



Cardiff Council's Scrutiny Committee – 5th June

Engagement with United Welsh

1. Housing Management and Allocations

- What works well

Common Housing Register and housing issues: Meetings are held on a regular basis with open and honest communication. United Welsh's views are heard and considered and requests for guidance from officers or senior staff receive a prompt response. Groups such as the exclusion panel are well-organised and offer best practice in the field for considering applicants where there are risks involved with re-housing.

Effective monitoring of allocations: We receive high quality information about the outcome of allocations and our performance can be monitored against other Registered Social Landlords to ensure that quotas for different types of lettings are met. This is not often the case in our experience of working in other Local Authorities. The data helps us to ensure that we are meeting our obligations, such as carrying out our allocations in a fair and transparent manner.

Local Lettings Policies (LLPS): When developing LLPs, the Council are prompt and the team are approachable and easy to work with. We always find a compromise and way forward.

Innovation: We welcome current and future opportunities to consider alternative methods of property allocation and new ways of working with Cardiff Council. For example, we recently allocated a block of flats in Roath as a pilot using co-operative principles. The project is currently being evaluated to determine if this approach has improved sustainability, the aspiration of tenants around employment, rent arrears, satisfaction and cohesion.

Supported housing: Our close working relationship and understanding from the Council means that we can be flexible with our support and respond to need e.g. accommodating dogs, couples and refugees / accommodating pods for rough sleepers on United Welsh land. Adams Court in Adamsdown is also an excellent example of a tripartite agreement between Cardiff Council, United Welsh and our maintenance subsidiary Celtic Horizons, providing intensive housing management, the maintenance and support to homeless families and individuals.

- Areas for more effective partnership working

Flexibility for future schemes: We are often providing homes for clients with complex needs, so it would be advantageous to have flexibility in our approach and offer so we can continually innovate to best meet the needs of individual households while balancing the needs of the wider community.

Downsizing: Working more closely to explore opportunities for tenants to 'downsize' into smaller homes would be welcomed.

IT support: This could be improved as delays in resolving issues with the Common Housing Register can significantly impact on our performance and ability to undertake essential tasks. We welcome opportunities to be innovative with technology, considering emerging technologies and software in the performance of our 'joint' duties.

2. Development of new homes

- Over the last four years, we have completed 253 new homes ranging from 1-bedroom apartments to 4-bedroom houses with a further 237 homes contracted to handover in the following three years.
- We have delivered 73 Temporary Homeless Accommodation at Adams Court in Adamsdown, which was secured in partnership with the Council with limited grant.
- We have revitalised seven empty homes through our 'Empty Homes Wales' project, having viewed over 37 in the Local Authority area: www.emptyhomeswales.co.uk
- We are delivering 10 Low Cost Home Ownership units in Cardiff this year. The nominated progress is going very well and we are working closely to deliver the first two Shared Ownership units. The set-up process is progressing well.
- We have worked with the Council to secure Innovative Housing Funding which is delivering market leading technology to reduce energy consumption using a combination of a ground source heat pump and Solar PV-T system to satisfy electrical, heating and hot water demand for the properties. This will seek to address the low carbon agenda and reduce the risk of our residents experiencing fuel poverty to improve wellbeing.
- We have also secured considerable "additional" grant funding. For example, last year alone we were awarded £3.403M and secured £4.299M; an increase investment into Cardiff of £896,715.

- What works well

- **Relationships:** Our relationship with Strategic Housing is excellent. Dialogue is open and honest which allows us to work collaboratively and ensure that we are meeting the strategic requirements of the Council (although note that greater collaboration could further improve outcomes as highlighted below).
- **Development Risk:** An increased partnership understanding of Development Risk has resulted in Cardiff Council securing additional capital funding from Welsh Government which will increase housing supply.
- **Planning approach:** This is generally flexible with a 'can do' attitude

- Areas for more effective partnership working

- **The strategic view of VFM - Land supply and value:** At present; most disposals are offered to the Open Market on the presumption that maximum capital receipt is achieved. We have demonstrated in other Local Authority areas that VFM is broader, such as providing revenue income to the Local Authority rather than Capital receipt and higher levels of Affordable Housing provision, without impacting on Market Value. An example of this is our Watford Road development in Caerphilly: <https://bit.ly/2HxqNkn>
- **Empty Homes:** This project would benefit from closer collaboration, potentially including enforcement where it is the last resort.
- **S106 funding:** Clarity on the use of S106 funding would be beneficial for challenging sites that may not attract Social Housing Grant or may involve environmental improvements.
- **Council Build Programme:** This could provide more opportunities for working in partnership with Housing Associations. For instance, offering wider housing options for future occupiers and / or sharing risk are just two possible outcomes from this approach.