

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At: Committee Room 3c, Guildhall, Swansea

On: Thursday, 5 March 2015

Time: 2.00 pm

AGENDA

Page No.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 **Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.** 1 - 2
- 3 **Minutes:** 3 - 7
To approve, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 5 February, 2015.
- 4 **Empty Property Work in Swansea.** 8 - 22
Presentation by:

Sally Jones – Technical Officer
Huw Morgan – Divisional Environmental Health Officer
Mark Wade – Community Housing Services Manager
- 5 **Homelessness: How we Provide for the Future.** 23 - 38
Presentation by:

Mark Wade (Community Housing Services Manager)
Steve Porter (Housing Options Manager)
- 6 **Work Plan 2014/2015.** 39



Patrick Arran
Head of Legal, Democratic Services & Procurement
Thursday, 26 February 2015

Contact: Democratic Services - tel: (01792) 637292

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Labour Councillors: 9

R A Clay	H M Morris
D W Cole	A S Lewis (Chair)
P Downing	R V Smith
T J Hennegan (Vice-Chair)	G J Tanner
B Hopkins	

Liberal Democrat Councillors: 2

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Independent Councillor: 1

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Conservative Councillor: 1

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Officers and relevant Cabinet Members :

Councillor D H Hopkins	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Councillor W Evans	Cabinet Member for Anti Poverty
Chris Sivers	Director of People
Lee Wenham	Head of Marketing, Communications & Scrutiny
Lee Morgan	Head of Housing and Public Protection
Democratic Services	
Archives	

Total Copies Needed:

20

Disclosures of Interest

To receive Disclosures of Interest from Councillors and Officers

Councillors

Councillors Interests are made in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea. You must disclose orally to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest.

NOTE: You are requested to identify the Agenda Item / Minute No. / Planning Application No. and Subject Matter to which that interest relates and to enter all declared interests on the sheet provided for that purpose at the meeting.

1. If you have a **Personal Interest** as set out in **Paragraph 10** of the Code, you **MAY STAY, SPEAK AND VOTE** unless it is also a Prejudicial Interest.
2. If you have a Personal Interest which is also a **Prejudicial Interest** as set out in **Paragraph 12** of the Code, then subject to point 3 below, you **MUST WITHDRAW** from the meeting (unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Standards Committee)
3. Where you have a Prejudicial Interest you may attend the meeting but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, **provided** that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise. In such a case, you **must withdraw from the meeting immediately after the period for making representations, answering questions, or giving evidence relating to the business has ended**, and in any event before further consideration of the business begins, whether or not the public are allowed to remain in attendance for such consideration (**Paragraph 14** of the Code).
4. Where you have agreement from the Monitoring Officer that the information relating to your Personal Interest is **sensitive information**, as set out in **Paragraph 16** of the Code of Conduct, your obligation to disclose such information is replaced with an obligation to disclose the existence of a personal interest and to confirm that the Monitoring Officer has agreed that the nature of such personal interest is sensitive information.
5. If you are relying on a **grant of a dispensation** by the Standards Committee, you must, before the matter is under consideration:
 - i) Disclose orally both the interest concerned and the existence of the dispensation; and
 - ii) Before or immediately after the close of the meeting give written notification to the Authority containing:

- a) Details of the prejudicial interest;
- b) Details of the business to which the prejudicial interest relates;
- c) Details of, and the date on which, the dispensation was granted; and
- d) Your signature

