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and other drug related concerns. South Wales Police has reported a massive improvement in the area and some signs that drug related issues have also been disrupted. Partners will continue to review the success of this trial, which is due to finish in early 2023.
- Litchfield Court and Tudor Street – due to recent drug related concerns surrounding Litchfield Court, partners have agreed to develop longer term solutions, with work focusing on disrupting the cyclical nature of the problem at this location and across Tudor Street. I have arranged a meeting on 29 November 2022 with local ward members and other key partners to discuss the issues.
- Cardiff Tents Protocol – as a precautionary measure, a wide range of partners, including South Wales Police, Dyfodol, CAVDAS and council representatives from the Parks Service, Targeted Outreach Team, Community Safety Team and the new City Centre Wardens Team, met on 11 November 2022 to refresh the Cardiff Tent Protocol. This aims to ensure support for those who are vulnerable and that street-based tents are removed as quickly and sustainably as possible, within the law and in full support of anyone presenting vulnerabilities. The current number of tents across the city at the time of the meeting was 13 and this figure remains far lower than pre-Covid levels.

Problem Solving Groups

- Following significant efforts by partners, reported levels of ASB at St Mellons Skatepark and Hub and at Lydstep Flats and Park in Llandaff North have been reduced.
- Partnership working continues in Clifton Street focusing on open drug dealing and drug taking, illegal activity of licensed premises, women’s safety and youth ASB. Operation Perception (a face-to-face survey by South Wales Police) is taking place in the area and we are currently awaiting the results to determine next steps. Anderson Fields has been identified as a possible area of concern following the displacement of issues from Clifton Street. This is being addressed by the Street Based Lifestyles Group.

- Concerns regarding Cowbridge Road East in terms of street drinking, ASB, litter, licensed premises and ongoing harassment are being looking into in partnership with South Wales Police.

Safer Street Fund

- Youth Outreach and Women's Safety engagement sessions are being implemented by Cathays Community Centre and Cardiff Women's Aid respectively.
- The new Safety Bus vehicles are due to be purchased shortly that will replace the current vehicles, which are leased. This will support the work undertaken by South Wales Police and police volunteers and will enable greater flexibility in the use of the vehicles.
- Eight CCTV cameras are being installed in Cathays in residential areas such as Senghennydd Road, Corbett Road, Fitzroy Street and North Road.
- Training sessions for club and bar staff to improve the response by venues to vulnerable individuals in the Evening and Night-Time Economy (ENTE) are being launched this month. This training will be complemented by police operations (Project Minerva) in the city centre during events and other peak footfall periods.

White Ribbon Pledge

Cardiff Council has made a commitment to the White Ribbon Pledge, which seeks to end male violence against women and girls. In Cardiff, we have commissioned local specialist services to support women, men and children, and we also promote the Welsh Government-funded [Live Fear Free helpline](#). I am pleased that the Council is also an accredited White Ribbon organisation and we have recently achieved our third period of accreditation. The Lord Mayor is due to accept our White Ribbon Accreditation plaque from the Chief Executive of White Ribbon UK on 21 November 2022.

The United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls is held annually on 25 November and this day is also known as 'White Ribbon Day'. This year, a number of related events and training sessions have been organised between 21 November and 8 December. On the day of this month's Council meeting, officers will also be at City Hall from 3pm so that Members can find out more about these events and sign the White Ribbon Pledge.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
18 November 2022