

COUNCIL: 26 NOVEMBER 2020

HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

AGENDA ITEM:

Homelessness

Work to deliver the new approach to homelessness is progressing well. The modular buildings which are to form part of the new Single Homeless Assessment Centre arrived recently and are currently being installed. These pre-constructed units will provide good quality emergency accommodation for single people while an assessment of their support needs is undertaken. The centre will provide a base for the multi-disciplinary outreach team, bringing a range of health and therapeutic specialists together to support this vulnerable client group. The centre is due to open early in the New Year.

Going by the latest figures (13th November), there were 12 individuals sleeping on the street in Cardiff, maintaining the good progress that has been made during the Covid-19 pandemic. New rough sleepers are identified each week and brought into accommodation. There is no reason for anyone to sleep out in the city and I would ask Members to report anyone sleeping rough via our web form or by texting 'REALCHANGE' to 80800, giving details of the person's location. The Outreach team will then visit the individual to offer support.

Re-cladding of Lydstep Flats

Following a competitive procurement process, the Council has awarded the contract for improvement works to the three tower blocks at Lydstep flats in Llandaff North to ISG Construction Limited. The main work of re-cladding the blocks is due to start in spring 2021. This is a significant milestone for both the Council and the residents at Lydstep flats, who I know have been eagerly awaiting this news. The solution being used is the safest option on the market, will significantly increase the blocks' energy efficiency and will improve their appearance, helping to regenerate the local area.

Housing Development

The Council's ambitious and exciting redevelopment proposal for the Channel View estate has moved another step closer, as consultation on the plans is currently ongoing with the Grangetown community. The proposed £60 million regeneration project could see between 360-400 low-carbon, mixed-tenure homes built at Channel View whilst delivering improvements to the Marl Park, better connectivity for the local community, and a potential cycling and walking connection between the Marl and Hamadryad Park. So far over 300 responses

have been received to the consultation which are largely supportive and a webpage has been set up in order for residents to see the consultation material, view a fly-through of what the development could look like and read a regularly-updated frequently asked questions and answers document. Phase 1 of the project will deliver a replacement of the existing tower block providing 78 new community living flats for older people.

The new Council homes programme has delivered 385 new Council homes to date and also has 228 new homes being built on site, 101 homes out to tender for a contractor, 145 new homes with planning permission in place, and 104 in the planning process. This represents 963 new homes either completed or going through the delivery process. These new developments are focused on delivering high-quality, low-carbon energy-efficient homes which are well-designed and incorporate high-quality urban design, place-making, green infrastructure and public realm. The aim is to deliver around 200 new homes this year resulting in a total of just over 500 new homes by year end.

Self-Isolation Support Scheme

With two weeks' notice, the Advice and Benefits team has worked hard to ensure that the new Welsh Government funded Self-Isolation Support Scheme was open to applications from clients from 16th November 2020. Residents can apply for a payment if they were told to self-isolate on or after 23rd October 2020. The scheme is designed to help working people on a low income who cannot work from home and will lose earnings when told to self-isolate by the NHS Wales Test, Trace, Protect (TTP) service.

The Advice and Hub teams will be on hand to support people to claim if they are unable to claim themselves online. Additional help will also be offered and referrals made to other teams if an additional need is identified. The Council's Benefit Assessment team is responsible for carrying out the relevant checks and making the fixed £500 payment to those eligible and living in Cardiff.

In addition to a national publicity campaign by the Welsh Government, the Council's Communications team is also carrying out local publicity. Emails have been sent to all internal partners and external stakeholders to further promote the scheme, ensuring that anyone who is eligible for the payment in the city makes a claim.

In the first two days of the scheme going live, over 188 telephone calls were taken by the Adviceline and over 100 applications were made.

Online Claim Form for Free School Meals

With the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent closing of Hubs during lockdown periods, it was vital that those who wanted to claim Free School Meals could do so easily and from the comfort of their own home. Claiming Free School Meals is now even easier through the provision of a simple online claim form, which can be accessed and completed on the Council's website at: www.cardiff.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

For those families who cannot access the internet, help can be provided over the dedicated Free School Meals phone line or face-to-face in Hubs by appointment. Due to the downturn in the economy, there has been an increase in the numbers of families claiming Free School Meals in Cardiff from 12,005 on 1st March 2020 to 13,614 on 16th November 2020.

Digital Foodbank Vouchers

To reduce the most vulnerable from having to pay travelling costs as a result of the temporary closures of community buildings and Hubs during lockdown periods, the Money Advice team has been happy to support the Foodbank in providing digital Foodbank vouchers to clients. If someone needs a Foodbank voucher, they can now call the Adviceline and the Advice Officer will send a qualifying code to the client's mobile phone. The client can then attend the Foodbank distribution centre with this code and they will be provided with their Foodbank parcel. This new digital method means that there is no paper handling between the Money Advice Team, customer or Foodbank and decreases the chance of vouchers going missing. Voucher codes are kept on the Money Advice system for a customer if they forget or lose the code provided. For those that do not have a mobile phone or attend a Hub for a voucher, the legacy system can still be used, ensuring that the most vulnerable are supported in the way that suits them best.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
19 November 2020