Officers

Financial Interests

1. If an Officer has a financial interest in any matter which arises for decision at any meeting to which the Officer is reporting or at which the Officer is in attendance involving any member of the Council and /or any third party the Officer shall declare an interest in that matter and take no part in the consideration or determination of the matter and shall withdraw from the meeting while that matter is considered. Any such declaration made in a meeting of a constitutional body shall be recorded in the minutes of that meeting. No Officer shall make a report to a meeting for a decision to be made on any matter in which s/he has a financial interest.
2. A "financial interest" is defined as any interest affecting the financial position of the Officer, either to his/her benefit or to his/her detriment. It also includes an interest on the same basis for any member of the Officers family or a close friend and any company firm or business from which an Officer or a member of his/her family receives any remuneration. There is no financial interest for an Officer where a decision on a report affects all of the Officers of the Council or all of the officers in a Department or Service.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC CENTRE, SWANSEA ON
THURSDAY, 5 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A S Lewis (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)	Councillor(s)
R A Clay D W Cole	P Downing T J Hennegan	B Hopkins G J Tanner

Officers:

K Anderson	-	Operations Manager (West)
J Harries	-	Landlord Services Manager
S Jordan	-	Sheltered Housing Manager
J Storer	-	Senior Welfare Rights Manager
S Woon	-	Democratic Services Officer

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor D Hopkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing.

24 DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea no interests were declared.

25 MINUTES:

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 8 January, 2015, be approved as a correct record.

26 FEEBDACK FROM SITE VISITS TO RSL AND COUNCIL SHELTERED ACCOMMODATION.

The Chair referred to the site visits to Council Sheltered Accommodation and RSL Accommodation which had taken placed on 27 and 28 January, 2015.

Members' comments arising from the site visits to Council Sheltered Accommodation comprised:

- Very informative, good experience;
- Wardens undertake a lot of work, both officially and unofficially;
- The role of community connectors and how they can compliment the role of wardens;

- Residents appear to be happy;
- Nice mixture of different types of accommodation visited;
- The importance of the design of the site (the site on a hill had some disadvantages compared to the purpose built site which was on one level);
- The role of sheltered accommodation in providing services which takes pressure off social services;
- Guest rooms are available for visitors at a number of establishments, although often kept for emergencies;
- The variety of accommodation provided allowed for personal choice and there was no optimum site.

Sarah Jordan, Sheltered Housing Manager, briefed Members on the support planning process which ensures a person centred approach to providing support to tenants for the duration of their tenancy.

The Sheltered Housing Manager advised that there were approximately 300 individuals on the waiting list for sheltered accommodation.

In response to a question, the Sheltered Housing Manager confirmed that on some sheltered sites there is communal heating and water, for which a set weekly charge is made. .

Members' comments arising from the site visits to RSL Sheltered Accommodation comprised:

- Hazel Court was ahead of other types of accommodation and is available for individuals aged 50 plus. The rent includes a care package. Facilities include a restaurant, IT room and a gym. The complex offers a lot of facilities for use by the local community. The provision is economically viable. If the Council were to build a similar establishment, community rooms should be open to the whole community.
- The communal facilities are open to the community by the agreement of all residents.
- Rooms are available for rent for individuals visiting tenants.
- The Lllys y Werin day centre has 25 places per day which tenants can be referred to.
- Issues with the Council funding respite room, which is only used 30% of the time. (It was noted that there were issues with matching a suitable care package to the respite suite);
- Need to look at the suitability of venues for people with higher needs, e.g., coming out of hospital in wheelchairs;
- The ability to 'bulk purchase' utilities and incorporate a utilities into the weekly rental fee.

The Chair referred to Coastal Housing Group who had felt that their accommodation was outdated. Coastal Housing Group do not believe that people should pay for other services (e.g., support packages). There are care packages available which would incur a further expense.

In response to a question by the Chair, Members confirmed that they would like to visit other facilities which were examples of best practice outside the authority.

A discussion ensued regarding the facilities at Kenfig Hill, Carmarthen and Crymych.

RESOLVED that:

- a. The Sheltered Housing Manager forward copies of waiting lists to Committee Members; and
- b. Site visits be organised to facilities at Kenfig Hill, Carmarthen and Crymych.

27 **VOID PROPERTIES.**

Kevin Anderson, Operations Manager (West), provided a presentation on Void Properties.

