



City and County of Swansea

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

Remotely via Teams

Monday, 10 May 2021 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor C A Holley (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

P M Black
L James
D W W Thomas

Councillor(s)

P Downing
M H Jones
I E Mann

Councillor(s)

P R Hood-Williams
J W Jones
B J Rowlands

Other Attendees

Cllr Andrea Lewis Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Service Transformation

Officer(s)

Emily-Jayne Davies Scrutiny Officer
David Meyrick Housing Planning and Delivery Manager
Mark Wade Head of Housing & Public Health

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P K Jones

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

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

2 Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, no declarations of Whipped Votes or Party Whips were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)

The minutes of the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel meeting, held on 12th April 2021, were agreed as an accurate record.

4 Public Questions

There were no public questions

5 Welsh Housing Quality Standards Annual Update

Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy and Service Transformation, attended the meeting to present the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard Annual Report (WHQS)** and answer questions. Mark Wade, Head of Housing and Public Health, and David Meyrick, Housing Planning and Delivery Manager, also attended to present to the Panel and answer questions.

The Panel held a discussion about the statutory requirement for all social landlords in Wales, forming part of the Council's Local Housing Strategy as well as the Public Accountability Measures. The Panel heard that due to the pandemic, Welsh Government suspended all of its WHQS monitoring activities in 2020 and had only reintroduced these in March 2021. Welsh Government had originally set the deadline for social rented homes to reach WHQS compliance by 31st December 2020. Due to the pandemic, the new deadline is now 31st December 2021.

Discussions included:

- Effects of the pandemic on the work being carried out and accessibility to tenanted properties. Cllr Lewis remarked on the incredible work carried out by Housing Services under difficult circumstances.
- The Panel heard that the WHQS sets out its requirements across six main themes comprising good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated; up to date kitchens and bathrooms; located in safe and attractive environments and suited to the specific requirements of the household.
- Officers explained that if elements within these themes are not considered to be in reasonable condition, and performing as intended, they are classed as an 'acceptable fail'.
- Over the last 21 month period full WHQS compliance has increased by 2,338 to 7,753 properties.
- The Panel heard it is expected that in 2021, despite reduced momentum because of Covid 19, all properties in the programme will have had an opportunity to receive a new kitchen and bathroom.
- There are now 7,753 fully compliant homes and there are 5,795 homes containing at least one acceptable fail in Swansea. This represents 57.2% fully compliant and 42.8% with acceptable fails.
- The Council expects that fully compliant levels will rise and acceptable fails will reduce as the remaining improvement programmes continue to be rolled out in 2021. Tenants will continue to be encouraged to participate in order to maximise full WHQS compliance.
- The Panel queried how 'acceptable fails' are recorded against properties where tenants have, themselves, installed upgrades, such as new kitchens. Officers explained that work is underway to re-visit such properties in an attempt to record as compliant.

AGREED that officers would circulate housing project information to relevant ward members.

The Panel took the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of staff, particularly during the last year of lockdown. The Panel considered the information provided, asked questions, and gave views on the available information. The Chair thanked all for their input.

6 Annual Review

The Panel considered the review documents and had nothing further to add.

7 Letters

The meeting ended at 11.07 am