

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At: Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

On: Thursday, 10 March 2016

Time: 2.00 pm

Chair: Councillor

Membership:

Councillors: R A Clay, D W Cole, A M Cook, J P Curtice, N J Davies, T J Hennegan, B Hopkins, H M Morris and G J Tanner

AGENDA

Page No.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 **Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**
www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests
- 3 **Minutes:** 1 - 4
To approve & sign the Minutes of the previous meeting(s) as a correct record.
- 4 **BME Access to Communities First Provision (Verbal).**
- 5 **Disabled Facilities Grants.** 5 - 8
- 6 **Work Plan 2015-2016.** 9 - 10

Next Meeting: Thursday, 14 April 2016 at 2.00 pm



Patrick Arran
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Thursday, 3 March 2016

Contact: Democratic Services - 01792 636923

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON
THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Bob Clay (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
D W Cole

Councillor(s)
A M Cook

Councillor(s)
G J Tanner

Officer(s)

T Nash

C Small

S Woon

Sustainable Development Team Leader

Sustainable Development Officer

Democratic Services Officer

54 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J P Curtice, N J Davies, B H Hopkins and T J Hennegan.

55 **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.

56 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 14 January, 2015, be approved as a correct record.

57 **SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAICS (PV) UPDATE.**

Tanya Nash, Sustainable Development Team Leader, assisted by Chris Small, Sustainable Development Officer provided a presentation on Solar Photovoltaics (PV).

Tanya Nash offered apologies on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer and Andrew Shaw who were unable to attend.

The presentation detailed:

- Swansea Community Energy and Enterprise Scheme (SCEES);
- General PV Update;
- Community Energy;
- How does it work;
- SCEES;
- How does it work;

- SCEES Buildings;
- Original Scheme;
- Removal of Government Incentives;
- Impact on Solar Community Energy Schemes;
- Implications for SCEES;
- Recent Developments;
- Next Steps; and
- Other Solar PV.

Members congratulated the Officers on their efforts in relation to the work involved in setting up the Community Benefits Society within six weeks and mitigating the reductions in tariffs in relation to the Community Energy Scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services referred to the potential within the Councils' vast housing stock. However, there were difficulties associated with tenancy agreements and tight deadlines which had made it impossible to deliver. As a result, it had been agreed to focus on the Glynn Vivian which was a new build lower energy.

In response to a Member's questions, Officers confirmed that:

- Due to tight deadlines, when selecting buildings the criteria had focussed on physical suitability (e.g. size of roof etc);
- Opportunities existed for PV installation in new build Council houses with retro-fitting over time;
- Whilst initially focussing on target areas, this has now been broadened to Council owned buildings;
- Community Centres were proving problematical in so far as none were facing in the right direction or the roofs were not large enough;
- The first phase will concentrate on buildings that are less high risk;
- Presentations have been made to Swansea Environment Forum. Whilst more promotional work is needed, caution needs to be exercised due to the uncertainty in this area;
- Communities are cautious as there is a lack of trust. The decision of Cabinet to invest was a huge benefit;
- In relation to the output in Wales, the figures are hit and miss, although Swansea is one of the best places to do this;
- The concept of efficiency is a complex one and is often misunderstood. However, no scheme is 100% efficient; and
- Whilst the original brief was to look at the areas that are disadvantaged, this does not preclude people in the Swansea West area who would want to invest.

The Chair urged Members to provide suggestions for sites that may be considered within their wards.

Councillor P M Meara suggested Sketty School as it benefitted from a large, South facing roof.

Members discussed the educational aspects for the next generation and the use of IPADS which detailed energy.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their informative presentation and expressed his appreciation for their work.

RESOLVED that the presentation be **NOTED**.

58 **OVERVIEW OF CITY & COUNTY OF SWANSEA ENERGY POLICIES. (VERBAL)**

The Chair circulated a paper entitled 'Energy and Climate Change CCS Policy Context' which had been prepared by Tanya Nash, Sustainable Development Team Leader.

The document outlined Energy Policy from a UK Government; Welsh Government and City and County of Swansea viewpoint.

The Chair referred to the recent motion at Council, which detailed the Council's ambition to be fossil fuel free by 2025.

He referred to the threats surrounding the Tidal Bay Lagoon and the division between what Central and Local Government were trying to achieve.

In response to questions regarding the Carbon Reduction Strategy, the Sustainable Development Team Leader confirmed that the Council were ahead of target at the moment, with the likelihood that the carbon reduction target set out in the strategy will be met.