He stated that there had previously been a high number of voids. However, rationalisation of stock carried out some years ago, market conditions and changes to the way the Housing Service managed its voids in late 2004 had resulted in a steady reduction of void properties over recent years.

He detailed:

- Void Levels;
- Demand;
- Stock Turnover; and
- Improvements to Voids management.

Members' asked questions of the Officer who responded accordingly.

Key issues arising from discussions included:

- Clarification was sought as to whether the numbers on the Housing Register include people on the ADAPT list waiting for adapted accommodation;
- The impact on rental streams if void properties are demolished;
- Difficulties associated with the use of Council properties for fraudulent use (i.e., individuals using the postal address but not residing at the property) and the measures being taken to combat this practice;
- The process of pre-allocation of properties before they are ready to live in was successful in reducing loss of income;

The Chair thanked the Operations Manager (West) for his informative presentation.

RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

28 **FEEDBACK FROM UNIVERSAL CREDIT BRIEFING (HELD ON 28 JANUARY, 2015) - (VERBAL).**

The Chair referred to the Universal Credit Briefing which had taken place on 28 January, 2015.

Jane Storer, Senior Welfare Rights Advisor, reported that the first seminar had taken place with further presentations planned for 10 and 12 February and 10 March, 2015. The presentations provided a broad overview of Universal Credit and all Council Staff and Members were encouraged to attend.

She detailed the timescales in relation to the implementation of Universal Credit and the progress made by neighbouring authorities.

It was noted that the scheme had far reaching consequences for many people with the added complexity that claims would have to be made and managed on-line. This would create challenges in respect of access to IT, bank accounts and budgeting skills.

She referred to a pilot scheme (in respect of a housing association based in Scotland) with payments direct to the landlord, who had seen the transaction fees triple to their organisation following the introduction of universal credit. This was due to the fact that tenants were paying their rent in instalments as opposed to paying it in one lump sum when they received the actual direct payment.

She stated that individuals were using their rent to pay for more urgent and pressing financial needs. However, as they were still receiving their other benefits which were paid at different times (e.g. job seekers allowance; child tax credit) they would use these payments to contribute to their rent. As a consequence they did not see the amount of arrears they expected, but they did see an increase in their transaction costs.

In conclusion, as these benefits (jobseekers allowance, child tax credit) would be included together with rent in a Universal Credit payment, claimants would not have the available financial resources to pay rent in instalments, so it would remain to be seen what the consequences would be.

The Chair stated that the briefing had been very informative and useful and provided information which would assist Members to signpost individuals.

The Chair thanked the Senior Welfare Rights Officer for her informative presentation.

RESOLVED that the Senior Welfare Rights Officer provide an update following the Seminars.

29 WORK PLAN 2014/2015.

The Chair presented the Work Programme 2014/2015.

RESOLVED that the following proposals for the action plan be approved:-

- The Senior Welfare Rights Officer provide an update following completion of the Universal Credit Seminars;

- Site visits be organised to RSL's sheltered accommodation in Kenfig Hill, Carmarthen and Crymych for March and be reported back to Committee in April;
- Reference to an invitation to the Director of Shelter Cymru to be removed from the workplan;
- Reference to an invitation to Councillor Mark Thomas to be removed;
- Rose McCreesh to be invited to the March meeting to provide a presentation on changes to Council tax in respect of empty properties;
- The Task and Finish Group on Poverty report their findings to the scheduled meeting in April. (It was noted that dates were awaited from S Crawley for an overview presentation).

The meeting ended at 3.41 am

CHAIR

Empty property work in Swansea

Introductions

- 1 Sally Jones – Technical Officer
- 1 Huw Morgan – Divisional EHO
- 1 Mark Wade – Community Housing Services Manager

Agenda

Empty property statistics

Measures to bring empty properties back into use

Informal action's

Changes to Council Tax

Any questions

Empty property figures for the Swansea area:

3,428 privately owned empty properties
(as of 1st April 2014)

1,969 of which have been empty for more than 6 months

Last year 94 properties were brought back to occupation through direct action.



