

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillors J. Aviet, G.M. Ball, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, S. Lloyd-Selby, B. Loveluck-Edwards, M.J.G. Morgan and H.M. Payne.

Also present: V. John (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel); Councillors A. Asbrey, H.C. Hamilton, S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement), E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

### 25 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

### 26 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal year.

### 27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from G. Doyle, D. Dutch and H. Smith (Representatives from Tenant Working Group / Panel).

### 28 MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### 29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### 30 PRESENTATION: COUNCIL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT UPDATE –

The presentation was given to the Committee by the Operational Manager - Housing Development, who updated them on the current position, that of last year and the Council's ambitions for this year and going forward in terms of its housing development programme. The Operational Manager's role was to deliver housing in the Vale of Glamorgan in accordance with the Council's Housing Strategy. Key areas covered in this presentation included:

- The spending, units constructed, and new homes delivered (including Acquisitions) over the 2023/24 and 2024/25 periods.
- The Council's housing ambitions were reflected in its commitment of £920m to develop new Council housing over the next 30 years.
- The current housing units being constructed in the Vale of Glamorgan, i.e. 31 units at Clos Holm View, Barry and 90 units at Eagleswell Road, Llantwit Major.
- Those new schemes and developments at the feasibility or early planning stage, such as 14 units at the former Cowbridge Police Station and 51 units for older persons at Cogan Farm, Penarth.
- Maximising grant income, such as the securing of £3.2m of Social Housing Grant (SHG) in 2023/24.
- Partnership and joint ventures such as with Newydd and United Welsh Housing Associations, Cardiff County Council and Edenstone to help deliver significant numbers of homes to the Vale.
- The Council's net zero carbon ambitions for its housing i.e. all new Council homes in the current programme would achieve EPC A (SAP 92+) and new homes to be designed in accordance with Passive House Principles.

Following the presentation, the Committee raised a number of comments and queries:

- On Councillor Haines' query concerning the new housing developments in the Vale and building houses for market sale and if this included purchasing existing housing from the market, it was explained that this was being done in addition to these developments, with 23 such properties purchased last year plus some former 'right to buy' properties in the pipeline that the Council was evaluating in terms of meeting Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and arranging valuations on these in terms of purchase.
- Councillor Haines subsequently raised the recent purchase of 20 houses in St Athan for £4.1m which had not been reported to the Committee, despite the scale of the numbers of properties purchased at a sizeable cost and therefore no proper scrutiny could be undertaken. Councillor Hanks also raised her concerns that local Elected Members had not been informed or consulted on this purchase. It was explained that under the Housing Acquisitions Policy adopted in 2020 that power was delegated to the Strategic Housing board to acquire housing from the market as necessary. The Head of Housing and Building Services explained that he had spoken to the Councillor about the concerns raised and stressed that the acquisition by the Council of properties on such a scale was probably a 'one off', with it being extremely unlikely that

such an opportunity would arise again. However, he wished to assure Members that should the Council have this type of sizeable acquisition / development again, then local Ward Members would be made aware as soon as possible and the relevant provisions discussed with them. Following further discussions at the meeting on this matter and the concerns raised by Councillor Haines, the Committee agreed with the recommendation that any acquisitions of housing properties made by the Council were to be consulted upon fully with the relevant Elected Ward Members prior to purchase. Also, if appropriate or required, any significant purchases of housing properties within the Vale of Glamorgan should be considered for call-in or referral to this Committee for the appropriate scrutiny.

- Councillor Payne welcomed the building of additional social housing and in particular at the east end of Barry. She also enquired about the purchase of empty homes and targets for building affordable housing. In response, the Operational Manager – Housing, explained that there was a significant shortfall in affordable housing available in the Vale and the Council was looking at the opportunities of not just building new homes but also at the local housing market and the purchase of empty properties in order to repurpose as Council housing stock. On housing targets, the Head of Housing and Building Services explained there was not a target as such but rather an aspiration to increase the number of housing units that the Council was developing and to maximise its capacity to fulfil its statutory housing duties. The draft Local Housing Market Assessment (to be presented to Committee later on at this meeting) also helped to inform the Council of local housing needs versus supply.
- Councillor Aviet asked if it was possible for Committee Members to visit some of these new housing developments, such as the one at Gibbonsdown, once completed. The Operational Manager – Housing replied that he welcomed this, and it would be arranged. On the Councillor's follow up comment about identifying several empty former Council homes, which were up for sale and whether these could be purchased by the Council, if the Councillor could provide the relevant addresses, then the Housing Team would look into this.
- On Councillor Hennessy's query on the breakdown on how many properties had been bought back by the Council and the numbers of one, two, three bedrooms, etc being built by them, it was explained that 23 properties had been bought back to date, with several more currently being examined. A variety of different properties (one-bedroom apartments, two-bedroom houses, wheelchair accessible properties, etc.) were being developed, which were site dependent and based on the input from housing strategy colleagues to determine the most appropriate type of property on a particular site. A more detailed breakdown would be provided to the Councillor and Committee. The Councillor highlighted the shortage of one-bedroom properties and the impact of this on residents on housing waiting lists and in temporary accommodation as well as the need to prioritise this type of accommodation accordingly. A number of one-bedroom units were being developed at numerous locations such as at Hayeswood Road, at the former Colcot Clinic, Barry, etc.
- On Councillor Lloyd-Selby's question on the communication undertaken with local, existing residents about new housing developments in their area and the point of contact for them at the Council, it was explained that initial

