

Meeting of:	<b>Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 09 December 2020</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	<b>Housing Strategies Update Report</b>
Purpose of Report:	To note the updates and progress on three of the Council’s housing strategies:- Tenant Engagement, Customer Services and Environmental and Neighbourhoods.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Nick Jones - Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report will affect all Council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken. The report has been reviewed by Officers from the Legal and Finance teams
Policy Framework:	This report is within the Policy Framework and Budget.
Executive Summary:	<p>This report shares progress in implementing three key housing strategies, namely Customer Service, Tenant Engagement and Environment &amp; Neighbourhoods. There have been regular updates to Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee over the last three years, however, since nearly all the key actions have been completed, this is a timely point to reflect on progress and consider priority themes for inclusion in a new combined Housing Strategy.</p> <p>A detailed report of all the key actions within each Strategy is included as Appendix 1 and progress is shown using a standard red, amber, green classification. A progress summary is included within the main body of this report.</p>

## **Recommendation**

1. That Scrutiny note the report highlighting the progress made implementing the key actions in the three Strategies.

## **Reason for Recommendation**

1. To ensure that key actions have been implemented and made a positive impact on tenants' lives.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The three Strategies have been in place for four years and were designed to drive improvements in key services which made Council housing estates better places to live and which had a positive influence on tenants' lives. Each Strategy was informed by an assessment of all available data, including tenant satisfaction information and external data sources- which identified the most important themes.
- 1.2 Regular progress reports have been shared with Scrutiny Committee, and there have been detailed discussions about various key actions which, together form the Strategies. Most of the key actions have now been completed and given the fact that more than three years has passed, it is an appropriate time to review progress more generally and think about the current issues which need to form part of a combined new strategy.
- 1.3 It is proposed to combine all the key themes into one general Housing Strategy, which should make it easier to monitor and review on a regular basis. It is also proposed that the distinct themes of each service area will be captured within different sections of the new Strategy.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 Customer Service
- 2.2 The Customer Service Strategy has been vital in driving improvements to levels of Customer satisfaction within the Housing Management team. The most recent tenants' satisfaction (STAR) survey shows that 84% of tenants are satisfied or very satisfied with the service they receive, and this is an increase from 81% three years ago. As well as overall satisfaction, there have been improvements across a range of key services including the way anti-social behaviour is handled, the repairs service and a range of estate management issues, including grass cutting, rubbish removal etc.
- 2.3 The progress has been supported by a range of measures within the Strategy, including establishing a 'customer first' culture within the staff team and a focus on things which are important to tenants. A significant amount of work has taken

place within the team, in terms of establishing the right mindset and values- to support good customer service and this has been supported by effective staff recruitment which has ensured new staff appreciate and are committed to delivering excellent customer care. Customer service is reviewed with team members at 1-1s and team meetings and feedback is provided regularly in order to drive further improvements.

- 2.4** Another important part of the Strategy was the need to personalise services and ensure what we do is tailored to individuals needs. This is not an easy task, when there are over 3,800 different tenants, however the Neighbourhood Action Plan approach is an important step forward to recognising the differences in different Council estates and the need to plan a localised management response to the issues which are important to local people. For example, in some areas this has included a focus on more active methods of tenant engagement, focussing on employability and training- to assist tenants into work, whereas in other areas more work is being undertaken on improving the quality of the physical environment i.e. ensuring that rubbish is collected, gardens are in good condition etc. This work will continue as the actions are implemented in the eleven different Neighbourhood Plans.
- 2.5** Access to services was a key theme in the Strategy and significant progress has been made embedding the neighbourhood approach, ensuring that patch Officers are visible in their communities and known to tenants. As well as this visible presence on estates, names and contact details of Officers have been shared widely and tenants now report it is easier to contact the right person of they have a query. For other tenants, access to services is now possible online with more information being shared via email bulletins and tenants being able to access an online portal to report issues, check their rent account or update household information. The digitalisation of services is not complete and is likely to be a continuing theme in the next Strategy. This work will be supported by future investment in Housing ICT systems.
- 2.6** Tenant Engagement
- 2.7** The Tenant Engagement Strategy has helped establish and integrate tenant engagement within the decision-making process. Tenant consultation informs all key documents and policies and feedback is used to set priorities and shape work programmes. There is an established 'engagement structure' in place which ensures if tenants can feed into local Residents Boards and also the overarching Working Group and Quality Design Forum (QDF). These groups meet regularly and receive reports and updates from Senior Management. In addition, tenant representatives also sit on the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.8** A range of more informal 'engagement' opportunities supports the formal process and enables tenants to get involved in different projects and activities. These include task and finish groups, community activities and volunteers who

give up their time to improve their local areas e.g. litter picking, organising social events, providing peer support and mentoring etc.