Measures to bring empty properties back into use



Annual mail-shot:

Makes owners aware of loans, vat discounts etc.

Identifies the length of time their property has been empty

Confirms potential lost income for that period;

Highlights any key issues (such as changes in council tax rates)

1,732 letters sent out April / May this year

<u>Lost rental income</u>	2 yrs empty	4 yrs empty	6 yrs empty	8 yrs empty	10 yrs empty
2 Bed	£10,908	£21,816	£32,724	£43,632	£54,540
3 Bed	£11,966	£23,932	£35,898	£47,864	£59,830

Legislation allows us to deal with:

Ruinous and dilapidated building;

Faulty rain water goods;

Gardens that are in such a condition as to attract and provide harbourage for rodents;

Properties that are causing a statutory nuisance;

Properties that are prejudicial to health

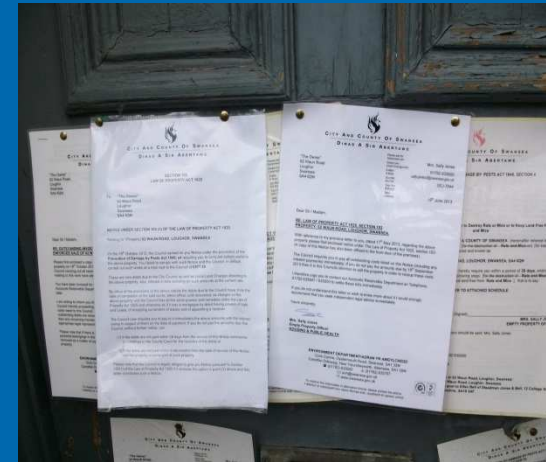
Securing empty buildings that are open to access.

Prosecute an owner for failure to comply with the notice.



Enforced sale of empty properties

- 1 11 properties sold via enforced sale (since 2008);
- 1 4 currently going through the process;
- 1 1 sold by the owner & all debts settled prior to the Council putting into auction;
- 1 1 owner settled a long term debt rather than loose the property via auction.
- 1 Ideal way of dealing with problematic, long term, empty properties;
- 1 New ownership normally leads to improvement & re-occupation.
- 1 No cost to the Council.



Informal actions:

Grant for Nomination rights – a grant of up to £20,000 in return the property must be let for a min of 3 years via the Councils preferred Social Letting Agent.

Houses into Homes Loan scheme – an interest free loan of up to £25,000.

VAT discounts (to 5% for the cost of renovation works)for owners renovating their empty properties – property must have been empty for longer than 2 years,

Mail-shots – to make owners aware of the above (& empty property information pack)



Informal actions *(continued)*;

Advice – on general letting, how to manage the property, instructing builders, insurance, reassurance etc.

City & County of Swansea Web page;

Encouragement to sell - Links with local auctioneers;

Inter department working

Links with the Fire Service & Police

Persuasion, persistence & perseverance



Houses into Homes

Interest free loan of up to £25,000 per unit. Max £150,000 per applicant.

28 Houses into Homes loans have been issued to date.

Value to date £834,000

2 loans repaid so far with a value £40,000. Will be recycled as new loans

16 properties brought back to occupation to date. Further funding available in 2015/16.

Dillwyn Road, Sketty

Before



After



Derelict Bakery at rear of Henrietta Street

Before



After



Castle Street, Loughor

Before



After



Role of the RSL's

A typical long term empty property owner is **very** risk averse. They perhaps want to retain ownership of the property but don't know how to manage renovation work, letting the property etc

An RSL can lease the property on a long term basis, renovate it then rent it out.



And finally...



Any questions?

