
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

RESI Residential Property Awards

I am proud to announce that one of our highly innovative housing developments has won a prestigious national award for its sustainability, climate resilience and low carbon footprint. Aspen Grove in Rumney is a ground-breaking scheme that is currently being developed on the former site of Eastern/Rumney High Schools. At the annual RESI Residential Property Awards, Cardiff Council and its Cardiff Living scheme development partner, Wates Residential, were awarded the top spot in the Climate Crisis Initiative – Residential category.

A total of 214 homes – a mix of private sale properties and affordable homes to rent from the Council – are being built as part of the Aspen Grove development, which forms part of the overall Cardiff Living programme to build 1,500 new homes in the city. The site will include 65 new council homes, of which 44 will be Community Living apartments for older people, while 149 properties will be for sale on the open market. The homes have been designed to the Cardiff Living Design Standard – our own high benchmark, which focuses on carbon reduction, energy efficiency and design quality as part of our aim to build new homes for the future that promote place-making and sustainable communities. At a time when costs are rising, the innovative, energy-efficient measures included in both the social rented and market homes within the development will make a real difference to residents.

Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW) Awards 2022

Cardiff Council and its partners were successful in winning a number of awards at the Constructing Excellence in Wales (CEW) Awards 2022, which were held at the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport on 17 June. The awards celebrate regional excellence in construction in Wales and form part of the wider UK Constructing Excellence Awards. They also demonstrate the commitment by the award finalists to delivering all kinds of building projects in a collaborative and sustainable manner.

The Council's Housing Development Team, working with Wates Residential as part of the Cardiff Living scheme and supported by other partners in the design and construction process, was successful in winning the MMC (Modern Methods of Construction) Award for the Cardiff Living project at Crofts Street in Cathays in partnership with Wates Residential, @Home, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners and AECOM.

The team was also Highly Commended in the Net Zero Award category for the Aspen Grove net zero, carbon-ready development in Rumney, in partnership with Wates Residential, Sero, Powell Dobson Architects, McCann & Partners, TIR Collective and Quad Consulting.

In addition, Cardiff Council was successful in winning the Digital Construction Award for Digital by Default at the new Fitzalan High School development, in partnership with Kier Construction, Austin-Smith:Lord, AECOM and Jubb. From a personal perspective as a local councillor for Grangetown, I was also pleased that the Grange Pavilion won in the Value Award category following the work undertaken by Benham Architects, Grange Pavilion CIO, IBI Group, Mann Williams, Holloway Partnership, CDF Planning, Mott MacDonald and The Urbanists.

Community Hubs & Libraries Update

I am pleased to say that our Community Hubs have now fully reopened and footfall has increased steadily month-on-month. Café facilities in STAR, Llandaff North, Ely, St Mellons and Grangetown Hubs have also reopened. 128,000 visitors were welcomed to the Hubs in May 2022, which was an increase of 86,000 on the same month last year and highlights how valuable our Hub services are. The Hub events website also had over 26,000 hits last month.

More events are being relaunched following the end of Covid-19 restrictions and new activities are being created, such as Men's Sheds@Whitchurch Hub, which is a social club for all men, and Yoga Bliss, which provides accessible Chair Yoga for all at Llanrumney Hub. The number of Tai Chi classes, Elderfit sessions and Falls Prevention sessions being held across the city is increasing and the popular 'Lego Club' sessions continue to be held. Digital classes are still proving popular with 'Wake up and Stretch' and 'Move Freely' sessions among the favourites, along with online community cooking classes, the Wednesday evening weekly quiz, Knit & Natter classes and Wellbeing Wednesdays. In addition, school visits to the Hubs have returned, along with homework clubs and English & Welsh book clubs.

The Hubs celebrated the recent Platinum Jubilee earlier this month by holding street parties, packed with fun activities enjoyed by all ages. Buffets and refreshments were also provided by the new Hub cafés. In addition, for Carers Week (6-12 June 2022), the Hubs held coffee mornings and breakfast clubs for carers and those cared for, providing wellbeing activities such as LIFT (Low Impact Function Training) and Read Aloud sessions. These were enjoyed by all, as many of the people attended had been left isolated with the decrease in social gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Butetown Pavilion, in partnership with Race Equality First, recently held its first breakfast morning for the community elders and their carers. Cllr Ebrahim attended the event and chatted to the community elders, enjoying the Somali and Yemeni breakfast cooked by the Butetown Pavilion Parent Panel.

Cardiff Wellbeing Support Service

The Cardiff Wellbeing Support Service seeks to boost the health and wellbeing of people across the city. Through partnership work across the Adults, Housing & Communities Directorate, people are supported to access advice, activities, events and any other provision to help meet their wellbeing needs.

