

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee: 6th September 2017

Report of the Director of Environment and Housing

Environment and Neighbourhoods Strategy (Housing) - Six Monthly Monitoring Report

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on progress implementing the Environment and Neighbourhoods Strategy (Housing).

Recommendation

1. That the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee NOTE the six monthly monitoring report in relation to the Operational Delivery Plan (Appendix 1) for the Environment and Neighbourhoods Strategy (Housing).

Reasons for the Recommendation

1. To ensure that the external environment on public housing estates is maintained to a good standard and is utilised by members of the local community.
2. To provide an opportunity for Scrutiny to make any comments.
3. To ensure the actions identified are progressed.

Background

2. The Environment and Neighbourhood Strategy was approved by Cabinet in February 2017 and incorporated feedback from the Homes and Safe Communities Committee. One of the recommendations was to provide six monthly monitoring reports to the Homes and Safe Communities Committee. This following report updates Members of progress against the actions identified.
3. There has been a significant progress with implementation and the majority of actions are either complete or are on target to be completed by the target date. There are however a number of actions which are either not due yet or are falling slightly behind. The standard red, amber green classification has been used to highlight the progress against each action. Green represents all actions which are complete or on target, amber is used for actions that are at risk of missing target and red is actions that have already missed target or very likely to miss the target.

Resident Consultation and Priorities

4. A key element of the strategy was about targeting large sums of capital investment into a smaller number of areas in order to maximise the impact and to this end the Buttrills estate in central Barry that would benefit a great deal from significant estate improvement works. To date, a number of consultation events have been undertaken with residents in order to identify priorities; these included drop in events, meetings with residents, surveys and door knocking. The consultation helped identify priorities and these have been used to inform a programme of works, which include changes to the layout of the estate, improved parking, fencing, CCTV coverage as well as upgrades to communal areas and the exteriors of the buildings. The work has already started on site and is scheduled to be completed over the next 18 months.



Image: impression of proposed estate improvement work at Buttrills estate

5. The physical appearance of estates was also identified as a priority in the strategy and progress has been made developing a photobook which is a set of agreed environmental standards which are being used to grade the quality of estates and drive improvements. Regular estate walkabouts are also an important part of improving standards and a more formal programme of walkabouts is now scheduled so that tenants have the opportunity to take part or engage with their Neighbourhood Manager when they are on site.
6. A number of community 'helping hand' events have taken place as part of the initiatives to improve the appearance of estates. These have involved tenants, contractors and partner agencies and have been very well received. At Llantwit Major a rubbish amnesty resulted in the removal of a large amount of rubbish and household items which had been building up in homes, outhouses and gardens. The events have been an effective means of raising the profile of the Neighbourhood teams and enabled staff to establish themselves as a key point of contact and build

relationships with the tenants. A toolkit for running these events has been developed and will improve the success of future events in different areas.



Image: Community clean up event at Llantwit Major

7. Another important element of the strategy is estate action planning. The development of tailored action plans which pick up local issues and priorities is underway and a template action plan has been developed which can be rolled out across different areas.
8. There is still progress to be made with regard to a number of issues including: making the best use of open spaces on Council estates. There are significant tracts of land on some Council estates and these are not often used for the benefit of the community. As a consequence, over the next few months staff will be identifying a small number of pilot sites and seeking to engage the community in how they would like to see the space used. This need not require large sums of investment and very often small initiatives, including benches or some signage can result in changes to the way the land is used.
9. Finally, there are still some changes to be made regarding the use of the smaller pot of revenue money for estate improvements. There are some good examples of this fund being used to make improvements to recycling and rubbish disposal at blocks of flats, however there is scope for further publicity of this funding so tenant groups across the Vale can make applications for creative solutions in their area.

Monitoring and Evaluation

10. Implementation of the Strategy is broadly on target, progress has been made in a number of areas and work is already underway to address some of the remaining objectives.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

11. Significant financial support has been set aside to deliver the objectives in the Strategy. This includes provision of a £2m budget for environmental and estate improvement works each year over the course of the next three years (which forms part of the Council's WHQS investment commitments). Revenue budget has also been set aside to fund two Community Investment and Involvement Officer Posts to take the lead in community engagement and drive a range of environmental improvements. Lastly, participatory budgets of £60,000 pa have been set aside to fund smaller scale estate and environmental improvements identified by local residents and groups.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

12. There are no direct sustainability and climate change implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

13. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

14. A better quality environment contributes to residents feeling safer in their home and in the local neighbourhood. Initiatives like improved lighting, CCTV and more secure fencing enabled by this Strategy will make a positive contribution through discouraging crime and anti-social behaviour.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

15. Environmental improvements will take into account the needs of tenants from a variety of backgrounds as well as people with protected characteristics.