Homelessness: How we Provide for the Future

Mark Wade / Steve Porter
Housing Options

City and County of Swansea
Dinas a Sir Abertawe



The Housing Options Service – An Overview

- Role of Housing Options
- Causes of Homelessness / Dispelling the Myths
- Preventing Homelessness
- What Options?
- Housing Assessment and Allocations
- Assessment Myths
- Key Issues for 15/16 and beyond



Role of Housing Options

- Provide advice and assistance to any person(s) threatened with homelessness (*some figures*)
- Assess Housing Need in accordance with the Housing Allocations Policy 2009 (applicants and tenants) and manage the Housing Needs list
- Provide affordable options for housing
- Make appropriate referrals for support on assessment of needs
- Work in Partnership with various Agencies & Departments e.g. Barnado's / Social Services / Probation / Police (MAPPA)
- Work in partnership with the Voluntary Sector e.g. 'Move-On' Scheme



Causes of Homelessness

- Relationship breakdown
- Domestic Violence
- Private Rented – Notice to Quit / too expensive
- Leaving Institution – Prison / Care / Armed Forces
- Rough Sleeping / Substance Misuse
- Mortgage Repossessions
- Evictions through Anti-Social behaviour / Rent Arrears
- Emergency – e.g. fire / flood
- Refugee Status
- Property unsuitable E.g. Medical grounds / condition of property



Homelessness Myths

- I should only go to Housing Options if I'm street homeless
- I'm entitled to a Council house if I'm homeless
- The Council will put me in Bed & Breakfast if I have nowhere to go
- If I lose my accommodation I will go straight to the top of the Housing Needs Register
- If I'm from a particular area in Swansea the Council will re-house me back in that area
- If I was an Asylum Seeker/Eastern European I would get housed



Preventing homelessness

- Is it better to stay where you are?
- Mediation & negotiation
(Parents/Landlords/Courts etc.)
- Money advice / Financial help
- Support & Advice
- Improving the security of a home
- Help with moving into a new home (bond, rent in advance etc.)



Options for moving into permanent housing

- Council
- Housing Association nominations / direct application
- Private Rented Sector
- Long term supported housing
- Move-on Strategy
- Adapted Housing (LA/ Gwalia /Coastal /Family Housing)
- Sheltered Accommodation
- Purchasing a Home



Housing Options & The Voluntary Sector

- Important linkages
- Adds value and increases housing options, gives flexibility in service delivery
- Voluntary Sector Grant – Shelter Cymru, Barnado's BAYS, Swansea Bond Board, Rough Sleepers Intervention Team funded.
- Joint Homelessness and Supporting People Collaborative Provider Forum – determines strategic direction for homelessness services



Assessment Team

- There are just under 4000 households on the Housing Needs Register
- Points based Policy for both Applicants / Tenants;
- Looks at cumulative housing need;
- Points awarded for; *Insecurity of tenure/Condition of Property/Medical Needs/Social Needs/time spent on the list;*
- Review of every application carried out annually
- Not just about Waiting List but about providing appropriate advice and assistance for individual needs
- How to apply – by application form or over the telephone



Assessment Myths

- I will keep going up the list over time
- My support worker / GP has sent a letter of support in so I will get more points
- I have seen an empty property so can I have it
- You must have something you can offer me? (Choice Advisor/Website)
- My daughter (15) is sharing with my 6 year old boy so you have to move us legally
- I have access to children so I need a house



Key Issues

- **Continual Pressure on Service** (demand outstripping supply, realistic expectations)
- **Housing Act (Wales) 2014** – Implementation date 27TH April 2015 . Significant change. Much greater emphasis on prevention of homelessness, increased use of private rented sector for homeless households and those in housing need, prisoners no longer automatically in ‘priority need’. WG providing short term funding to Council’s to help meet new duties
- **Private Rented Sector Lettings Team**



Key Issues (cont'd)

- **Welfare Reform**
 - Universal Credit
 - Under Occupation Charge (Bedroom Tax)
 - Shared accommodation rates for U-35's
- **Challenging Client Group** – Increase in substance misuse / mental health etc.



