



County Hall
Cardiff,
CF10 4UW
Tel: (029) 2087 2087

Neuadd y Sir
Caerdydd,
CF10 4UW
Ffôn: (029) 2087 2088

My Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/Cllr Jenkins
16 Nov 2020

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member Housing & Communities
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Dear Cllr Thorne,

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 4 NOV 2020

As Chairman of the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, I wish to thank you and officers for attending Committee, providing Members with an opportunity to understand and consider the recent proposals relating to the council house build programme's procurement plan, the submission of the planning application for Channel View and the delivery of the scheme's initial phase ahead of its consideration by Cabinet. Following their consideration, Members of the Committee have requested that I feedback the following comments and observations to you.

As discussed at Committee, Members perceive the Channel View scheme to be an exciting, ambitious project which carries the ability to transform the area by delivering real strategic improvements through new, high quality homes with better access to public space. The innovative aspirations also included within the project surrounding waste management and energy efficiency are also pleasing to see. However, as highlighted at Committee, due to the scope of the project it will undoubtedly carry risks. As such, in order to reach the site's full aspirations the execution and delivery of this scheme along with the ability to have frank conversations both internally and externally, particularly with regard to design precedents, is of critical importance. The need for this innate focus on the site's deliverability is shared by officers and Members note that in order to ensure the aspiration for this scheme to be exemplar, a range of external professional support within the scheme's process and its costings have been accounted for. Members also note that the proposed procurement plan displays the range of consideration and professional support which will be included within the delivery of this scheme.

With regard to architectural legacy, Members note that the need to deliver sites which provide a level of architectural detail and quality which brings lasting, positive effects both for the initial estate and its wider area is shared by officers. Members note the comments made by officers that at present the architectural design and detail for the overall scheme is not yet confirmed, and that the images captured within their consultation document will change as the scheme evolves. When further questioning the design precedents for the site, with particular reference to sustainability, Members were advised that ongoing work is being conducted with the Design Commissioner for Wales. It was also pleasing to hear that schemes such as Goldsmith Street are being used utilised as precedent images within the architectural design's consideration. During the discussion, It was confirmed to Members that working with architects to ensure intricate details which adds real, lasting value to the community is a key objective of the scheme, however, it is hoped that the vision and design of the site is both driven and directed by the Council and Members wish to reiterate the need to continue relaying the sites desired outcomes and objectives as the designs' progress. During the meeting, Members also explored the scope to unify the Channel View vision with the Gasworks site and heard that a key objective within the programme is to ensure a relationship between the two sites through both access routes and shared elements of architecture.

Due to the known pressures in the Highways Team, concerns were raised regarding the cost of the proposed foot and cycle bridge between the Marl and Hamadryad Park and sought clarity surrounding how funding for the proposed bridge may be secured. Members note the comments made by officers that although the ability to secure funding for the bridge is not yet known, discussions are ongoing to ensure the proposal is feasible which should in turn increase the likelihood of securing grant funding. Members also note the possibility of the scheme potentially accessing funding by tying into the Cardiff City District Heating Network. As offered at Committee, Members would be grateful to be kept informed of its progress.

A key concern highlighted by Members was the implications for current occupants of the site impacted by proposals, including property rights for existing owners and the Council's obligation for rehousing residents. Members were advised that works on the site are to be carried out in phases in order to allow current residents to remain living in their property transferring from their existing home into a new property once built. However, in order for the scheme to progress an initial phase must commence where tenants would be required to move subsequent to alternative accommodation being built and it was confirmed that Phase 1 will be the only part of the scheme which will require current residents moving prior to alternative accommodation being built. Members heard that the Council does have a requirements and duty to rehouse council tenants impacted and with regard to private residents who wish to sell their property to the Council, costing would work on the basis of an independent market value in addition to a home-loss compensation payment of no more than 10% of the agreed market value. It was further confirmed that within such instances where current residents wished to move, the Council would also cover legal costs and reasonable removal fees. Members wish to seek clarity on the exact number of Council tenants within Phase 1 whom require rehousing and the proposed plans in place.

Members note the assurance provided at Committee that it is the intention to work with the existing community, accommodating requests where possible and avoiding compulsory purchase routes unless necessary. With regard to existing tenants of the site who may be resistant to moving from their current property, Members were informed that experience from similar instances suggests that for some individuals moving from their current property can take time, and it is hoped that the roll out of this scheme in phases, which provides current residents with the ability to physically see future properties should assist in addressing any apprehension they may hold. Members wish to reiterate the need to continue working in partnership with current residents, working through any potential issues both sensitively and appropriately.

Another key concern raised by Members related to the current properties on the site falling into disrepair due to the sites significant subsidence issues and Members sought assurance as to how this would be rectified within the current programme of works along with the outlay of costs within such rectification. Members were informed that the current properties on the site are built on incorrect raft foundations which are not deep enough and result in the properties moving. Members were assured that significant site investigation work has been carried out and the new properties proposed for the site will be built on piled foundations, which eradicate this issue and such groundwork costings has been accounted for within the scheme's overall projected costings.

Due to the scale of the project, Members flagged their concerns with regard to deliverability and sourcing reliable contractors and questioned what measures will be in place to mitigate such risks. Members note that such concerns were acknowledged by officers and were informed that as the site is being progressed in a phased approach, this breaks the site down into small packages of work with a tendering process being undertaken for each phase, which should, in turn reduce this element of risk. It was further confirmed to Members that within the process robust due diligence which includes the financial stability of each contractor will also be undertaken.

When seeking clarity on how much money is expected to be achieved from the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant for the overall Council House Build Programme, Members were advised that in order to receive the grant, deliverability of the build programme must be clearly displayed. Members note the assurances provided at Committee that officers are confident that the overall programme is deliverable so a significant bid for the grant will be made. Members wish to seek further clarity on the anticipated amount hoped to be received from the grant.

As confirmed at Committee, Members **recommend** the draft Cabinet Report be amended to include that the delegation of authority to the Corporate Director People & Communities to undertake all aspects of the procurement process, which includes sites over £5 million, be reflected to confirm it will be conducted in strict consultation with yourself, and the Corporate Director, Resources.

Finally, although not discussed with you directly at the meeting, following our contemplation at the end of the meeting, Members wish to request a breakdown of all proposed property types within the *overall* Council House Build Programme along with contextual background and reasoning's for the proposed property types.

Thank you once again to you and officers for attending Committee. To confirm, a response to this letter is requested which includes your comments on the thoughts and observations captured within this letter along with the following requested information:

- Clarity on the exact number of Council tenants within Phase 1 whom require rehousing and the plans in place;
- The anticipated amount hoped to be received from the Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant;
- A breakdown of proposed property types within the *overall* Council House Build Programme along with contextual background and reasoning's for the proposed property types.

Yours,



COUNCILLOR SHAUN JENKINS

Chairman - Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee

cc. Sarah McGill, Corporate Director People & Communities

David Jaques, Housing Development Manager

Cabinet Office