Corporate/Service Objectives

16. This Strategy is consistent with the overarching vision within the new Corporate Plan, namely 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future' as well as several of the Well Being Outcomes, including 'An inclusive and Safe Vale', 'An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale', 'An Active and Healthy Vale'.
17. It is also consistent with many of the core objectives (which support the Well Being outcomes), including: reducing poverty and social exclusion; decent homes and safe communities; promoting regeneration; sustainable development and protecting the environment; and active and healthy lifestyles.

Policy Framework and Budget

18. This report is a matter for information and noting.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

19. This report will affect all Council tenants and therefore no individual Ward Member consultation has been undertaken.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

20. Homes and Safe Communities.

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

Nick Jones - Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader.

Officers Consulted

Andrew Treweek, Operational Manager, Building Services.
Committee Reports
Operational Manager Finance

Responsible Officer:

Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing

Objective 1: Increasing safety of residents and homes

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Allocate a pot of money specifically to address tenants security concerns, allowing purchase of deployable CCTV cameras, additional lighting, more secure fencing etc.	March 17	July 17	<p>Estate budgets have been top sliced to create a pot of £8,000 for security measures</p> <p>Deployable camera currently being used at Central Estates and Buttrills estate to monitor on going anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems. Cameras have proved effective in reducing ASB and improving residents' sense of safety. Specification for cameras currently being reviewed in order to improve surveillance (including sound recording, night vision and allowing longer distance coverage). Demonstrations received from suppliers and the case for increased level of investment is being considered</p> <p>All new ASB cases are being assessed to establish if any security/ target hardening measures would assist to alleviate problems and decisions are made on a case by case basis.</p>	
Review published crime statistics and liaise with Police and Safer Vale to identify key issues on Council estates	Sept 17	Dec 17	Not due	
Adopt secure by design principles for all Council new build developments	April 17	Sept 17	New build properties at Francis Road and Holm View incorporate secure by design principles	
Re tender empty property security contract	April 18	Dec 18	Not due	
Run focus groups with tenants who have expressed a concern regarding security in order to identify local priorities that can make a difference	April 17	July 17	Local consultations and meetings taken place with residents at Fair Oaks and Central estates regarding ASB. Package of measures including CCTV, increased Police patrols etc. have been adopted.	
Develop estate action plans for larger estates to set out responses to residents' concerns	Feb 17	Feb 18	Draft template has been developed for an estate action plan based on best practise examples. This sets out the range of issues relevant to the estate and identifies residents' concerns. The template is being reviewed across the team and when finalised will be adopted for other estates	

The template will be reviewed with existing Residents Boards as well as the Tenants Working Group

Objective 2: Improving the appearance and cleanliness of the community environment

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Schedule monthly estate inspections/walkabouts in advance and publicise dates and times to tenants	April 17	Dec 17	<p>Estate walkabouts are now taking place at most estates and a new system of estate grading is being piloted. This involves grading estates against an agreed standard. The standard also breaks down into different elements e.g. car parks, garage areas. The system will be rolled out across all estates by the end of September and will help drive improvements in appearance</p> <p>Dates and times for estate walkabouts have been shared with tenants and there has been some take up, with a small number of people taking part, however there are plans for more publicity in the next tenant newsletter</p>	
Encourage tenants to take part in estate walkabouts, including consideration of incentives	April 17	On going	A proposal has been developed for a tenant incentive scheme. This would offer vouchers/credits to tenants who take part in volunteering and other initiatives. A report is due to go to Cabinet for consideration at the end of September 2017. If approval is granted, it will be possible to offer incentives to tenants who take part in estate walkabouts	
Review service level agreements and arrangements with Cleansing and Parks team to ensure rubbish removal and grass cutting works are carried out regularly to a high standard	June 17	Dec 17	Discussions taken place with Cleansing and Leisure to improve referral process, response times, billing queries. An efficient cost effective rubbish removal service helps ensure that housing estates remain in a good condition	
Work with Cleansing team to develop process for tackling fly tipping and dog fouling and take enforcement action against offenders	Feb 17	June 17	<p>Several meetings taken place with the enforcement team and a process has been agreed and adopted to tackle fly tipping</p> <p>Whilst dumping continues to be an issue in the Vale there have been reductions at the sites targeted. To date it has not been possible to gather sufficient evidence to justify taking enforcement action against an individual/s</p>	
Identify hotspots for rubbish dumping and use CCTV to identify perpetrators	April 17	Sept 17	Several specific sites have been identified, including the garage courts in Llantwit Major and parts of Gibbonsdown. Regular inspections are being carried out at both sites and advice given to tenants about correct disposal. Sites are also on rota for the cleansing team	