Key Issues (cont'd)

- **Closer links with Housing Associations** – e.g. Move towards shared referral process, sharing of information and open communication
- **Continued emphasis on reducing the need for use of Bed & Breakfast and tackling Rough Sleeping**
- **Increased use of Technology** – e.g. Housing Options Webpage - launched in 2012 – swanseahousing.co.uk



Swansea Housing - Windows Internet Explorer

http://swanseahousing.co.uk/index.php

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Swansea Housing

HOUSING @ SWANSEA Latest News: Calling all Landlords..... Select Language
Powered by Google Translate

Home Accommodation Landlords News Information Contact Search

Welcome to the Swansea Housing Website

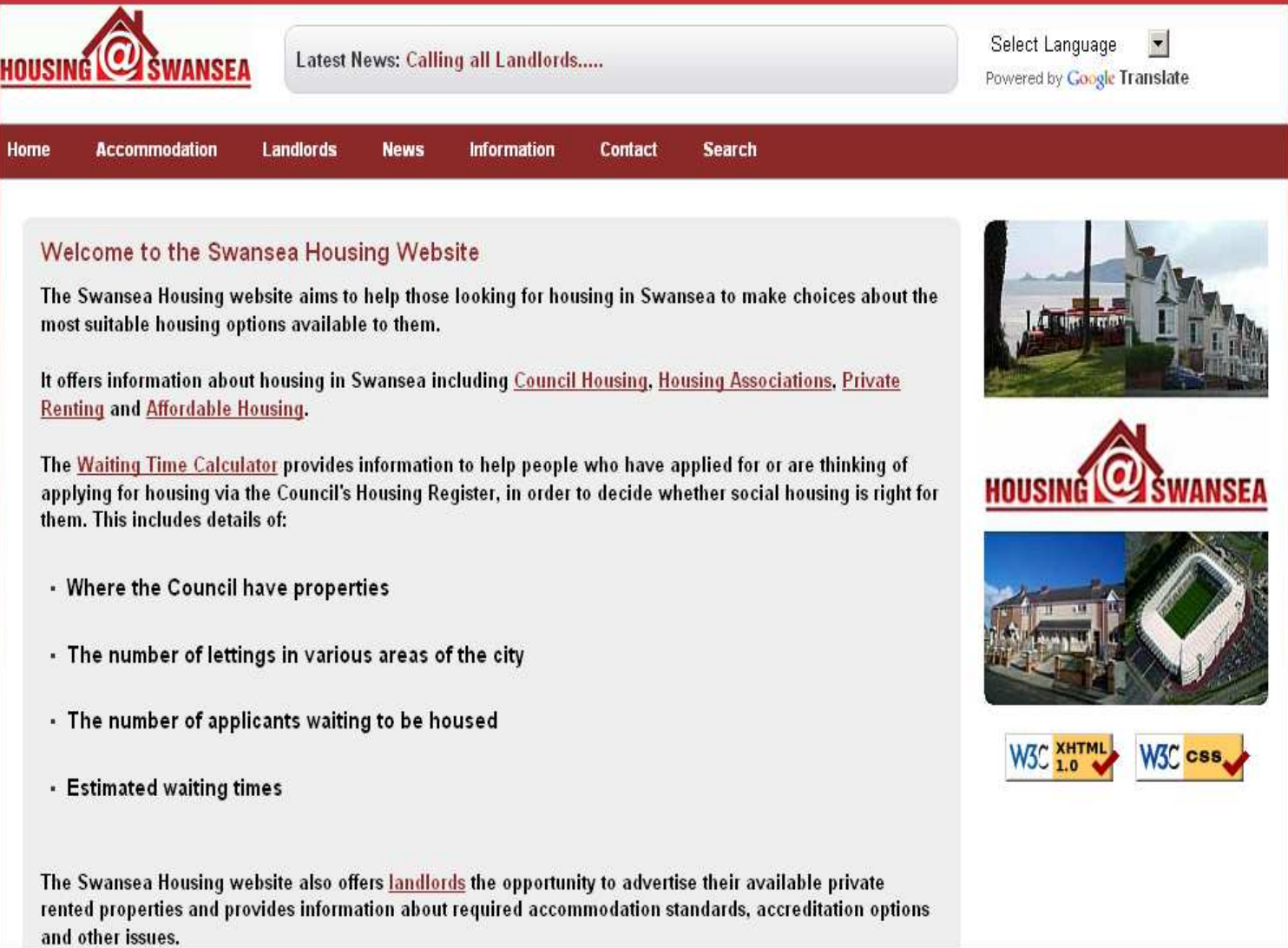
The Swansea Housing website aims to help those looking for housing in Swansea to make choices about the most suitable housing options available to them.

