



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Council Chamber - Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 18 November 2019 at 1.00 pm

Present: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
E W Fitzgerald
T J Hennegan

Councillor(s)
L S Gibbard
P K Jones

Councillor(s)
D W Helliwell

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas A Roberts

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

P M Black C A Holley P R Hood-Williams

Also Present

Councillor Andrea Lewis Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation / Joint Interim Deputy Leader

Officer(s)

Lynda Grove Strategic Housing Customer and Service Development Manager
Jane Harries Landlord and Community Housing Services Manager
Kate Jones Democratic Services Officer
Brij Madahar Scrutiny Team Leader
Debbie Smith Deputy Chief Legal Officer
Mark Wade Head of Housing & Public Health

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): C Anderson, M Durke, E T Kirchner, W G Lewis, G J Tanner and W G Thomas

Councillor Co-opted Members: L R Jones and J W Jones

78 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, the following interest was declared:

Councillor T J Hennegan – Minute No 81 – Council Tenant – Personal

79 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.

80 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

81 Pre-decision Scrutiny: Housing Commissioning Review Findings.

The Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation / Joint Interim Deputy Leader, the Head of Housing and Public Health, the Landlord and Community Housing Services Manager and the Strategic Housing Customer and Service Development Manager were present for the Committee's consideration of the Housing Commissioning Review Findings.

The Head of Housing and Public Health provided a verbal address further to the written report provided which highlighted the following: -

- Review findings
- Main aims of the review
- Need to modernise the Service and adapt to the changing ways that customers are accessing the Service
- Improving the application process and reducing waiting lists
- Future model of District Housing Offices
- Good customer satisfaction levels which could be built on
- Purpose of the Service
- Homelessness Prevention Service
- Key priorities
- Tenancy sustainment and ensuring tenants are tenancy ready
- Decarbonisation
- Increasing supply of affordable housing
- Improvement of Information Technology
- Income generation
- Greater presence on Council estates
- Increase of resources for the rents team
- Anti-Social Behaviour and development of noise app
- Empty properties and voids
- Housing management costs
- Tenancy consultation and stakeholder engagement- key aspects going forward

Questions and discussions focussed on: -

- Sheltered housing – provision of wardens
- Reduction of District Housing Offices – impact and alternative provisions through technology, local housing sessions and neighbourhood officers
- Concern on potential resource implications if more Officers are visiting individual homes with the reduction of District Housing Offices

- Allocation / break down of money received from rent
- Charges for furniture packs – recovering costs for missed deliveries
- Structure of rents team / allocation of additional funding
- Advice and training on benefits system
- Breakdown of complaints into topics to identify recurring themes
- Issues of anti-social behaviour and effect on surrounding area / tenants
- Proposed changes to the Tend and Mend Service
- Timescale for changes particularly on IT upgrades and the noise app

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy & Service Transformation / Joint Interim Deputy Leader Cabinet Member and Officers and noted that a number of suggestions from the earlier meeting of the Committee on 1 August, when it considered progress with the Commissioning Review and emerging findings, had been taken on board.

The Committee welcomed the direction of travel proposed for the Housing Service, but raised a number of points which should be taken into account by Cabinet, around the visibility of an implementation plan to take forward proposals, the introduction of new technology, and connection between service user feedback and improvements proposed.

The Committee noted the Cabinet Member's intention to undertake formal consultation with tenants in January 2020 regarding the proposed change to the future model of the District Housing Office service, and to report findings of consultation to Cabinet in April 2020. It was clarified by the Cabinet Member that the District Housing Offices identified, would only close once new ways of working described in the report were in place.

Resolved that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee writes to the Cabinet Member outlining the views of the Committee, with feedback to be presented to Cabinet on 21 November ahead of decision on the cabinet report.

The meeting ended at 1.55 pm

Chair