



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Economy & Infrastructure Service Transformation Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS Teams

Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillor P Downing (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C R Doyle
N L Matthews

Councillor(s)

W G Lewis
W G Thomas

Councillor(s)

P Lloyd
T M White

Officer(s)

Sally-Ann Evans
Phil Holmes
Rosie Jackson
Lisa Jones
Carol Morgan
Samantha Woon

Lead Lawyer
Head of Planning & City Regeneration
Senior Policy & Leasehold Officer
Associate Lawyer
Head of Housing & Public Health
Democratic Services Officer

Also present

Councillor A S Lewis – Cabinet Member for Service Transformation.

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): S J Rice

30 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interests.

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

31 Minutes:

Resolved that the Minutes of the Economy & Infrastructure Service Transformation Committee held on 18 January 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

32 More Homes Delivery Programme.

The Cabinet Member for Service Transformation introduced the More Homes Delivery Programme and stated that it was a key mechanism to deliver the corporate commitment to increase the amount of affordable housing in Swansea.

The Head of Housing & Public Protection assisted by the Senior Policy &

Leasehold Officer reported that the first Housing Revenue Account Development Plan had been approved in February 2019, which set out a programme to develop over 140 new homes. In January 2020, the Council increased the goal and approved a 10-year ambition to deliver 1,000 additional Council homes from 2021-2031. The recommendations of the report also noted that any changes in the financial assumptions made at that time would result in an increase or decrease in the number of units that the Council could afford to deliver.

Housing demand had steadily increased since 2016 due to the impact of the pandemic and other external factors. As a result, the housing waiting list currently stood at 7948 households, 17% of which were homeless, 63% were waiting for re-housing and 20% were awaiting transfers. These were the highest numbers ever in Swansea and it is a situation replicated across Wales and nationally.

The More Homes Programme had delivered an additional 255 council homes via a mixed strategy of new build developments, acquisitions and conversions of existing properties.

All new council homes are built with energy efficiency as one of the main priorities. They have been built to a performance standard known as the "Swansea Standard", meaning that they are very well insulated, and the energy required to heat them is very low compared to a traditional home. The addition of renewable technologies including solar panels, storage batteries and ground source heat pumps mean that Swansea Standard homes are designed as mini power stations, known as Homes as Power Stations (HAPS), and they produce a significant proportion of the energy that is required to heat the home and provide hot water. This results in very low energy bills for tenants.

The Council was working in partnership with the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University to monitor the energy consumption, building performance, and tenant experience of all the new build properties over a long-term period to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of the buildings. An interim findings report was due in the Summer.

The Swansea Standard complies with Welsh Government funding requirements for Social Housing Grant that are set out in Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR21). This requires all new social housing construction standards to work towards net zero carbon, achieve an EPC rating A and not to install fossil fuel fired boilers to provide domestic hot water and heating. The guidance also stipulates the space standards and safety and security requirements that must be adhered to.

The More Homes Programme is funded via a mix of Welsh Government Grants and the HRA Capital Budget (via tenants' rents and HRA borrowing).

There are a number of additional Welsh Government funding streams which have contributed to the More Homes Delivery Programme including:

- Land and Building Development Fund.
- Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme.
- Innovative Housing Programme.

- Swansea Bay City Deal Homes as Power Stations (HAPS) Financial Incentive Fund.

Officers detailed the current schemes in development (i.e. at design or planning application stage). The longer-term pipeline of delivery was more difficult to predict given the increasing budgetary constraints/pressures faced by the HRA, as set out in the Budget report approved by Cabinet on 15th February 2024. Members noted that there are a number of HRA sites that are in the early stages of feasibility work including site surveys and concept plan development.

The main challenges for the delivery of the More Homes Programme included:

- HRA budget pressures.
- The need to increase the pace and scale of delivery to meet ever increasing demand for social housing against a challenging financial situation.
- A challenging portfolio of HRA owned land with high levels of site abnormalities, contributing to increased scheme costs.
- Delays in securing statutory planning and drainage/SAB approvals.

Members noted the actions underway to address the challenges which included:

- The introduction of a variety of delivery mechanisms, in addition to in-house delivery, to increase the pace and scale of delivery and provide additional capacity to internal teams including.
- Improving viability and cost information at an earlier stage for all schemes ensure that the most viable sites were selected for development, including undertaking a range of surveys on potential sites to determine ground conditions to assess impact on cost of development.
- Review of the Swansea Standard to undertake a value engineering exercise to find ways to reduce costs whilst maintaining quality.
- Maintain the budget for acquisitions over the next 3 years to ensure properties can continue to be rapidly added to the housing to assist in the response to increasing levels of homelessness and demand on temporary accommodation.
- Identify further opportunities for the Council to acquire s106 planning consent affordable housing units via private developments.

Officers advised that the More Homes Programme was included in the Directorate risk register, and Homelessness was recorded in the corporate risk register. Both were monitored on a regular basis.

Committee questioning and discussions focussed on the following:

- Use of community buildings (such as churches) and the challenges associated with re-modelling such buildings.
- Monitoring of Employers Agent.
- Multi-generational living and challenges associated with properties of this type.
- Finance and grant requirements.
- Issues associated with single occupancy in larger accommodation.
- Partnership working with RSL's in relation to the social housing grant.

- The 'Pattern Book'.
- Section 106 Agreements.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation, the Head of Housing & Public Protection and the Senior Policy & Leasehold Officer for their participation and attendance.

Resolved that:

- 1) The progress in relation to the More Homes Delivery Programme be noted.

33 Work Plan.

The Work Plan 2023-2024.

The topics for discussion at the following meeting were noted:

- 11 April 2024:
 - Tawe Riverside Corridor Action Plan.
 - Annual Report.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chair