

---

**Pre-Decision Scrutiny: Homelessness – The response to the Covid-19 crisis and delivering the future service model**

---

*Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of Appendix A are not for publication as they contain exempt information of the description contained in paragraphs 14 and 21 (Appendix 1 and 4) and paragraph 16 (Appendix 2) of Schedule 12A of the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 assist Members in their pre-decision scrutiny of the report to Cabinet on homelessness, prior to its consideration by Cabinet at their meeting on 16 July 2020.
2. Members should note that **Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of 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.

**Structure of the meeting**

3. The Chair will move that this item be considered in two parts: an open session, where Members will be able to ask questions on the issues and papers that are in the public domain; and a closed session, where members of the public will be excluded, where Members can ask questions that pertain to **Confidential Appendices 1, 2 and 4 of Appendix A**.
4. 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 be available to answer Members questions. Members will then be able to decide what comments, observations or recommendations they wish to pass on for consideration.

### **Structure of the Papers**

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

#### **Appendix A – Report to Cabinet**

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

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

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

**Confidential Appendix 2** – exempt legal implications

**Appendix 3** – Revenue Costs

**Appendix 4** – Capital Costs

**Appendix 5** - Equalities Impact Assessment

### **Scope of the Scrutiny**

6. Full Council established the COVID-19 Scrutiny Panel on 21 May 2020 to provide measured and proportionate scrutiny in the current emergency and to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of reports to Cabinet. At its meeting on 16 July 2020, Cabinet will consider a report on the impact of Covid-19 on homelessness in Cardiff and the proposed future model for homelessness services.
7. To ensure all previous scrutiny informs the internal challenge, in advance of this meeting all Members of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee have been consulted, their comments and enquiries collated and passed to Panel members to follow up, in line with the Panel's Terms of Reference.
8. During this scrutiny, Members have the opportunity to test the recommendations to Cabinet and explore:
  - a. Proposals for future services for homeless people
  - b. Key factors shaping these proposals
  - c. Impact of proposals

- d. Financial Implications
- e. Risks to the Council
- f. Next Steps and Timelines.

## **Background**

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. The 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**

12. 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**).

13. 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**

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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**).

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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**

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

### **Proposed Recommendations to Cabinet**

24. The report recommends that Cabinet:

- note the steps already taken to secure additional permanent homeless accommodation to replace temporary provision and ensure that no service user will experience a reduction in service availability as lockdown measures are relaxed.
- agree the way forward for homeless services as set out in the report including the need to make representations to Welsh Government for ongoing funding to ensure the "No Going Back" strategy for single homeless people is sustainable.
- note that in the event grant funding is not at the levels assumed within the report, options for schemes will need to be reviewed and revised to achieve lower operational costs and within available budgets, this will impact significantly on the overall effectiveness of the approach.
- approve a direct award contract to Beattie Passive to deliver 50 temporary accommodation units at the Gasworks site for the reasons outlined in this report.
- delegate responsibility for the leasing of private domestic properties under the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme to the Assistant Director for Housing and Communities following appropriate advice from Strategic Estates.

## 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:
  - the stability of the private rented sector
  - access to private rented sector properties proving problematic in terms of persuading landlords to let properties to those on Housing Benefit or 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 meetings 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. Following the meeting, Cllr Jenkins, Chair Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, wrote to Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member – Housing and

---

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Cllr McGarry, Chair of CASSC, to Cllr Thorne, Cabinet Member, dated 6 December 2019



and Communities; the letter thanked Cllr Thorne and officers for their positive response to the Committee's work, commended and encouraged further positive work in supporting individuals sleeping rough. Members requested a progress report on the agreed recommendations in September 2020.

## **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 take questions from Members of the COVID- 19 Scrutiny Panel, representing the Members of all five Cardiff Council Scrutiny Committees.

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**. Members will be invited to agree the meeting go into closed session to enable discussion of this information.

## **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**

The Panel is recommended to:

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

**DAVINA FIORE**

Director, Governance & Legal Services

10 July 2020