In response to a further question regarding the Climate Local Commitment which had originated two years ago, the Sustainable Development Team Leader stated that had been re-written in order to meet the objectives in the action plan for last year and the action plan would therefore be updated in light of that review. She stated that Swansea was the only Welsh Authority to sign up to the plan.

The Chair referred to the PV agenda which was big part of commercialisation. He stated that becoming fossil free before 2025 would allow the Council to invest profits into local services.

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services referred to the major piece of work which is underway looking at the energy strategy and how landfill is managed. There are also savings to be derived from clean energy and the district heating network. She urged Members to contact her should they have any specific issues they feel should be examined.

The Chair thanked the Sustainable Development Team Leader for the briefing note.

RESOLVED that the briefing be noted.

59 **WORK PLAN 2015-2016.**

The Chair referred to the work plan and the two Cabinet Portfolios serviced by the Cabinet Advisory Committee.

He referred to the Cabinet Advisory Committee's role in making useful, concrete contributions to policy development. He stated that one meeting a month would not do either Cabinet Portfolio justice and sought Member views in respect of scheduling further meetings (which could be in the form of Task and Finish Groups or Sub Committees).

Members' stated that they would consider the matter and discuss the issues at a future meeting.

The Chair referred to the Work Plan and the items scheduled for the forthcoming meetings, specifically 10 March, 2016.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) An item on Community Engagement be scheduled for the meeting on 10 March, 2016;
- 2) The Chair liaise with the Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services to identify a further topic for discussion.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

CHAIR

Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee – 10th March 2016 Disabled Facilities Grants

1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is to help fund modifications to the home environment in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. The focus is on identifying and delivering an individualised solution to enable a person to use their home effectively in accordance with their needs.
- 1.2 Adaptations are a key preventative measure helping avoid slips, trips and falls in the home for example. They are also used to help facilitate hospital discharge and delay/reduce the need for care packages and residential care admissions.
- 1.3 Demand for adaptations is rising. This is led by demographic change and medical advances that have allowed people of all ages, with varying levels of disabilities and complex needs, to lead longer and more independent lives in the community.
- 1.4 A recent paper by the UK Home Adaptations Consortium forecasts that the number of people aged 65 or over will increase by 23% by 2019, growing to 56% of the population by 2031. The number of people aged 75 and over will see an increase of 70% by 2031, compared with an overall population growth of only 16%.

2. Disabled Facilities Grants

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide DFGs. These are provided using the powers laid down by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The grants are means tested and available to home owners, Council and private tenants. For Council tenants we use resources from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to fund adaptations but mirror the DFG process to ensure consistency.
- 2.2 The maximum grant limit in Wales is £36,000 per application. The means test is not applied where the application is for a disabled child. Applicants at or below the income threshold for means tested benefits are entitled to full grant assistance.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England & Wales Order 2002 requires Councils to adopt a Policy on adaptations and housing renewal assistance. The Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy 2012-17 details how the Council delivers assistance to help residents adapt and maintain their homes. This includes discretion to

award up to a further £10,000 to an applicant where adaptation costs cannot be fully met within the statutory DFG limit.

4. Budget

4.1 The Annual Capital budget for the Disabled Facilities Grants and repair assistance is £5.2m funded by the General Fund. The annual capital budget for adaptations for Council tenants is £2.75m funded by the HRA.

5. DFG Process

5.1 DFGs are managed by the Housing Renewal and Adaptations Service in Housing and Public Protection. Requests for DFG are received from a variety of Council departments and partner agencies. An initial screening process is undertaken to help determine the customer's needs as early as possible.

5.2 DFG law requires consultation with Occupational Therapy. The Occupational Therapist (OT) carries out a functional assessment of the person's abilities in relation to personal and domestic activities within their home and provides Housing with detailed recommendations for adaptations and equipment.

5.3 On receiving the OT recommendations, the Housing Caseworker helps customers complete application forms and source relevant supporting documentation. The Caseworker also carries out the means test to determine if the customer is required to pay anything towards the cost of the adaptation works.

