
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Homelessness Demand

World Homeless Week was held this month and we are continuing to see unprecedented pressures on homeless services. This has required us to increase both our emergency and temporary accommodation to deal with the ongoing and anticipated increase in demand. Our Homeless Prevention Services are working with 200 clients who have been given notice to quit by their private landlords. Unfortunately, all of them have the potential to become homeless and will therefore require temporary accommodation if we are unable to resolve their housing situation. In addition, we remain concerned about the likely increase in presentations by December 2023, which will put additional pressure on an already stretched resource.

Demand on services for single people continues to be exceptionally high and we are still accommodating around 80 individuals per night through our emergency out of hours provision. This is a real cause for concern going into the winter months as the cold weather creates a significant increase in demand for this service. We also now have a record high number of single and young single people requiring temporary accommodation, with more than 350 people waiting to enter temporary accommodation. Efforts remain ongoing to locate suitable grounds for accommodation to help expand our provision and alleviate the demand on this service as a priority.

To support homeless families, we have secured use of an additional hotel that will provide us with 60 additional units of emergency accommodation. This has allowed us to remove our reliance on the ad-hoc use of hotels in the city. Whilst this does allow us to provide better support on site, it does mean that, unfortunately, there are now 200 families in hotel accommodation.

To help address this, we are committed to delivering additional units of temporary accommodation. Work remains ongoing at the Yr Hafan (Gasworks) site in Grangetown, with the first four units now occupied with further units expected to be in available by December. Working with our Registered Social Landlords, we have also opened Ty Celyn in Pentwyn, which is a 28 unit supported accommodation project. This project is now fully occupied. In addition to this, we have opened 43 units of accommodation at Bay Chambers in Cardiff Bay and 18 units at Myn Y Coed in St Mellons will be opened in early November.

Our Young Person's Gateway has seen an expansion to help ease demand, with our partner Llamau opening new provision and the Gateway increasing by nine spaces. Whilst this expansion is welcome, we clearly continue to require many additional units of accommodation to meet the demand of young people facing homelessness across the city.

Tai Ffres, the Young Person's Housing Association launched by United Welsh Housing Association and Llamau, will also be letting its first homes this month, with 22 units becoming available for young people in housing need.

We continue to identify new opportunities to increase our temporary accommodation and to deliver new and affordable permanent homes in the city that we can offer to those most in need of a place to call their own. To date, we have delivered 901 new build council homes, which includes 13 two, three and four-bedroom family homes at Wakehurst Place in St. Mellons that were handed over to the Council recently following completion. These new properties provide safe and secure, energy efficient and sustainable homes, as well as helping to achieve our commitments in support of the One Planet Cardiff strategy to deliver low-carbon developments using renewable technology that are not reliant on fossil fuels.

In addition to the projects that have been completed recently, we currently have nine active housing development schemes, with works being undertaken on site, which will deliver 413 new council homes. We also have a further six schemes with full planning consent and contractors appointed and due to commence works on site within the next few months, which will deliver a further 245 new council homes.

I am also pleased to confirm that Transport for Wales completed rail infrastructure works at Waungron Park station earlier this month, which included the installation of a new retaining wall alongside the station platform and railway line. This needed to happen before the Council could commence site works for the housing and transport interchange development on the adjacent site at Waungron Road. Officers are currently working with Wates to prepare plans for site clearance and the necessary groundworks ahead of the commencement of the main building works.

National Housing Design Awards

I am pleased to confirm announce that our Moorland Road redevelopment proposal, to re-provide a new community centre alongside 13 older person's flats, has won a prestigious award at this year's National Housing Design Awards. The awards recognise excellence in architecture and design and are the only awards promoted by all five major professional institutions – Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Landscape Institute and Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists. This award underlines the innovation and quality that is being delivered as part of our housing development programme.

