

## CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

### MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 5, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA ON  
THURSDAY, 15 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 2.00 PM

**PRESENT:** Councillor R A Clay (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

U C Clay  
T J Hennegan  
G J Tanner

**Councillor(s)**

A M Cook  
M B Lewis

**Councillor(s)**

N J Davies  
R D Lewis

**Officer(s)**

D Evans  
C Morgan  
S Woon

Housing Business Manager  
More Homes Development Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): Y V Jardine

16 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS.**

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

Councillor T J Hennegan – Personal – Minute No. 19 – More Homes Strategy – I am a Council secure tenant.

Councillor G H Tanner – Personal – Minute No. 19 – More Homes Strategy – I am a Council tenant of 48 years.

17 **MINUTES:**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 July, 2016, be approved and signed as a correct record.

18 **WORK PLAN 2016 - 2017.**

The Chair stated that it was his intention to balance the work plan with a 50% split between Anti-Poverty & Communities and Next Generation Services issues.

He stated that the agenda for the October meeting comprised Food Enterprise (Chris Sivers and Chris Williams to be in attendance) and the outstanding actions arising from the presentation on the Energy Strategy (12 May, 2016).

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services stated that Food Enterprise was a cross-cutting issue, covering both portfolios.

The Chair referred to outstanding issues in respect of the resolution made at the meeting of 9 June, 2016:

- a) Colleagues from the Tackling Poverty Unit Section work with Penderry Members to develop a presentation on the community development work they have undertaken and present the findings to all Members as part of a training programme;
- b) The Committee examine the strategy for use of community buildings;
- c) The Committee provide observations on the employee pledge on volunteering during the consultation process;
- d) The Committee are to research tackling poverty activities in other Local Authorities and share these with Cllr Evans
- e) The Head of Poverty and Prevention to pick up on the issues of inequality of outcomes and provide information to the CAC in the future.

He stated that the former Head of Poverty and Prevention had suggested that the Committee examine the topics detailed above. However, Jane Whitmore would be attending the meeting on 20 October, 2016 to advise whether the above issues were still required to be examined. Ms Whitmore would also be asked whether there was an Officer resource available to support the Committee in respect of the above issues.

The Chair felt that there was a shortage of Anti-Poverty Officers available to attend and support the Committee. He referred to incidents when an Officer had attended the Committee having confessed that he had not read the paper and had not been prepared to attend. Additionally, a meeting had been cancelled in August as a result of Anti Poverty Officer unavailability.

He reported that the Tackling Poverty Strategy (which had previously been a suggested item for the Committee) had been passed to a Scrutiny Inquiry Panel. This had resulted in the list of items suggested by the former Head of Poverty and Prevention at the meeting on 9 June, 2016. Whilst he was unhappy with this outcome he had, with the support of the Committee, agreed to accept the items suggested by the former Head of Poverty and Prevention.

The Chair circulated copies of an email received from the Cabinet Member for Anti-Poverty & Communities. The email proposed that the Committee undertake an urgent piece of work in relation to a Joseph Rowntree Foundation document entitled 'We can Solve Poverty in the UK'. The Cabinet Member had requested that the Committee produce recommendations arising from analysis of the document.

The Chair suggested that the Joseph Rowntree document be discussed when Ms Whitmore attends on 20 October, 2016 and that he seek guidance from the Cabinet Member regarding the urgency of the piece of work.

The Chair referred to the outstanding issues agreed at the meeting of 12 May, 2016:

- a) Task and Finish Groups be established to examine Biomass, Wind Farms, Energy Companies, Smart Meters and Storage;

- b) The membership of the task and finish groups include the Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services, the Chair of the Communities CAC, Members and relevant Officers;
- c) The Director of Place circulate details of energy companies to Members of the Committee;
- d) The Director of Place make the relevant linkages with other CAC's and report back to the Committee;
- e) The Director of Place re-define the action plan in respect of issues titled 'low priority'.