communication and resident feedback would be done via the planning consultation process. Further communication could be sought via the site management team and Housing Team, as well as newsletters to the relevant communities periodically in order to keep them updated.

- Councillor Hanks overall welcomed the housing development work being undertaken by the Council but raised concerns on the Eagleswell development concerning whether August would be the final moving in date for this development and the site having only point of entry at this time. It was outlined that there had been delays here due to unforeseen circumstances, which had now been overcome and a phased hand over would be in place, subject to a further Planning Committee meeting and the handover would follow immediately after between mid-June and through into mid-August. Traffic would be marshalled during the early stage of occupation at the site and other measures taken to make it safe and secure. On Councillor Hennessy's follow up question on how this phased handover would be communicated to residents nearby, this would be done via a newsletter sent out to local residents.
- Both the Neighbourhood and Building Services and Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement Cabinet Members spoke, referring to the efforts of maintaining existing Council housing and new developments to the extremely high WHQS standards and incorporating the latest energy efficiency and carbon neutral technologies. The Council was also looking to 'future proof' new and existing homes to ensure that residents could continue to stay in them, even if they required additional needs and support due to age, disability, etc. The Welsh Government had also stopped the 'right to buy' approach, which meant that the Council could hold on to its housing stock and buy back old Council housing stock to try and help meet the demands for social housing.
- The Head of Housing and Building Services also highlighted key considerations around acquisitions and housing development, including the adoption of the Empty Homes Strategy, the challenges of building Council housing, due to it being dictated by the amount of land available and the work with private developers and Housing Association partners, particularly in drawing down significant funding for new homes via the Social Housing Grant to help meet local housing needs and in order to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.

There being no further questions, Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentation, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the presentation on the Council Housing Development Update be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Council ensures that any acquisitions of housing properties are consulted upon fully with the relevant Elected Ward Member prior to purchase. Also, if appropriate or required, any significant purchases of housing properties within the Vale of Glamorgan be considered for call-in or referral to this Committee for the appropriate scrutiny.

### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

#### 31 2024 UPDATE TO THE HOUSING SUPPORT GRANT DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2025 (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services and the Supporting People Coordinator, was to inform the Scrutiny Committee of the updated Housing Support Grant Delivery (HSG) plan and HSG spend plan 2024-2025. The HSG Programme was the policy and funding framework for delivering housing related support to vulnerable people in different types of accommodation and across all tenures within the Vale of Glamorgan. In accordance with the WG Guidance for the Housing Support Grant, all Local Authorities were required to develop a three-year Local Delivery Plan, which must be submitted to Welsh Government, including annual updates on this. This annual delivery update enabled Members to consider the report and spend plan and to make any recommendations prior to these going to Cabinet for their consideration and submission to WG prior to the deadline (31<sup>st</sup> May 2024).

Key points included the following:

- This was the second iteration of the report to come to Committee recently, with the previous one in March and the Council's proposals around the impact of inflationary and cost pressures, etc in providing its services, predicated on a 'frozen' budget being superseded by the actions of Welsh Government (WG) who subsequently provided additional funding and a budget increase of 7.6% equating to £5.1m per annum for the programmes delivered by the HSG. Therefore, the report was returning to the Committee due to these changes.
- A condition of the 7.6% uplift was that part of this would be used to help support providers to ensure that their staff members could get paid the real living wage.
- This 2024 update to the HSG Delivery Plan 2022-2025 maintained the same delivery priorities and priority service development areas as the HSG Delivery Plan 2022-2025 and included an updated spend plan for the financial year 2024-2025 which required approval before submission to Welsh Government.
- There was no room at this time to expand services significantly beyond what had already been budgeted for. However, the Council had been able to recommission mental health services and the commissioning of a new complex needs hostel supported accommodation project. Furthermore, the allocation of funds to supported accommodation had gone up significantly over previous years. However, due to the cost pressures faced by the Council and service providers, service development was currently 'standing still'.

