



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Scrutiny Performance Panel – Service Improvement & Finance**

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Wednesday, 20 March 2019 at 9.30 am

**Present:** Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

J E Burtonshaw  
L James  
A S Lewis  
D W W Thomas

**Councillor(s)**

P Downing  
P K Jones  
I E Mann

**Councillor(s)**

P R Hood-Williams  
J W Jones  
B J Rowlands

**Other Attendees**

June Burtonshaw  
Andrea Lewis

Cabinet Member - Better Communities  
Cabinet Member - Homes & Energy

**Officer(s)**

Karen Gibbins  
Bethan Hopkins  
Tracey McNulty  
Mark Wade

Principal Librarian Information And Learning  
Scrutiny Officer  
Head of Cultural Services  
Head of Housing & Public Health

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): M H Jones

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

- None

**2 Notes**

- Approved

**3 Public Questions**

- None

**4 Wales Audit Office Report - Housing Quality Standards**

- £500m capital investment in Council housing between 2002 -2020

- The Wales Audit Office (WAO) has noted the Councils 'sound approach' to the work
- More work is being done 'in house'
- Raising the standards for Council tenants
- WAO validated the programme of work
- Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) are an integral part of the overall strategy
- Robust plans in place to meet standards
- Deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 2020 to meet the standards
- WHQS are the legal benchmark for all social housing
- 2012-2018 £230m spent so far
- Legal and regulatory obligations
- 6 technical measures of components of WHQS
- The standards fit into Council corporate priorities and wider agendas on health, well-being, poverty and public services
- Work closely with other services such as corporate building services
- Every 5 years the Council undertake independent validation of properties and produce reports on condition and what work should be planned
- Council surveyors then go and prioritise the work
- Other teams such as corporate building services feedback to the team if they see other work which needs addressing
- Use standard component life cycle timelines to plan work (e.g. new roofs)
- 'Acceptable Fails' in the report represent properties which are still delivering programmes or where tenants have refused the work
- Some tenants are too unwell or not able to cope with the major disruption so can refuse to have the upgrades
- Upgrades will then be done when the property becomes vacant
- Biggest challenge is redoing gardens
- Work includes installing handrails to steps, protecting changes in levels to retaining walls and mitigating risks and hazards in gardens generally
- £118m to deliver the WHQs by December 2020
- Annual update to scrutiny will be undertaken
- External Surveyor engaged to carry independent house condition surveys for the Council to inform future repair programmes and validate WHQS works carried out to date
- Environmental and green issues are important in communal areas
- Housing Preparation Unit deal with void properties
- Congratulate team on work done in West Cross
- Housing Officers in the District Housing Offices work with tenants to encourage them to maintain their gardens. This done informally in most cases but tenancy conditions can be invoked where appropriate.
- Councils approach to the WHQs is generally well integrated
- Most people felt the improvement of their homes was beneficial – Council's internal survey questionnaire more detailed than WAO telephone survey and satisfaction levels generally measured higher
- Action plan has been developed to deal with any recommendations within the Wales Audit Office Report
- Piloting retrofitting 'Homes as Power Stations'

- Council goes above the WHQS but do have budget restrictions
- Some disruption payments to tenants recognising the huge inconvenience and intrusive nature of work and lack of cooking and washing facilities during that time
- Been lobbying for more funding around solar energy
- Good comprehensive report and presentation
- Biggest improvement in public health is down to safe and secure housing
- Panel really appreciate the work which has been done and congratulate the team

## **5 Welsh Public Library Standards Annual Report 2017/18**

- Still continue to perform well in library services
- Public libraries have 12 core entitlements with 16 quality indicators
- Met 11 of the 12 core entitlements
- QI 9 – missed up to date reading materials
- QI 10 – missed Welsh Language Resources
- QI 3 – missed staffing levels and qualifications
- Qualified managers have left the service which reduced the qualification average
- Discussed 4 case studies relating to individual development
  1. Crochet group St Thomas
  2. Reading Stars in Brynhyfryd
  3. Shopping Online – Central
  4. Mental Health support – Clydach
- Looking at improving monitoring to improve outcomes
- 5<sup>th</sup> in Wales for library attendance for events
- 5<sup>th</sup> in Wales for library visits
- 5<sup>th</sup> Wales for revenue expenditure
- 8<sup>th</sup> in Wales for online access
- Good customer satisfaction rates
- Met targets of sufficient service points due to the wide spread of libraries
- Will continue to address any failure points
- No mobile libraries left but do have community service deliveries
- Agency staff are used to cover sickness and deal with delays in recruitment
- There will be no more changes in library service times for the foreseeable future
- Borrow Box – free downloads including audio books, shared across Wales with partial Welsh Government Funding
- It is important to maintain library services
- Pleased to see libraries thriving

## **6 Work Plan 2018/19**

- Discussed

The meeting ended at 11.25 am

**Chair**