- 2.9** There has been a significant increase in the number of people who are active in their community and Timebanking has proved to be an effective way of encouraging and supporting people to do this. In addition, the programme of training and employment support opportunities has been extremely popular with large numbers of tenants taking part and acquiring new skills and knowledge which raises self esteem and helps improve quality of life.
- 2.10** Progress has been made towards establishing an effective tenant scrutiny function. This entails a group of tenants who are trained to carry out service reviews, service testing and mystery shopper type activities- in order to gain feedback about key service areas. The group has received external training and support from staff as well as establishing contacts with tenant groups of other landlords. Visits have subsequently been made to empty homes to check lettings standards and identify improvements that could be made to the lettings process. This work is being followed up by looking at the information, leaflets and documentation provided to new tenants. Follow up work will be required to support this group to develop its capacity to complete further service testing and reviews.
- 2.11** The tenant engagement work to date has shown that traditional methods of involvement, for example the residents boards are still popular and need to play a part, however there is growing interest and participation in more flexible, less formal opportunities- these seem to appeal to a broader cross section of tenants and enable people to be active within their community at the same time as balancing the challenges of their busy daily lives.
- 2.12** Timebanking is an important strand of the approach to engaging with tenants and ordinarily there is a six-monthly progress update reported to Scrutiny; however, following the Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant lockdowns, face to face volunteering has been put on hold. There is no progress therefore to report at this stage in relation to Timebanking specifically.
- 2.13** Environment & Neighbourhoods
- 2.14** The Environment & Neighbourhoods Strategy attempted to strike a balance between targeting large capital investment in estate improvement and the need to support smaller scale, tenant led schemes across the Vale. In line with the Strategy, significant capital investment has been made at the Buttrills estate, Gibbonsdown and Central Estates in Barry. The external improvement works including cladding to buildings, security measures including fences, lighting and paths have helped address concerns about energy efficiency and security. The works are on-going, and several new schemes are being developed to improve communal garden areas and address parking issues.

- 2.15** There has also been a wide range of local resident led schemes funded from Environmental Improvement budgets, including upgrades to communal bin stores, creation of communal gardens, upgrades to open spaces and ‘clean-up initiatives’ which have improved the appearance of estates and provided spaces which local people can use for social and recreational purposes. A good example of this approach is the ‘Everyone’s Garden Project’ which has transformed a derelict area of land close to Margaret Avenue in the Colcot area of Barry. Close working with the residents Group and Primary School has enabled designs to be drawn up to create a recreational and educational space for use by local people.
- 2.16** The Strategy has also led to the development of a tool for assessing and improving the physical appearances of housing estates. The Photobook model has been adopted and an investment in an ICT solution, enables staff to capture and measure estate conditions, including, communal areas, green spaces, parking areas, bin stores, garage courts etc.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

#### **3.1** Long term

The Strategies have ensured that a planned approach has been taken towards the long term, to ensure that services continue to improve, and customers are able to access the services they need when they need them.

#### Prevention

- 3.2** The approach to customer service makes it easier for tenants to contact the right person and get an early resolution to issues before they turn into problems. The measures to get more people to use on-line services will reduce pressure on the telephone service.

#### Integration

- 3.3** The Strategies have supported a holistic approach to customer service, tenant engagement and environment & neighbourhoods which is focussed on outcomes and problem resolution, ensuring that different Officers and teams work together to bring about solutions to complex problems.

#### Collaboration

- 3.4** The Strategies recognise that several factors contribute towards an effective housing service and sets out a framework for several Council teams i.e. Rents, Neighbourhood Management, Assets and Repairs- to work together with residents to deliver effective results.

#### Involvement

- 3.5** Resident involvement is key to the effective delivery of the objectives in all the Strategies. Each Strategy therefore takes account of feedback from tenants in terms of what is most important to them so that changes to service delivery can be prioritised.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** The financial implications arising from all the Strategies has been taken into account within the Departmental Service Plan and the required budgetary provision has been made available. Progress and spend to date have been monitored as part of existing budget management arrangements.

### **Employment**

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications arising from this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.3** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **5. Background Papers**

None.

