

SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 - MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 3 HELD IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON MONDAY, 18 MARCH 2019 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor JC Spanswick – Chairperson

SE Baldwin	P Davies	DK Edwards
DG Howells	A Hussain	DRW Lewis
J C Spanswick	G Thomas	E Venables

Officers:

Gail Jewell	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Rachel Keepins	Democratic Services Officer - Scrutiny
Michael Pitman	Business & Administrative Apprentice

Invitees:

Cllr D Patel	Cabinet Member Future Generations and Wellbeing
Sue Cooper	Corporate Director, Social Services and Wellbeing
Martin Morgans	Head of Performance and Partnership Services;
Mark Shephard	Interim Chief Executive
Lynne Berry	Group Manager - Housing & Community Regeneration
Joanne Ginn	Housing Solutions Team Manager
Ryan Jones	Supporting People Strategy, Planning and Commissioning Officer

NA Burnett	RJ Collins	PA Davies
AJ Williams	K Watts	M Jones
JP Blundell	C Webster	TH Beedle

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

J Williams, P Davies and N Burnett

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr A Hussain declared a personal interest in Agenda items 4 and 5 because he was Chair of Brynawel House;
Cllrs K Watts, N Clarke, C Webster and P Davies declared personal interests are they are all Private Landlords.

73. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of Subject Overview and Scrutiny Committee 3 dated 17 September 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

74. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2022

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services made a presentation to the Committee detailing the draft Homeslessness Strategy. He explained that the draft strategy had been developed to respond to the findings of the review and

has been submitted to Welsh Government. This has been submitted on the basis that it is subject to public consultation and final approval by Cabinet.

The review identified a number of areas to be developed but one of the key messages was to reinforce that homelessness is a complex, cross cutting issue which not only requires a corporate approach but also a partnership approach to tackle. It was reported that to further develop corporate and partnership responses to the Strategy findings, an Action Plan is being developed and will be reported to Cabinet alongside the final Strategy. Discussions have been held with many of the key stakeholders around formulating the priorities and actions that have been identified and included in the draft Strategy. This has included relevant internal and external stakeholders and the Council's key partners.

The Head of Performance and Performance and Partnerships reported that on 22nd January 2019 Cabinet approved public consultation on the draft Strategy over a period of six weeks to ensure that members of the public who have concerns or are affected by the issues around housing and homelessness are able to formally put forward their views as well as any stakeholders or organisations who have an interest in the issues and proposed actions. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires the Authority to consult with relevant stakeholders as it considers appropriate in relation to a proposed Strategy. Responses will then be taken into account and necessary amendments made, with a final Strategy being presented to Cabinet for approval in April 2019.

As part of the consultation process the Committee were asked to consider the draft Strategy and provide comments.

Discussions were held around collaborative working where it was reported that although there were challenges ahead, there was a general consensus between all partners involved to prioritise preventing homelessness. This culture change and focus would ensure that resources would be targeted to the right places.

The Head of Performance and Partnerships reported that one of the challenges was that 65% of young presentations to the Authority who needed support require single bedroom accommodation which there is simply no capacity for. There are, for example 1200 empty properties, but the majority of these are three bedroom. The Authority are working better with partners and Registered Social Landlords to challenge them to try and provide the right properties for the needs of Bridgend.

In relation to the figures for those who present as homeless, it was confirmed that in relation to families, only the lead household member would be recorded in the figures. The Housing Solutions Manager clarified that we record all household member details and can report on the numbers that are families.

It was identified by the Housing Solutions Manager that there was various accommodation and support available to meet people's needs; temporary accommodation for example that would be supported for those with complex needs. Other types could be a house, a flat, with only floating support or self-contained accommodation or Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) with support only should they need it. One of the challenges was with HMOs in that getting the match right was key and they were predominantly private sector

accommodation that we don't have control over. It was reported that the Authority does have a new initiative through the Supporting People's Grant which is a private sector rented support scheme 'Early Doors' where landlords or tenants can sign up to receive targeted support with the aim of maintaining accommodation for the tenant

Discussions were held around homelessness of young people where parents have no longer been able to accommodate them. It was reported that there is a tenancy crisis service and mediation support which aims to provide early prevention and intervention. A pilot project called EMPHASIS has been developed for 14 – 19 year olds with the aim of early prevention of homelessness. The Committee were advised that with some circumstances there was a need to create more of a pathway with Social Services to ensure that there was wrap around support.