Following the presentation of the report, the Committee raised a number of comments and queries:

- Councillor Aviet raised questions about what work was done with Pobl as part of the supporting people network, and concerning the floating support provided. It was explained that Pobl was one of the Council's commissioned service providers, which also included floating support, with these workers going out into the community to deliver support to people in their own homes or in temporary accommodation. Pobl also delivered the 'One Stop Shop' on Holton Road, Barry, which provided 'drop' in housing advice and support, both physically and via telephone or digitally. They also had 3 supported temporary accommodation projects to help people to transition to more permanent accommodation in the community. On floating support, if a resident of the Vale had to be put into temporary accommodation outside the County, i.e. Cardiff, then the Council would continue to provide floating support with Vale based staff. This was an approach that other Councils undertook too as part of their HSGs.
- Councillor Hanks sought reassurance on the services provided via the One Stop Shop continuing as part of the HSG. It was explained that the contract for the One Stop Shop would carry on until next year, when the Council intended to recommission this service and undertake a re-tendering process from registered support providers for the contract. The One Stop Shop remained a priority for the Council, due to the breadth and volume of services it provided, thereby freeing up Council staff and removing the need for residents to wait for access to advice, support and services around housing, etc.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby asked if there was any update on the progress and impact being made as part of the welcomed expansion of mediation services support to include landlord and tenants. It was explained that due to the incorporation of the Homeless Prevention Grant into the HSG, the Council had taken on mediation services. This included funding of the 'Jigso' Project which was a family mediation service undertaken by Llamau. This was highly effective and had yielded positive results, including helping to prevent family breakdown, which could lead to homelessness, thereby putting less pressure on housing services. The Committee would receive the latest progress reports for Vale Advice and Mediation (Jigso) which contained the relevant performance indicators for the service. However, not all tenancies could be saved and it was sometimes not suitable or safe for a young person to stay in their own in the family home and therefore the priority would then be to house them in suitable, alternative accommodation.

There being no further questions, Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the 2024 Update to Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2022 - 2025 be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Housing Support Grant Spend Plan 2024-2025 be noted.

### Reason for recommendations

(1&2) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

### 32 LOCAL HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT (LHMA) 2023 (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Operational Manager, Public Housing Services in conjunction with the Housing Strategy Coordinator, aimed to provide Committee Members with an overview of the draft Local Housing Market Assessment (attached as an appendix to the report) for their consideration and any comments to be forwarded on to Cabinet as part of their consideration and approval of this review, prior to submission to Welsh Government (WG).

Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 required Local Authorities (LAs) to undertake periodic reviews of their Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMAs). WG had requested all Welsh LAs do these reviews every 2 years. In March 2022, WG issued their new methodology by which they required all LAs to carry out the LHMA reviews. A review of the Vale LHMA was carried out using the new methodology and with data extracted on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2023. As well as the 2023 LHMA following the new methodology introduced by WG, a new online tool was also introduced which calculated the need for affordable housing over a fifteen-year period from 2022 – 2037. The assessment was carried out on a housing market area basis taking account of the property type and size identified as being required.

The report was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation, which highlighted a number of key areas and topics in relation to LHMA and its findings, including:

- How housing need was determined (based on WG housing projections, newly arising need, newly arising need from existing households and the backlog of need, including housing waiting lists).
- The challenges and caveats of calculating local housing needs i.e. the ‘rounding up’ of figures and statistics and the use of the new WG tool to calculate the demand for housing versus the supply of housing i.e new builds and re-lets.
- The average annual need over the first 5 years, using the WG tool for the backlog of existing need, would be 1,214 for social rented properties and 382 for intermediate housing (overall totals being 6,071 and 1,908 respectively).
- In terms of the supply of housing, namely new build and re-lets this would be 663 for social rented properties and 40 for intermediate housing per year coming online.
- The results of the LHMA 2023 showed a net need for an additional 1,075 units of affordable housing per annum for the next five years, comprising 687 units for social rent, 388 for intermediate accommodation, including assisted home ownership.
- The key findings suggested that demand was greatest for one bedroom accommodation, with the highest demand being in Barry and Penarth/Llandough.

- The LHMA was essential to enable the Vale to meet the demand for affordable housing, and fed into and formed part of the evidence base for the negotiation of affordable housing through the planning system, as well as the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP).