## Operational Delivery Plan Customer Service

### Objective 1: Embedding a customer first culture within the housing team

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Review Staff Charter at staff appraisals and team meetings	April 17	Sept 17	The Staff Charter has been reviewed at a monthly team meeting and is discussed with individual team members during the annual #itsaboutme sessions.	
Staff working group to establish team 'values' to include Customer focus	April 17	Sept 17	A set of team values have been developed by group of staff in the Neighbourhood team. These have been reviewed and adopted by colleagues in both the housing management and rents team.	
Highlight good practice case studies as exemplars to team members	April 17	Sept 17	Customer Care Policies of John Lewis and First Direct reviewed by customer services staff working group and informed the content of the Customer Service (Housing) Strategy.	
Team members to take part in 'Aspiring Leaders' Staff development programme	Nov 16	June 17	Two cohorts of staff have now participated in the Aspiring Leaders programme which involved 6 days of classroom based learning covering a range of management competencies. Members of staff who completed the programme then completed a work based challenge based on the TV Programme 'The Apprentice' - where they worked in teams to produce short films for tenants. The task was judged by members of the Executive team, tenants and was subject to a staff vote. The initiative was very successful and enabled the staff involved to use the skills and techniques they have learnt on the Aspiring Leaders Programme.	
Testing of customer service/ attitude to form part of interview process for future recruitment of Housing staff	April 17	On-going	Customer care questions are included in all interviews for front line staff. These are competency based questions, designed to ensure successful applicants share the Council's values and are committed to delivering high standards of customer service.	
Undertake service testing to review quality of customer experience	Jan 17	June 19	Tenants have been involved in making checks of the lettings standard of new lettings; this has involved attending properties with repairs staff and checking standards ahead of new lettings. Tenants have also taken part in estate inspections on several estates.	

Undertake staff engagement survey	Sept 17	March 18	The Council staff engagement survey has been completed. There was a very good response rate from the Housing and Building Services team and the results were analysed and fed back via Management Development sessions with Leaders.	
Identify key themes impacting staff morale	April 18	June 18	As per above, staff feedback sessions have taken place in Feb and March 2018. Results and key themes were shared with front line staff via Staff net, team meetings and 1-1s. Since then, any emerging themes are picked up via monthly 1-1s and team meetings.	
Develop a staff working group to address themes/issues	July 18	Dec 18	A group of Managers was trained in creative thinking techniques and facilitated group discussions with staff designed to unpick the results and recommend actions to drive improvements in staff engagement.	



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## Objective 2: Expanding the range of personalised services available to tenants

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Develop suite of personalised services/interventions	Jan 18	May 20	Neighbourhood Action Plans have been developed for major housing estates, which set out a range of actions to tackle issues which are specific to each individual estate. The Plans provide a personalized approach to issues within neighborhood and promote a new localized way of working to address tenants concerns and issues.	
Identify vulnerable tenants from existing management information e.g. difficulty getting access for gas servicing, no repairs reported, single people etc.	April 17	Sept 17	<p>An exercise has been completed to overlay information which contains triggers of vulnerability i.e. very few repairs reported, gas capped off, applicants re housed via homeless. These tenants were then contacted to ensure they are managing their tenancy.</p> <p>More recently over 1,500 potentially vulnerable tenants, including people who live alone and those with health issues received a welfare call from a member of Housing staff, as part of the Covid-19 response- to ensure they had access to essential supplies, including food and medication. Where difficulties were identified, staff liaised with food banks, advice agencies and local volunteer groups to ensure that everyone's needs were met.</p>	
Implement priority tenants' scheme to target vulnerable tenants with a range of interventions to sustain tenancies	Sept 17	Dec 17	Vulnerable tenants are being identified and targeted with more intensive management and housing related support. Front line staff have received training in 'restorative approaches' which now helps them work with households to address their vulnerability and the root causes of issues. This represents a new way of working and is consistent with emerging best practice being advocated by Welsh Government. Work to date includes, assistance provided to people with hoarding disorders and support for tenants with low level mental health issues to take part in volunteering opportunities in order to improve their well-being.	
Gather socio-economic background data for each estate	April 17	July 17	Socio economic data including census, Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, employment etc. has been gathered for different housing estates and has fed into the Neighbourhood Plans. This information helps to highlight the most pertinent issues on different places.	

