



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Special Scrutiny Programme Committee**

Council Chamber - Guildhall, Swansea

Thursday, 1 August 2019 at 4.30 pm

Present: Councillor M H Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

C Anderson
L S Gibbard
W G Lewis

Councillor(s)

M Durke
D W Helliwell
G J Tanner

Councillor(s)

E W Fitzgerald
T J Hennegan

Statutory Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas A Roberts

Councillor Co-opted Member(s)

P M Black	P R Hood-Williams	J W Jones
C A Holley	L R Jones	

Also Present

Councillor Andrea Lewis Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy

Officer(s)

Lynda Grove	Strategic Housing Customer and Service Development Manager
Jane Harries	Landlord and Community Housing Services Manager
Mark Wade	Head of Housing & Public Health
Samantha Woon	Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): P K Jones and E T Kirchner

26 Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.

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

27 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.

28 Public Question Time.

There were no public questions.

29 Housing Commissioning Review Progress

The Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy stated that the purpose of the Housing Commissioning Review was to focus on improving and modernising the Housing Service. It was noted that following the historic tenant ballot, the decision had been made to retain the Housing Service 'in-house'.

The Head of Housing and Public Health provided a presentation which included:

- The Purpose of the Update.
- Main Aims of the Review.
- Service Purpose.
- Service Characteristics.
- Service Priorities.
- Review Scope.
- Review Framework and Stakeholder Engagement.
- Headline Review Findings.
- Service Specific Findings.
- Sustainability of Offices.
- Conclusion.

In response to Member questions, Officers stated that:

- Housing Staff currently enjoyed a good relationship with the Welfare Rights Unit and extensive training had/would be undertaken regarding Universal Credit issues. The impact of Universal Credit had placed more pressure on Housing staff as tenants needed assistance with the intricacies of the manner in which the new benefit worked.
- The structure of the service had taken into account the impact of Universal Credit, however it still remained a significant challenge.
- Ward Member engagement involved all Members who had Council Housing within their wards. Those without stock had also been communicated with.
- Laptops had been provided to staff and work was ongoing regarding WIFI. Progress was being made around mobile technology. Examination and procurement of software will take place in due course.
- Redundancies were not anticipated as a result of the Housing Commissioning Review. Resources were likely to be reallocated to new tasks to improve the service.
- The Tend and Mend Service was available to older residents.
- The tenant survey was undertaken in 2017-2018, 2,800 responses were received from a population of 13,500 tenants. Whilst no targets had been set for the return rate, 100% was always strived for. Engagement could be difficult, but positive feedback was being received as a social landlord.
- Letters had been circulated to all tenants and households regarding the proposed changes. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in which authority to undertake formal consultation would be sought. Stakeholder consultations would be undertaken as part of this process.

- The review of waiting lists and identifying those in greatest need was a huge amount of work and it was very important that it was done right. There was a shortage in supply of affordable housing in Swansea as well as nationally. Meeting the requirements of those on the needs register was a significant challenge.
- There was potential to develop the Tend and Mend Service and the feasibility of creating a community social enterprise around the service would be investigated.
- TV licences for sheltered housing was complicated and controversial as the procedure differs from a residential home.
- The issue of tenants missing furniture removals was costly and labour intensive. Whilst tenants were reminded via letter and text, it was proposed that a charge of £20 would be levied if a prearranged delivery is missed.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy and Officers for their informative presentation.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Programme Committee would carry out pre-decision scrutiny when the report comes back to Cabinet in November 2019.

Letter to Cabinet Member - Housing Commissioning Review

The meeting ended at 5.42 pm

Chair