

No.

## HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2025.

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

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

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

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale); G. Doyle, D. Dutch and H. Smith (Tenant Working Group / Panel Representatives); Councillors: G. John (Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Wellbeing), Dr. I.J. Johnson and S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement).

### 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”.

### APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from V. John (Tenant Working Group/ Panel Representative).

### MINUTES –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### PRESENTATION: CIVIL PROTECTION UNIT (CPU) UPDATE –

The presentation was given by the Principal Civil Protection Officer and provided an update to Members on recent and ongoing work of the unit. Following the presentation, the Officer provided the following advice in response to questions from the Committee:

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- The Dow Silicon site in Barry was a 'domino site', where one emergency plan covered all the chemical companies on site, with each organisation inputting into this plan.
- It was a statutory duty for the Local Authority to write the off-site plan and to ensure it worked effectively.
- The plan was required to be re-written, validated and tested every three years under the relevant legislation. The Health and Safety Executive and Natural Resources Wales were the competent authorities and oversaw and signed-off this work.
- There was an incident on the Dow Silicon site in June 2024, involving the alarms being sounded. Officers were de-briefed following this incident, and significant work had been undertaken with the on-site businesses regarding communications, as well as currently in conjunction with the Council's Communications Team, in order to get clearer messaging out to the public, to ensure the community fully understood what such incidents meant for them.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation regarding a Civil Protection Unit update be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentation and discussions at the meeting.

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL HOUSING – POLICY ON APPLICATION OF THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD '23 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet of 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2025 as contained within the agenda was presented by the Operational Manager for Building Services.

Following presentation of the report, Officers provided the following advice in response to Committee questions:

- An estimated 25% of the Council's housing stock had received External Wall Insulation, to reduce heat loss from our homes;
- It was extremely difficult to provide a timeline for when all remaining homes would be improved to the standard. While PAS2035 provided a target pathway, it was difficult to plan until all the relevant information was available;
- The resources needed to cover the full works were extensive. Costs per home could be approximated at £50k per property, with around 4,000 properties requiring improvement. This could equate to £200m of additional funding required through the Housing Revenue Account;
- There were also some variable external factors such as interest rates, which made a timeline difficult to predict, however, more certainty would be possible over the next two years;
- A variety of energy efficiency works were carried out to improve homes to the new standard, and a holistic approach to the improvement of each individual

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property was taken, to maximise the benefits for both the environment and the tenant;

- The switch to energy efficient electric-based systems in the home would involve a significant change for tenants, many of whom were used to gas systems which worked very differently, and a key challenge would be to bring tenants along with the process;
- Tenant Liaison Officers would support tenants with the change, and training would be provided on how to use the new systems before work commenced to ensure tenants understood how they worked and the benefits of using them. Tenants themselves would also be key in promoting the changes and support available to other tenants;
- Officers were very keen to avoid causing any additional fuel poverty for tenants through the improvements;
- Energy efficiency and decarbonisation was sought through a fabric first approach to the design of new homes, as well as the addition of technology;
- Solar panel technology had improved significantly in recent years, increasing in their efficiency and no longer requiring a certain orientation;
- Flats on Severn Avenue in Barry had been installed with solar panels which enabled electricity to be shared among the flats. Data collected from these solar panels could demonstrate how the panels were performing, this could help to identify tenants with unusual patterns of usage who may require additional support, and also generated a reduction in the bills of some tenants;
- The reduction in some bills did require tenants to sign up to a scheme in order to achieve the savings, and currently take-up of this scheme had not been high. Officers were conscious of the need to raise awareness of these benefits among residents;
- The income and money advice team worked with tenants experiencing poverty to explore ways to improve their financial situation;
- Not all properties were capable of achieving an EPC 'A' rating;
- There were some concerns across Local Authorities about the level of resources available to cover the competing priorities of building new Council houses, the commitment to tackling homelessness and the commitment to achieving WHQS across the housing stock. This level of investment would need to be paid for through tenants' rent, or through further Welsh Government investment;
- Approximately 150 heat pumps had already been installed into existing Council properties across the Vale of Glamorgan. This was far from the only solution used, and heat pumps were only installed where appropriate for the property. Heat pumps did appear to be working, although this was dependant on tenant behaviour. As there was some uncertainty around their use, the Council was implementing them with caution, and in the case of some properties, insulation and glazing measures were more appropriate.

With no further queries or comments, Committee subsequently:

**RECOMMENDED – T H A T** the contents of the Cabinet reference and the appended report on the Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing – Policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard '23, be noted.

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Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the reference and report and discussions at the meeting.

ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN MONITORING REPORT: QUARTER 3  
PERFORMANCE (DEH) –

The report was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, who advised that the performance report presented the progress at Quarter 3 (Q3) (1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2024) towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan (2024/25) commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

Following a proof of concept using the existing Corporate Performance Framework of measures and actions to develop the use of Power BI to support performance reporting, Officers had produced a Q3 performance snapshot for the current Annual Delivery Plan (2024/25) which was detailed in the presentation appended to the report (Appendix A). The snapshot provided an overview of progress against planned actions and performance indicators aligned to the 4 Wellbeing Objectives and listed any exceptions (Red actions attributed a Red RAG rating) in an accessible format. This had been produced as part of developing the approach and would be subject to further refinement informed by the views of officer colleagues and Elected Members throughout the 2024/25 performance reporting period, with a view to informing the monitoring and reporting arrangements for the new Corporate Plan 2025-30. Officers were currently working towards producing Scrutiny Committee remit specific performance snapshots which would be reported at Q3.

The presentation appended at Appendix A to the report provided a summary of overall progress against the Annual Delivery Plan commitments for 2024/25 as aligned to the 4 Corporate Plan Well-being Objectives.

The report sought Elected Members' consideration of Q3 performance results and the proposed remedial actions to address areas of identified underperformance. Upon consideration, the Scrutiny Committee was recommended to refer their views and any recommendations to Cabinet for their consideration.

Having fully considered the report, Committee subsequently:

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Quarter 3 performance results and progress towards achieving the Annual Delivery Plan 2024/25 commitments as aligned to the Corporate Plan Wellbeing Objectives within the remit of the Committee, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the remedial actions to be taken to address areas of underperformance and to tackle the key challenges identified within the remit of the Committee, be noted.

No.

Reason for recommendations

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