Consult with local residents to identify key issues and future estate priorities	April 17	July 17	Consultation exercises were carried out with residents to inform the Neighbourhood Plans. This included door knocking, surgeries, meetings with residents and also feedback via social media i.e. Twitter and Facebook.	
Develop template for estate action plan	April 17	July 17	A template for the Neighbourhood Plans was developed based on data available and good practice from elsewhere.	
Complete action plans for larger estates	July 17	Dec 18	Neighbourhood Plans have been drafted with tenants for eleven housing estates in the Vale. These plans take into account local concerns and set out a range of priority actions which will drive improvements to the area over the next three years.	

### Objective 3: Developing the ways customers can access housing services

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Publish article in tenants newsletter including photograph, name and contact details of Neighbourhood Officers and Assistants	July 16	On-going	Complete. The details of Neighbourhood team, including direct telephone numbers and email addresses have been included in the last two tenants' newsletters. A new quarterly neighborhood newsletter is currently being drafted to update tenants on their Local Neighborhood Action Plan will include details of key Housing staff	
Undertake programme of estate road shows/ community events to raise profile of landlord and build relationships with tenants	Feb 17	Sept 17	A series of estate roadshows/ community events have taken place at Penarth, Llantwit Major, Buttrills, Gibbonsdown and Central Estates. These have been popular events and have helped raised the profile of the Neighbourhood Manager and enabled them to get to know more residents.	
Pilot mobile working IT solution to free up staff to spend more time on site	Feb 17	June 17	A mobile working solution has been implemented (Photobook) which enables staff to complete forms and gather information when on site. This improves record keeping and reduces administration, allowing staff to spend more time on site. Photobook continues to be used for inspections of communal areas in blocks of flats and to undertake estate grading's but it also being rolled out to other service areas including the voids maintenance and temporary accommodation teams.	
Publish dates and times for estate walkabouts in advance and encourage tenants to join in	June 17	On-going	Estate walkabouts take place regularly at all major housing estates. The programme has been promoted locally to tenants and residents groups via word of mouth and Social Media.	
Front line staff attend residents meetings and local surgeries	Feb 17	On-going	Neighbourhood staff attend all Residents Boards as well any community group meetings on a regular basis.	
Promote ways of getting in touch via tenants newsletter	July 17	June 17	Contact details are published in a range of places, including newsletters, the web site and on correspondence.	
Publish article in tenants newsletter including photograph, name and contact details of Neighbourhood Officers and Assistants	July 16	On-going	Complete. This will remain a standard item in future tenants' newsletters. The details will be updated to reflect any staffing changes.	

Develop Customer Portal, enabling tenants to access information and services on-line	Jan 17	Jan 18	Customer portal is 'live' and provides customer access to rents and tenancy modules allowing tenants to review rent balances, view rent statements, update personal circumstances and make service requests. This enables customers to manage their own information and should also reduce the number of telephone enquiries and personal visits to Council offices.	
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			Staff training has been provided and the Portal went live on the 26 <sup>th</sup> September 2018.	
Ensure access to Customer Portal is available in Welsh and English	March 17	Jan 18	The requirement to provide the information bilingually previously proved an issue and translation software (Linguaskin) was purchased to address all of the Council's requirements. All of the information used in the Portal has been translated and tested and is working effectively which enabled the portal to 'go live'.	
Improve quality of information held on the Housing pages of the external web site	July 17	March 18	Some cosmetic changes made to web site content, mainly revised contact details, staff names. More fundamental review of the web site content is underway in order to improve the amount and quality of information available.	
Use social media to share news, information and updates	Feb 17	On-going	Updates and information are being shared via Twitter and Facebook. There are now more than 700 people following the Housing team via social media. In addition, email bulletins are sent to over 1,200 people who have registered for updates via the .govdelivery platform.	
Promote use of Customer Portal via tenants newsletter	Jan 18	April 18	A 'soft launch' took place to ensure everything was working correctly and staff were able to manage requests from new users. Following a review period, a more active promotion campaign has taken place with details included on the rent increase letter which went to all tenants as well as the rent arrears correspondence. An email has also been sent to all tenants who have provided their email addresses- giving details how to register for the Portal and access information.	