In relation to the Hostel facility in Brynmenyn there were concerns from the Committee around the suitability and standards of facilities. They were advised by the Head of Performance and Partnerships that the building is not of an acceptable standard and they were looking at the options appraisal for this for relocation or redevelopment. Unfortunately it is the only asset that the Authority has at the moment for supporting families. Despite this, the day to day support that is provided to families at the facility is very good.

Discussions were held around support for prison leavers presenting as homeless, particularly those who may have originally come from out of county. Legislation states that they have to evidence a local connection in order to receive housing support. A prisoner must evidence a local connection to receive housing assistance from the Authority.

There is a Supporting People Grant funded project that has been put in place to support prison leavers with a local connection to Bridgend. This project, is run by Taff Housing Start service and has been put in place to provide support in prison and through transition back into the community. Other support is provided which does not need to evidence a local connection. It was reported that initial social services funding had been provided to LAs with prisons for the first two years but that following this, this funding had been reduced as it had been divided between all 22 LAs.

RESOLVED:

The Committee recommend that the strategy includes services provided by Third Sector organisations, to present members of the public who are facing possible homelessness with alternative options for assistance and supply citizens the opportunity to choose the most appropriate choice for them.

Although the Committee are mindful of the resource required to improve collaboration and communications with Bridgend County Borough Council staff and external organisations, Members recommend that Officers explore best practice for inter-agency working with reference to homelessness. The Committee further recommend that a mechanism is created to share referrals made with each agency to outline what support is being supplied and could also be required in the future.

Members raised concerns regarding the issues relating to the effects that may be encountered with 'employed' homeless people being placed in emergency accommodation. Firstly with placements being amongst other individuals who may sustain more vulnerable and chaotic needs and secondly in relation to the high cost implications of residing in temporary accommodation, which could lead onto financial difficulties for an individuals on a low income.

Members recommend that a programme of rota visits are launched for the temporary accommodation options provided by the Council, which will offer the opportunity for Elected Members to meet with people who reside in these establishments and listen to their views.

The Committee also voiced their apprehensions relating to the safety of citizens who are housed in Houses with Multiply Occupancy (HMO's). As previously mentioned, Members reiterated the differing needs of individuals and the necessity to ensure that individuals are housed in-line with their requirements and support network. Therefore Members recommend that the Council create a HMO Strategy which outlines the effect of incorrect allocation of housing and looks to engage effectively with registered and private landlords to mitigate these issues.

To encourage communication, Members recommend that the Housing Department look to explore the opportunity to create 'Strategic Housing Forums'. When discussing the membership of the potential Forum, the Committee recommend that in addition to the inclusion of any relevant partners, that thought is given of involving letting agents as well as private and registered landlords.

The Committee recommend that there is a continuation of care and monitoring of service users that have previously presented as homeless, as many of the previous issues, especially relating to substance misuse and mental health could be re-occurring.

Following discussions in relation to the Local Authority owned hostel accommodation in Brynmenyn, Members raised grave concerns regarding the suitability of the facility and the possible regression with children's learning skills, such as toilet training due to existing shared bathrooms. Therefore Members recommend that strict timelines are implemented for the hostel options appraisal and further recommend that the outcome is reported back to the Committee.

Additional Information

- Members requested to receive the percentage of people who present as homeless but don't continue with support offered.
- When discussing the Homelessness Presentations, Members requested to receive the precise recording of all presentations including children in each household. In addition the Committee request that the information includes citizens that have presented that reside outside the borough;
- With reference to one of the greatest reason for homelessness – 'parent no longer able or willing to accommodate', Members requested to receive

statistics on how successful mediation is currently to ensure funding is being spent in the most efficient way;

- Members asked to receive further information from the Education Directorate in relation to school transport to and from Brynmenyn hostel to ensure that continuity of education is ensued;
- The Committee asked to receive a breakdown of the 41% of people for whom the Council had a 'final' duty to house that had a negative outcome - along with an action plan to mitigate the outlined reasons;
- To assist Members with monitoring the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy, the Committee requested to receive timelines against the aims and objectives outlined within the Homelessness Strategy and for the establishment of multi-agency Homelessness Strategy Delivery Group.

