

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 14TH FEBRUARY, 2022

REFERENCE FROM HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 12TH JANUARY, 2022

“735 DRAFT LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2021 – 2026 (REF) –

The reference from Cabinet on 6th December, 2021 was presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services, who outlined the importance of this Local Housing Strategy (LHS) in underpinning the Council’s strategic housing enabling role not just for Council housing, but for the effective functioning of the housing market as a whole. The Strategy also looked at private housing, general housing solutions and supply and demand for housing. The Strategy underpinned other key, strategic documents like the Local Development Plan (LDP) and delivered the direction in terms of things like supplementary planning guidance and also supported the Council’s Corporate Plan, as well as linking into Future Generations and the importance of housing and associated areas such as health and financial inclusion. The development and publication of the LHS was a requirement under Section 87 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The ‘retrospective’ outlook of the Strategy was due to it being a five-year strategy that had been subject to extensive consultation exercises with various contributors (such as partner organisations, representatives from the public, private and third sectors, Elected Members and Council departments) in 2020 where the previous Strategy was reviewed and discussions on what actions, objectives and outcomes were needed for the new Strategy going forward. This built on the previous Strategy, and the new one faced similar challenges i.e. access to affordable housing and the prevention of homelessness as well as facing newer challenges such as Brexit, ongoing austerity and welfare reform and now of course COVID-19.

The Council would be delivering these strategic aims with their partners in Health, Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), private sector landlords and the statutory and Third Sectors.

The overall, long term, vision for the new Strategy to deliver housing in the Vale for the next 5 years was that ‘All residents in the Vale of Glamorgan had access to good quality, suitable housing and could live happily and independently in vibrant, sustainable communities’. In terms of the aims of the Strategy, these were as follows:

- Aim 1: More Homes, More Choice i.e., figures in the report outlined the increase in house building already since the last Strategy started (rising to 917 houses in 2019-20) as well as addressing the challenges of housing rising numbers of older residents and single persons thorough social and

private housing options (with the aim to expand options in the latter category to offset the limits of providing Council owned properties) and in light of rising house prices and rents.

- Aim 2: Improved homes and communities, such as returning empty homes into use, working with RSLs in terms of the Council's Community Investment Strategy and Tenant Engagement Strategy and going beyond a 'bricks and mortar' approach.
- Aim 3: Better housing advice and support in order to prevent homelessness and enable access to the right kind of housing for residents (such as for larger families and to support people to live independently for as long as possible), whilst addressing the related challenges around COVID-19 and the availability of housing.
- Aim 4: Equality of access to housing and housing services such as the Council's ongoing commitment to help house Syrian and Afghan refugees as part of the UK government's resettlement program through private housing solutions and the undertaking of a tenant profile survey in order to understand who the Council's tenants were and to respond to their diverse needs as well as eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation by reviewing key policies and procedures in line with the with current legislation.

The Head of Housing and Building Services added that in terms of monitoring this Strategy, the related Action Plan would be brought to the Committee on an annual basis for an update and in terms of the actual day-to-day operational oversight of the Action Plan that had traditionally been undertaken by the Overarching Housing Forum (OHF) which included all of the key partners, on a quarterly basis.

Following the Officer's presentation, the subsequent questions and comments were raised by the Committee:

- On Councillor Perkes' query regarding the level of demand for people to move from 1 or 2 bedroom Council properties to larger dwellings, there was some demand for, and more gradual movement to, 'upsizing' to larger properties but not as high as that for 1–2-bedroom properties. The latter properties were still the main focus of demand, with a significant number of the single people that the Council had statutory duties for being vulnerable people, with challenging issues and the need to look at supporting them with sustainable housing as well as addressing single bedroom demand, such as the possible 'de-designation' of existing single bed properties.
- Regarding Councillor Nugent-Finn's query on whether Welsh Government (WG) and LDP needs were aligned in terms of what was expected to be built and in terms of the actual demands, it was explained that the needs identified in the Local Housing Market Assessment (890 units of affordable housing per annum over the 5-year period 2021-26) could not be met solely via the LDP on a year-by-year basis. What the Strategy and the Local Housing Market Assessment did, however, was to ensure that the accommodation that was built positively influenced or regulated the housing market, for example, developers were required to provide a proportion of affordable social rented housing or affordable housing on their schemes, which had proved successful. Therefore, there was an alignment with WG and the LDP housing needs, but with the caveat that the figures that were identified in terms of the

backlog need in the housing market assessment could never be fully delivered due to the natural limits on land supply.

Committee, having considered the report and all the issues and implications contained therein, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the comments of the Scrutiny Committee on the Draft Local Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026 be considered by Cabinet prior to the final Strategy being referred to Full Council for approval.

Reason for recommendation

To allow Cabinet to make a fully informed decision on the final Strategy before referring the same to Full Council.”