			to clear. There has been a reduction in fly tipping over the last 3 months.	
Review communal bin store facilities at flats to ensure residents have got sufficient means of disposing of household rubbish	April 17	March 18	Pilot schemes have taken place at several blocks of Council owned flats; this has involved supplying tenants with containers for waste which can be used in between collection days. This has proved effective and has resulted in less waste being piled up outside flats and reduced the cost incurred in rubbish removal arranged by the Housing team	
Work with Visible Service to target publicity and education campaigns towards Council tenants	April 17	March 18	Several community events/ roadshows taken place at Gibbonsdown, Treharne, Llantwit Major and Rhoose aimed at raising awareness of rubbish disposal and recycling, including providing recycling materials	
Provide recycling materials free of charge to all new tenants at start of their tenancy	Feb 17	On going	Packs provided to all new tenants and left in the void	
Hold annual 'best garden' competition for tenants to include categories for best individual garden and best street	April 17	Oct 17	Best garden competition has taken place and winners have been announced. Photographs of winning gardens will be featured in the next tenants newsletter	
Target overgrown gardens and encourage and support individual tenants to keep their garden in good condition	April 17	Oct 17	Housing staff have been undertaking garden inspections across the Vale and have targeted tenants who have not kept their garden to an acceptable standard	
Research scope for a garden service to assist disabled or elderly tenants	Sept 17	May 18	Not due	
Develop a photo book which sets out different environmental standards and allows consistency in recording	Feb 17	May 17	A photobook has been completed using a variety of photographs to define different environmental standards. This has been trialled by all staff and has enabled estates to be graded consistently	
Use photo book to grade environmental standards on all Council estates	May 17	Dec 17	The Photobook is in place and all estates will be formally graded by the end of September 2017	
Record the estate grading's as part of performance reporting and target improvements on estates with lower grading's	Dec 17	On going	Not due. This work start after the completion of the estate grading	
Consult tenants and produce business case for a communal cleaning service	April 17	March 18	Resident consultation has taken place and a pilot cleaning exercise has taken place at Sladewood House and Ty Ffynon. Costings have been provided and several issues are being	

to improve the cleanliness of shared areas in flats			followed up, including the scope to provide tenants with a choice (to have their block cleaned) against the eligibility for Housing Benefit. This information will form the basis of a business case which will be prepared early in the new year	
---	--	--	---	--

Objective 3: Increasing opportunities to access open spaces

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Map all open/ green space on housing estates which is owned by the Housing team	July 17	June 18	All Housing land is highlighted on the council's mapping system. This is being used to identify plots of land for potential community use	
Undertake resident consultation regarding specific plots of green space to identify possible uses	July 17	Dec 17	Consultation exercise has yet to start	
Explore grant funding opportunities to secure additional funding to improve specific green spaces, including Treetops in Gibbonsdown	July 17	Dec 17	Several grant applications made including Barry Town Council, Peoples Health Lottery for funding to support the development of two community gardens	
Prepare a business case for the development of a community garden at Margaret Avenue, Colcot	April 17	Aug 17	A site survey has identified that significant remedial works are required before the site can be used as a garden. Grant applications have been made for external funding in order to make the project viable	
Develop 2 pilot projects to bring unused areas of land into use by local community	July 17	Dec 17	No progress made to date	
Establish links with range of agencies e.g. Keep Wales Tidy, Ground works Trust and develop a toolkit to support Environmental Projects	April 17	Dec 17	Housing team participate in quarterly task group meetings involving Visible Services, Keep Wales Tidy etc.	

Objective 4: Increasing community engagement and residents pride in their area

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Encourage tenants to participate in	April	On	Estate walkabouts are now taking place at most estates and a new system of estate grading	

estate walkabouts, including possibility to use incentives	17	going	<p>is being piloted. This involves grading estates against an agreed standard. The standard also breaks down into different elements e.g. car parks, garage areas. The system will be rolled out across all estates by the end of September and will help drive improvements in appearance</p> <p>Dates and times for estate walkabouts have been shared with tenants and there has been some take up, with a small number of people taking part, however there are plans for more publicity in the next tenant newsletter</p>	
Schedule and hold a series of community clean ups across the Vale including in rural areas	Feb 17	Dec 17	Rubbish amnesties and skip days have taken place in a number of areas including Barry, Penarth and Llantwit Major. These have been very popular events and have led to improvements in the appearance of estates	
Develop pro forma for tenants and groups to apply for funding from estate budget and also criteria for prioritising bids	April 17	Aug 17	Draft criteria and proforma's have been developed to enable tenants groups to apply for funding from the estate budgets. This will also enable Officers to prioritise bids. The more tenants who benefit and the bigger the impact, the better prospects of securing the funding	
Promote estate budgets to residents and support tenants to develop projects and secure funding	April 17	Sept 17	No progress made to date	
Develop toolkit for undertaking community clean ups e.g. how to promote events, how to engage residents, which agencies to engage, how to source skips etc.	Feb 17	April 17	Toolkit is in place and has been used to plan the recent community clean ups	