With regards to the proposed task and finish groups referred to at (a) above, the Chair stated that he would like to invite Keith Ross, Frack Free Wales, to participate.

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services stated that she welcomed the input of lay members.

**RESOLVED** that the work plan issues be **NOTED**.

## 19 **MORE HOMES STRATEGY.**

David Evans (Housing Business Manager), assisted by Carol Morgan, More Homes Development Officer, presented the More Homes Strategy.

The presentation detailed:

- The purpose of the Strategy;
- The aim of providing more Council housing;
- The Financial context;
- Housing need;
- The supply of land;
- The aim of supporting sustainable homes and communities;
- The Pilot schemes;
- The Development options; and
- Next steps.

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services stated that the results of the pilot scheme, examining the costs of Corporate Building and Property Services (CB&PS) had not been received. The introduction of the 'Right to Buy Scheme in 1996 had reduced the Council's housing stock by 3891 and it would take some time to replenish the number. It would be easier for CB&PS to deal with a site that had 100% Council houses and it is important to ascertain whether CB&PS had the capacity to build houses for mixed use tenures. The Scheme would need to be managed in a creative and articulate manner.

The Chair stated that inability to build affordable houses had been a growing concern for some time and needed to be the focus going forward. Other options could be considered if CB&PS were not in a position (due to the Welsh Quality Housing Standard up until 2020) to commit to schemes. Such options included the use of

organisations who build houses and market homes for sale but are not classed as developers.

In response to Member questions, the Housing Business Manager stated that:

- Any new Council housing would be subject to the same rent policy and tenancy agreements as the existing stock;
- The investigation into 'arms length companies' was included in the strategy. Whilst the use of these companies may bring funding opportunities, it would need to take into account any HRA borrowing gap limitations;
- The requirement to maximise the percentage of homes built for council use would be imperative;
- The strategy complimented other council strategies. Social Services had been involved in early discussions and would be consulted further on the detailed development plan;
- The term 'affordable housing' described housing which is let or sold at below market rent or value. However, build costs are similar irrespective of the eventual tenure and Government standards could mean that costs can be higher for affordable housing. Therefore, to be a viable proposition, affordable housing schemes need to be subsidised which could be in the form of lower land values and/or subsidy from Government to help cover some of the costs;
- The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan forecasts are over a 30 year period;
- The objective will be to maximise community benefits and ensure compliance with the Council's 'Beyond Bricks and Mortar' Scheme' irrespective of who undertakes the development;
- The introduction of the Welsh Government's policy for calculating social housing rents provides an element of consistency for all social housing landlords including Council's and Registered Social Landlords;
- The cap on borrowing is an all Wales limit set by the Treasury. Welsh Government will seek to get the cap increased;
- The strategy establishes that £6m could be made available to spend by 2020 but assumptions in the HRA Business Plan may need to be revised if the rent policy changes and/or the impact of welfare reforms are more severe. The negotiation of any developer contribution towards affordable housing is a planning policy issue; and
- There are commercial risks associated with build developments for sale which need to be taken into account and if this involves selling properties built using HRA funds, then the full cost of the scheme plus land value would need to be recouped as the ring fence means that the account cannot subsidise the purchase price.

The Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services stated that land was being considered across the board to identify the best way to develop quickly and efficiently whilst taking into account the needs of the community. Each site would be looked at on its own merit and the Council's aim would be to procure goods/services locally. She reiterated the need to develop an action plan and timescales.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their informative presentation.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. the presentation be noted; and
2. The Chair write to the Cabinet Member highlighting: the percentage of affordable housing required for future schemes; the dumb bell effect (pressures either end) associated with the provision of suitable accommodation (single or two bedroom flats); local authorities be given social housing grants; the development of an action plan and timescales to track progress; the reconsideration of developer contribution schemes and the need to be ambitious in pursuing the energy and fuel poverty strategy into the private sector via the Scheme.

The meeting ended at 3.46 pm

**CHAIR**