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- On Councillor Hennessy's query on the breakdown of the current backlog of persons on the housing waiting list by the Gold, Silver and Bronze banding or categories (approximately 6,573 persons on the list at this time), this was roughly broken down by 12% on Gold and Gold Plus banding, with 40% on Bronze and with the remainder on Silver. The Bronze category included persons who did not have an identified housing need but rather simply wished to move properties. Further details would be obtained and shared with the Committee on this topic.
- On Councillor Haines' query on how often the data from Homes4U and Aspire2Own was audited in order to check that people on those housing lists still required homes, it was explained that this was reviewed annually, with those on the list being contacted to see if they wished to stay on the list or come off. For those that did not reply or did not wish to stay on the waiting list, they then come off. Each time a review was done, all persons on the waiting lists were written to in order to update their circumstances. Typically, the Council would lose roughly 40% of the applications on the list. For those persons who did not reply, a timeframe of one month was given, with a series of reminders sent to them before they were removed from the list. However, what would subsequently happen was those same persons would then probably place a fresh application or re-register thereby replenishing the housing waiting list of 6,500 plus.
- Councillor Haines also commented that he was glad that the figures for social housing needed, for St Athan, as shown on the presentation/report, were being fed into the RLDP. He had been chasing this data from the Planning Department but had been unsuccessful in obtaining this so was pleased that this was now available.
- Councillor Morgan highlighted, which was also echoed and expanded upon by the Vice Chair, the importance of the Council considering the provision of suitable housing for older persons (including retirement housing and housing with care, as referred to in the LHMA report) in order to address the growing shift to an ageing population within the Vale of Glamorgan and thereby 'future proof' the County's housing provision and related needs for its residents. It was important that such considerations be fully embedded within Council policies, strategies and planning (i.e. the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Replacement Local Development Plan).

There being no further comments or questions, Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently



## RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T, having considered the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) 2023 attached at Appendix A, the following comment be referred to Cabinet as part of their consideration on the LHMA:

- The Committee wished to highlight the importance of the Council considering the provision of suitable housing for older persons (including retirement housing and housing with care, as referred to in the LHMA report) in order to address the growing shift to an ageing population within the Vale of Glamorgan and thereby ‘future proof’ the County’s housing provision and related needs for its residents. It was important that such considerations be fully embedded within Council policies, strategies and planning (i.e. the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s Replacement Local Development Plan).

(2) T H A T the Committee noted that Cabinet would be asked to permit the Head of Housing and Building Services to make minor editorial changes to the document once approved.

Reasons for recommendations.

(1) To enable Cabinet to consider the comment raised by the Committee as part of their consideration of the implications of the assessment and demand for affordable housing units required in the Vale of Glamorgan.

(2) To ensure that typographical or other minor changes can be made without the need to seek further Cabinet approval, following their consideration of the LHMA.

33 4TH QUARTER SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION TRACKING 2023/24 AND PROPOSED ANNUAL FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME SCHEDULE 2024/25. (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, the purpose of which was to advise Members of progress in relation to the Scrutiny Committee’s historical recommendations and the proposed Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25. Also, for the Committee’s consideration, was the Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 attached at Appendix E to the report, in the context of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 content.

Subject to the approval of the Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25, the Committee was requested to allow amendments to be made to it prior to uploading:

- The Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report was now due in the September 2024 cycle (slipped from July).
- The Corporate Safeguarding Mid Term Report was now due in the January 2025 cycle (slipped from December).

In addition, most historical recommendations had been completed but there were a few recommendations still open / ongoing which had been updated or in the process of being so and any responses had been chased up or sought.

Other highlights included the recent meeting between Cabinet Portfolio Holders and the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee in order to discuss the Committee's Work Programme, Council priorities and improving scrutiny.

Following the report, Councillor Hennessy asked about the outstanding recommendation concerning the Gypsy and Traveller site and whether there was any further progress on this matter. The Head of Housing and Building Services outlined recent progress, in terms of the drafting of a new Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment, amongst other developments, such as the required inclusion within the Replacement Local Development Plan of any sites identified as part of this. A call for sites had been undertaken, but the two sites subsequently put forward by the relevant landowners or agents had now been withdrawn. This left the Council in the same situation as it had been for a number of years, but progress would be pursued in order to address this matter and updates shared with the Committee and Cabinet, including the draft Gypsy and Traveller needs assessment, when possible. The Chair added that this matter had been going on for some time, due to the Council facing a number of issues in order to try to address and identify an appropriate housing solution for the Gypsy and Traveller community and therefore this would take time and could not be rushed.

There being no further questions, Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

#### RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the status of the actions listed in Appendices A - D to the report be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the Cabinet Annual Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 attached at Appendix E to the report, in the context of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee Annual Forward Work Programme 2024/25 content, be noted.
- (3) T H A T the Committee's proposed Annual Forward Work Programme Schedule for 2024/25, attached at Appendix F to the report, be approved and uploaded to the Council's website, subject to the following amendments being made:
  - The Corporate Safeguarding Annual Report will move from July to September 2024.
  - The Corporate Safeguarding Mid Term Report will move from December 2024 to January 2025.

#### Reasons for recommendations.

- (1) To maintain effective tracking of the Committee's recommendations.

- (2) To align with section 7.6 of the Cabinet and Scrutiny Roles and Responsibilities Protocol.
- (3) For public information.