#### Objective 4: Improving the quality of customer services provided to tenants

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Establish knowledge base for Contact 1Vale staff to set out key information to help answer housing queries	Nov 16	July 17	The knowledge base was completed and training provided to staff in C1V. Analysis has indicated that fewer calls have been transferred and fewer service requests raised as a result of agents being able to provide more detailed information to callers.	
Provide C1V staff with read only access to rent screens	March 17	On-going	Complete. C1V staff have access to rent screens in OHMS and are able to deal with straightforward enquiries including requests for PIN numbers and balance checks. This enables the Income team to focus on arrears recovery.	
Train staff to interpret rent accounts and provide basic information such as current balances	March 17	Sept 17	C1V have received training in interpreting accounts and providing rent balances to customers and this has resulted in a reduction in calls transferred to the rents team.	

Review repeat callers and identify barriers to first point resolution	July 17	Feb 18	A number of frequent callers have been identified. Analysis identified there can be vulnerability factors which affect the repeat calls (rather than service failures). Staff work with the individuals to ensure appropriate support and assistance is being provided in order for them to live independently. In other cases, repeat calls are due to ongoing issues	
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			in an area. This has included on going lifestyle clashes between neighbours. When the dispute has been resolved, there is a noticeable reduction in calls.	
Review call volumes and types to identify main reasons for calls	July 17	Feb 18	Configuration of telephony system means it is not possible to breakdown different call types received via the Housing queue. Analysis of service requests raised via Oracle however has been useful in identifying key call reasons and enables staff to align the knowledge base so that staff are able to provide high quality response to main call types.	
Improve knowledge base and training for front line staff to resolve high call volumes	July 17	March 18	'Knowledge base' is reviewed and updated periodically in order to drive further improvements in first call resolution in contact centre.	
Review current processes to prevent some types of call e.g. more specific appointment slots, follow on for repairs etc.	July 17	March 18	Complete. High volume calls are regarding repairs and Homes4U. Repairs team are improving processes to reduce waste and increase first time fix, also looking at repair appointment system to be able to offer more flexibility in appointment slots. Housing application form available on line and use of paper forms has been discontinued (except for vulnerable people). The next stage will be to introduce ability to bid for properties online. Call volumes and service requests from C1V have reduced.	
Establish duty facility to provide immediate response to urgent queries raised by customers	April 17	On-going	'On call' system established to ensure that a member of the Housing team is on office cover and available to deal with calls escalated via the contact centre or the reception counter at the Civic.	
Establish knowledge base for Contact 1Vale staff to set out key information to help answer housing queries	Nov 16	July 17	Knowledge base has been completed and training provided to staff in C1V. Analysis has indicated that fewer calls have been transferred and fewer service requests raised as a result of agents being able to provide more detailed information to callers.	
Rent First pilot to include all teams discussing rents during every tenant contact	April 17	March 18	Pilot undertaken with Housing reception staff and agents in C1V.	

Weekly 'void property' meeting to improve new tenant experience	March 17	On-going	Weekly void meetings take place to speed up the letting process and 'move in' dates are conveyed to tenants in order to improve the move in experience. Post letting surveys are also carried out by telephone to identify any issues. Positive feedback has been received about the new lettings process and the condition of properties, with 74% of tenants advising they were satisfied with the condition of their property when they moved in.	
Establish monthly meeting between Housing and repairs staff to resolve repairs issues	April 17	On-going	Regular communication between repairs team and neighbourhood staff have helped address issues and improve customer service.	





## Objective 5: Increasing the range of customer feedback and using this to drive service improvements

Identify missing tenant profile data	Nov 16	Dec 17	New 'tenant profile' module has been implemented which gives scope to collect more detailed information regarding each tenant e.g. income, benefits claimed etc. The Money Advice team continue to collect this information and input it onto the OHMS system.
Send out profile questionnaire to tenants	Nov 16	Dec 17	A tenant profile questionnaire was sent out to all tenants. It is planned to send a new tenant profiling questionnaire to tenants in 2021 with a view to cleanse and update data – Capturing contact preferences – email addresses – vulnerabilities and support needs. Employment types, skills level, education and skills – whether tenants are working or not working allowing us to going forward target service user for relevant support services.
Bulk update of tenant profile data into OHMS system	Dec 17	May 17	Tenant profile data has been updated in the housing management system (OHMS).
Key driver analysis will be undertaken of the customer satisfaction results to identify the most important improvements and the factors which have the biggest impact on overall satisfaction.	Sept 16	Feb 17	Key driver analysis completed as well as detailed analysis of results at estate level and by various demographic groups. Emerging themes and issues informed a customer satisfaction action plan which was developed by staff from various front-line teams.
Undertake tenant satisfaction survey of all Council tenants in the Vale of Glamorgan (STAR)	Sept 16	Feb 17	Complete. Results reported to Housing and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee and fed back to tenants in the Summer Newsletter 2017. The 2020 STAR Survey has now also been received and will be reported to Housing and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee shortly.
Completion of Housemark Core Benchmarking exercise	April 17	Nov 17	Core benchmarking was completed for 2016/17 and again in 2018/19 which provided detailed business intelligence on a broad range of Housing and Building services and also enabled comparisons to be drawn with a wide range of housing providers. This information has been shared with Managers across the Directorate and informs the Service Plan