The service recently organised a trip to Barry Island for 27 people who travelled on three buses provided by VEST (Voluntary Emergency Service Transport) from Llanrumney, Powerhouse and Ely & Caerau Hubs. Participants spent several hours taking part in activities such as walking, paddling in the sea and visiting the arcades, and a great time was had by all.

All Hubs now have health and wellbeing mentor drop-in sessions. Dementia cafés are also back up and running following the end of Covid-19 restrictions, along with an increased number of support groups. In addition, Community Inclusion Officers have been busy relaunching and scheduling activities such as Walking Netball, Football and Bowls & Boccia along with additional walking groups.

A new 'Feel Good Friday' is being launched in Ely & Caerau Hub comprising of a community walk, chat in the café and Friday Fun activity sessions, which will include arts & crafts, low impact exercise and games. A new community garden is also planned for Fairwater Hub, together with a relaunch of STAR Hub community garden.

Homelessness Update

Rough sleeper numbers in the city remain low with a weekly average of just 11 recorded last month.

Homelessness Services are still under immense pressure, due in part to a lack of available and affordable private rented accommodation in the city and lower than normal vacancies in social housing. Whilst the number of those becoming homeless and entering temporary accommodation has remained consistent over the last few months, a lack of viable move-on options means that we cannot move people on to permanent accommodation as quickly as we would like, and this is creating challenges for homelessness services, particularly given our need to welcome people fleeing from Ukraine.

Many private landlords are selling their properties as property prices have increased and private rents have risen to a level that many people cannot afford. As part of our new LETS (Landlord Enquiries & Tenant Support Service) initiative, we are contacting landlords to discuss the various options that we can offer, such as the Welsh Government Leasing Scheme and our own tenant matching scheme. The schemes offer a range of support services and benefits to both the applicant and to the landlord with the aim of making tenancies successful for both parties.

Our new family supported accommodation at the Gasworks in Grangetown opened last month, with 17 families having already moved into this brand-new, high-quality accommodation. In total, 48 units of accommodation will be available to temporarily house families who find themselves homeless. Support is available on site to ensure the families can address any issues and quickly move on to permanent accommodation. The scheme will offer a broader range of support, including access to Flying Start and other Early Help services. So far, every family has been happy with the standard of accommodation and the location, and feedback from visiting professionals has been extremely positive.

Cardiff Community Safety Partnership

Street Based Lifestyles & Complex Needs Group

South Wales Police is leading on a new begging protocol based on the Operation Luscombe model. Following good practice across the UK, this approach will formalise police engagement with individuals found begging to both discourage the activity, whilst also encouraging engagement with support services.

Public engagement will continue via the Real Change campaign, which asks people not to give their spare change to those begging on the street, but instead to signpost vulnerable people to the services that can deliver real change in their lives. This campaign will be supported by a renewal of the Give DIFFerently initiative led by FOR Cardiff.

If anyone has concerns about someone they see on the streets in the city centre, or anywhere else in Cardiff, the best way to help them is by telling the Council about them by texting the message 'REALCHANGE' to 80800 with details of the location or by using either the CardiffGov app or the online form on the Council's website. An officer from the Outreach Team will be sent to check on them and offer them accommodation and access to services.

Since the installation of improved lighting and CCTV funded by Safer Streets in April 2022, the frequency of drug litter collected at the Letton Road ramp in Butetown has halved compared to last year's figures. This was previously one of the city's main hotspots and early evidence suggests that activity has not been displaced elsewhere; however, incidents of drug litter around Callaghan Square remain high.

Night-Time Economy Group

FOR Cardiff has been successful in leading partnership efforts to renew the Purple Flag status for the city. Purple Flag is an international accreditation that recognises good practice in managing the evening and night-time economy. A full report with any recommendations for improvement will be made available to partners later in the year. Partners have also supported a series of Neighbourhood Assessments led by British Transport Police, which have mapped out a number of anti-social behaviour and exploitation concerns around Cardiff Central Station and Central Square. This will focus the development of future interventions by the group.

Empty Homes

During 2021/22, the Housing Enforcement Team within Shared Regulatory Services brought 51 empty homes back into use and also created 33 new residential properties by bringing empty properties back into use (either non-residential properties or by converting one residential property into multiple residences). The Welsh Government has also approved the Council's Empty Homes Action Plan, which identifies empty properties in the city for targeted action. This will enable the Council to draw down funding to indemnify the service against the financial risk involved in taking appropriate legal action to help bring these properties back into use.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
23 June 2022