5.4 In accordance with good practice, the customer is offered the opportunity for the works to be administered by the Housing Renewal and Adaptations Agency Service. The Agency Service is offered to help DFG customers complete adaptation works quickly and to as high a standard as is possible. Services provided by the Agency include:

- Providing access to Council procured local builders and contractors.
- Assisting with other housing options if adaptations are not feasible at the current home.
- Helping applicants access support services.
- Advising on entitlement to welfare benefits and access to other forms of financial assistance, for example home repair loans.
- Acting as Contract Administrator for any adaptation works recommended by the Occupational Therapist. This includes carrying out a survey, preparation of designs/plans, estimates, schedules of work, ensuring construction health and safety compliance, supervising / inspecting works and liaising with other statutory bodies and departments including Planning and Building Control.

6. Performance

6.1 A robust performance management system is in place to ensure waiting times for adaptations are monitored and kept to a minimum. Waiting times are measured from initial customer contact to completion of works. These have reduced since 2010. See Table 1.

Table 1

Year	Number of DFGs completed	Average numbers of days to complete a DFG
2011/12	474	351
2012/13	394	317
2013/14	420	267
2014/15	302	277

6.2 A systems review of the DFG process has been completed and a number of changes aimed at reducing waiting times have been implemented. This includes for example a telephone based initial enquiry and screening process. The Agency Service has also been expanded and helps ensure DFGs are offered within statutory timescales.

6.3 Waiting times have however increased during 2015/16. The waiting time target is 290 days but current performance is 346 days. This is largely due to available OT resources, set in the context of the high demand for adaptations detailed in this report. OT resource is also a contributing factor in the reduced number of adaptations completed in 2014/15 compared to previous years. To manage this and improve performance, Housing has directly employed 2.5 OT staff to work in addition to OTs based in Social Services. This is expected to improve DFG performance in 2016/17 and beyond.

7. Minor Adaptations

7.1 Minor adaptations are completed in partnership with Swansea Care and Repair. Small adaptations up to £2000 in value are delivered outside of the DFG process and without the need for an Occupational Therapist assessment in every case. The average waiting time for minor

adaptations in 2015/16 is 55 days. Typical works include installation of grab rails, external handrails, small ramps and lever taps. In 2014/15 467 minor adaptations were completed. Minor adaptations are not included in the monitoring of DFG waiting times. The larger and more complex adaptations are all delivered through the DFG process, hence longer waiting times for DFG.

Contact Officers:

Mark Wade
Community Housing Service Manager. Tel: 01792 635004

Darren Harrison
Housing Adaptations Coordinator. Tel: 01792 635064

Report of the Chair

Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee – 10 March 2016

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Date	Subject Area	Lead
2 June 2015	Local Housing Strategy (Chapters 1-4): Introduction; Housing Market Assessments; Land Use Planning Framework and Affordable Housing.	2 June 2015
13 August 2015	Local Housing Strategy (Chapter 6) <i>Addressing the Needs of specific Groups: Homelessness Supporting People; An Ageing population; The housing needs of the BME Population; Gypsies & Travellers and Sustainability & Housing</i>	Peter Williams
10 September 2015	Co-operative Housing	David Palmer, Co-operative Housing Project Manager, Wales Co-operative Centre.
6 October 2015	Smart Energy	Fflur Lawton, Head of Policy and Communications (Wales)
12 November 2015	1. Welfare Reform Update. 2. Restructuring of Communities First (Incorporating Impact on Third Sector).	Karen Grunhunt & Jane Storer
10 December 2015	1. Rent Recovery and Housing Benefit Fraud; 2. Progress on CCoS House Building Programme (targets in LDP; social housing); 3. Changes to Council Tax in relation to Empty Properties; 4. Private rented sector lettings team and change in policy.	Jane Harris/ Tal Davies David Evans Paul Mellor Martin Webborn/ Mark Wade Mark Wade
14 January 2016	1. Community Development Training – feedback from Members on ideas for the next training session (e.g., developing work plans within wards to deal with anti-poverty). 2. Commercialisation.	Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty Chris Williams Head of Commercial Services
11 February 2016	1. Solar Photovoltaics (PV) Update. 2. Energy Update.	Tanya Nash Chris Small

10 March 2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Engagement. 2. Disabled Facilities Grants. 	Cabinet Member for Anti Poverty M Wade
14 April 2016	Update on Council Tax Changes.	Martin Webborn
To be Scheduled/Confirmed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Joseph Rowntree Foundations (JRF) publication on Black and Ethnic Minority Poverty. b. Update on Restructuring of Communities First (incorporating impact on third sector). c. Update on how food banks could be further supported by the Authority (Minutes of 2 June, 2015). 	Community Food & Growing Manager