It offers information about housing in Swansea including [Council Housing](#), [Housing Associations](#), [Private Renting](#) and [Affordable Housing](#).

The [Waiting Time Calculator](#) provides information to help people who have applied for or are thinking of applying for housing via the Council's Housing Register, in order to decide whether social housing is right for them. This includes details of:

- Where the Council have properties
- The number of lettings in various areas of the city
- The number of applicants waiting to be housed
- Estimated waiting times

The Swansea Housing website also offers [landlords](#) the opportunity to advertise their available private rented properties and provides information about required accommodation standards, accreditation options and other issues.



The main content area of the website is a white box with a red border. It contains a welcome message, a list of services, and a list of features. To the right of the text are two images: a row of houses and a stadium. Below the images is the 'HOUSING @ SWANSEA' logo and two accreditation badges for W3C XHTML 1.0 and W3C CSS.

Internet 100%

Start Microsoft PRS Steering Bond Board IK Private Sector HOUSING OPT workshop soci Swansea Ho Welsh Govern Microsoft Pow 15:53

If you are looking for a home there are a number of options you may want to think about

The links below provide information which will help you consider the 'pros and cons' of the available options and to decide what might be best for you.

You will also be able to view details of properties that you could rent now, and get information about things you may need to consider such as the different tenancy types, waiting lists and affordability.

Choose an option below for more information about the choices that are available to you.



Council Housing



Housing Associations



Private Rented Accommodation



Assisted Home Ownership



Sheltered Housing



Homeswapper



Adapted Housing



Waiting time calculator



Available Private Properties



Properties available NOW



Questions?

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Housing Options Manager

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Mark Wade

Community Housing Services
Manager

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Report of the Chair

People Cabinet Advisory Committee – 6 March 2015

PEOPLE CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

Date	Subject Area	Lead
8 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice re:- Task and Finish Group on potential changes to the member role in Tackling Poverty Strategy To discuss this suggested work programme To be advised of suitable sheltered Housing Complexes to visit and to identify members who wish to undertake these site visits. 	Cllr W Evans and C Sivers List to be provided by Jane Harris
27 & 28 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site Visit by certain CAC Members to Sheltered Housing Complexes 	Jane Harris/ Sarah Jordan
28 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness Raising Seminar – Universal Credit (including Welfare Reforms) 	Jane Storer
5 February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from Site Visits to RSL & Council Sheltered Accommodation (Councillor J E C Harris and U Clay to attend) Void Properties Councillor M Thomas to attend to outline his policies and key areas of responsibilities 	Chair K Anderson
5 March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty Properties Homelessness 	Huw Morgan, Sally Jones Mark Wade/ Steve Porter
24 March 2015	Task and Finish Group Meeting re: Poverty	
2 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Task and Finish Group to report back on Tackling Poverty Feedback from Site Visits to RSL sheltered accommodation in Kenfig Hill, Carmarthen and Crymych. 	Chair Chair