Responsive Repairs Academy

As part of our commitment to "growing our own" workforce, our Responsive Repairs Academy is continuing to support trainees, apprentices and maintenance persons into becoming qualified tradespeople. One great example is Connor, who came to work for the Council after previously working in theatre set building. He started working as a Maintenance Person undertaking smaller repair jobs in our council homes. With support from the team, Connor applied to become a Skilled Tradesperson, specialising in carpentry and was successful in gaining the position. He is now carrying out his role to an extremely high standard. Connor's success highlights the opportunities that our Responsive Repairs Academy can provide to people across our communities.

Festival of Languages

Central Library Hub hosted its first Cardiff Festival of Languages in September 2023. The event aimed to raise awareness about various languages spoken in Cardiff, as well as promoting the extensive community language book resources available within Central Library Hub and in other Community Hubs in the city. Central Library Hub has book stock in 25 different languages ranging from Arabic, Bengali, Somali to Persian, Ukrainian, Urdu and many more. The event attracted numerous partners, including representatives from Cardiff University's School of Modern Languages who hosted information and activity stalls. The programme included English and Spanish Conversation Clubs and a Mother Language Sing & Rhyme session for under 5-year-olds.

The World Languages café and information stalls were very popular, with visitors seeking information from, and sharing language skills with, Routes into Languages, Mentoring for Languages, Confucius Institute, Adult Community Learning, Friends and Neighbours Groups. Welsh, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Kurdish information points were made available and visitors to the event also took part in board games in an effort to help them expand on their Welsh and English vocabulary skills.

I would like to thank the teachers and pupils of Coed Glas Primary School who delivered a wonderful sign language choir performance. Representatives from St Cuthbert's Primary School were also present at the event and have promised to return next year with a performance of their own.

Black History Month

This month is Black History Month and it provides an important opportunity to engage with the wider community to learn, celebrate and promote understanding. Our Community Hubs and Libraries engage in culturally diverse events all year round of course, but it's been so good to see all the book displays throughout the Hubs celebrating the heritage, culture and achievements of Black people. This year, the theme was 'Saluting our Sisters', which focused on the achievements of Black women and I'm pleased to say that books by wonderful authors, including Zadie Smith, Patience Agbabi and Malorie Blackman, have been flying off the library shelves. Black History Month story time sessions have also been taking place in Hubs during October and school visits have also been taking place with lots of fun activities.

Violence Prevention Strategy

Work is ongoing with partners to develop a Violence Prevention Strategy for Cardiff, in response to the Serious Violence Duty that was introduced in 2023. Following the regional strategic needs assessment, which was carried out by Public Health Wales earlier this year, a recommendation was made to create an evidence-based profile specific to Cardiff. The evidence-based profile, using information contributed by a variety of partners (including South Wales Police, South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Cardiff Youth Justice Services, HM Prison and Probation Service and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board), has provided guidance on 'where, when and what' violent incidents are most prevalent in Cardiff.

Key themes of violence from the data include knife crime, violence involving young people, organised crime and exploitation, violence related to night-time economy, and violence against women and girls.

Development of the draft strategy, including further engagement sessions with partners and residents about the key themes, priorities, and terminology, will continue over the next few months. Alongside this strategy, a local delivery plan will be developed, that will support a variety of programmes and interventions. This work will enable us to move towards reducing violence with our communities through a co-production and collaborative approach.

CCTV Forum

A partnership meeting to make best use of CCTV assets from an evidence-led perspective has allowed the Council and South Wales Police to strategically re-deploy cameras across the city improving visibility of and response to criminal and anti-social behaviour. Over the last few months, redeployed CCTV assets have aided police investigations in several cases, including a recent assault, allowing for formal action to be taken.

Community Safety Funding

A partnership bid to the Home Office for approximately £150,000.00 for Round 5 of Safer Streets funding has been submitted. Round 5 focuses on initiatives targeting Anti-Social Behaviour and Violence Against Women and Girls. The bid is focused on strengthening CCTV provision, youth interventions, and improving public space in the wards of Adamsdown and Riverside. In addition, a £250,000 bid has been submitted Shared Prosperity Fund on behalf of the Cardiff Community Safety Partnership. This would secure additional resources for more localised project work and a budget to fund projects that would tackle crime and anti-social behaviour with partners.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
20 October 2023