Members agreed that when in receipt of the above additional information the Committee will decide as to whether the data and statistics should be included within the Strategy or if Members wish to make further recommendations in relation to it.

75. SUPPORTING PEOPLE GRANT PROGRAMME

The Head of Performance and Partnership Services made a presentation to the Committee providing detail around the Supporting People Grant Programme. The Committee were advised that the Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) was a Welsh Government programme, which provides housing related support to help vulnerable people to live as independently as possible. The SPPG was an early intervention programme which has preventing people from becoming homeless at its core. The vision for the Programme was "A Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish". The Grant provides vital funding to prevent homelessness and allows vulnerable service users to live as independently as possible, including young people with support needs, care leavers, older people, men and women experiencing domestic abuse and people with; criminal offending histories, learning disabilities, mental health issues, physical disabilities, substance misuse issues. Services were a combination of generic and specialist provision to specific groups and can be broadly distinguished between fixed support, which is available on site and floating housing related support, which can be delivered to individuals across the County Borough.

Discussions were held around the grant funding with concerns expressed by Members over the reduction in funding, yet numbers of homelessness were increasing. The Head of Performance and Partnership Services provided a breakdown of the funding and where they were being targeted, expressing the view that as a funds were now centrally held, they reduced bureaucracy and allowed the Authority's own Corporate Management Board to target the funding to meet needs.

The Committee questioned the sustainability of the grant, particularly for those with Learning Disabilities where there was a need for continued support and provision. The Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing reassured Members that both the LA, along with three other independent providers have worked very hard in changing the model of delivery, carrying out in depth reviews of individuals involved. This has led to a shift in the support that they receive which has made it more sustainable, rather than possibly them losing the provision, becoming homeless or having to move to a high cost out of county placement. It was reported that the reliance on this type of funding for those with Learning Disabilities has decreased from 50% to 35% with the hope of reducing this by a further 10 % over the next year or two. Competing demand however is a continuing and increasing challenge for the Directorate. It was reported that Bridgend has only a very small number people with Learning Disabilities in OOC high cost placements compared with most other Authorities, as many had already been brought back in under a project with Health called 'Closer to Home'. Those remaining were historical cases and with very specific reasons for why they are in these placements.

The Interim Chief Executive reported that there were significant challenges as with any demand led services with the biggest one being where best to spend funding with increasing demand and decreasing resources, whilst dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in the community. This was the challenge for Cabinet and CMB and had to be based on outcomes, evidence and impact. Key was to collaborate better, join up and align services better, but this wasn't just a 'One Council' approach, this was actually a 'One County Borough' approach.

RESOLVED:

The Committee note the increasing numbers of presentations from men experiencing domestic abuse and were pleased to hear of options being explored for a refuge for men only, although Members did query where the facility would be placed if a joint service with other Local Authorities is employed.

Additional Information

- The Committee request to receive timelines that are being adhered to in relation to the options for a hostel for men.
- In relation to the Supporting People Grant Spend Category detailed in the report, Members note the line 'Women experiencing Domestic Abuse' and queried whether this should state people experiencing domestic abuse which would include women, men and LGBT. The Committee further questioned whether the percentage presented on page 40 only totalled women experiencing domestic abuse.

Future Work

Following the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy, Members have requested to receive a further report on the Supporting People Grant and provide

an update in relation to what steps have been implemented as recommended by the Independent Review undertaken.

76. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report on the Forward Work Programme, highlighting the FWP workshops to be held in April and May.

RESOLVED:

Following the Committee's discussions, Members determined the following in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Forward Work Programme:

- 1.1 Regarding the potential Enforcement Vehicle item, Members have requested that the following information is included in the report:
- Detailed feedback on the vehicles use;
 - Agreed route for vehicle along with timings;
 - How are the recordings reviewed?
 - Statistics in relation to letters sent and details of enforcement.

The items below has been highlighted by the Committee as a priority to be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for formal prioritisation:

Communication and Engagement.
Enforcement Vehicle.

77. **URGENT ITEMS**

None