## Operational Delivery Plan Tenant Participation

**Objective 1: INTEGRATE-** make tenant engagement an integral part of our business, influencing how services are provided, how decisions are made and how money is spent.

Action	Target date	Progress	Status
Chief Officer (Head of Service) appointed to act as a champion for tenant engagement and take overall responsibility for implementation of the Tenant Engagement Strategy	On-going	The Head of Housing and Building Services acts as champion for tenant engagement and actively challenges Officers to ensure that tenants have opportunities to be involved and influence service delivery.	
Work closely with the tenant working group and the Quality Design Forum (QDF) to increase membership and develop capacity	Ongoing	The Tenant Working Group and the QDF continue to meet regularly and play an active an important role in the decision-making process. Despite efforts to engage new members there continues to be a reliance on a small number of hard-working tenants.	
Tenant Working Group to be routinely consulted on services and have meaningful input to key strategies and policies which effect tenants. Evidence of tenant consultation to form part of reports to Scrutiny Committee	On-going	The Tenant Working Group have regular discussions with Senior Managers about key issues and have been able to challenge performance, raise concerns, review new policies and new initiatives. Reports to Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny set out specific tenant consultation and engagement carried out in respect of each issue.	

<p>Establish tenant scrutiny team who are able to undertake quality checking and service reviews</p>	<p>June 19</p>	<p>Staff have made contact with a number of tenants to try and raise interest in a tenant assessor project and a 'taster' day was organised to provide more information and get people on board. To date there has been limited interest and the 'taster' day had to be cancelled at short notice when a number of apologies were received. Anecdotal feedback has indicated that tenants have been put off by the time commitment required and also lack of confidence about their own ability to undertake this work.</p> <p>A number of other options are now being explored to establish a tenant scrutiny team. Tenant Assessor Group developed - small group of 5 tenants that have undertaken Tenant Assessor Training in partnership with Newydd, Hafod, Trivallis, Merthyr Valley Homes and Bron Afon.</p> <p>They have started to complete Mystery shopping exercises for eg – The Civic Offices Reception Area, The Leisure Centre and the Extra Care scheme in Barry.</p> <p>Moving forward as a team they will be given training to look at some of our Housing Services to see if any improvements can be identified. We are also looking at doing joint work with other partners - being a critical – friend and completing online surveys etc</p> <p>We have developed a Digital Champion Group – This group are developing a suite of workbooks in order to provide digital training drop in sessions at our sheltered schemes and our Community Hub in Aberaeron Close</p>	
<p>Tenant Engagement to become a fixed agenda item at team meetings and for monthly staff 1-1 sessions</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Discussions about tenant engagement take place regularly on team meeting agenda and front line staff are challenged to develop ways of actively engaging tenants when carrying out their day to day roles.</p>	

**Objective 2: INCLUSIVE-** ensure that opportunities are provided for all tenants to get involved and broaden the current levels of engagement

Action	Target date	Progress	Status
Develop a flexible menu of tenant involvement which enables a broader cross section of tenants to take part	Dec 18	There are now a wide range of flexible ways for tenants to take part, including more formal groups like residents boards, working groups and focus groups to a wide range of more informal local opportunities including attending estate walkabouts, completing surveys, undertaking litter picks, taking part in training, volunteering or health and well-being initiatives. Over the last 12 months the Housing team has engaged with over 2,500 tenants from a wide variety of backgrounds and in a number of different areas across the whole of the Vale.	
Promotion of tenant involvement opportunities via tenant newsletter, web site, social media, leaflets etc.	On-going	<p>There has been an increased emphasis on social media with regular updates and information shared via Twitter and Facebook. There are currently over 750 followers on Twitter and around 450 'likes' on Facebook, however the nature of these communication channels, mean the information reaches a very wide audience with several thousand 'interactions' with many of the posts.</p> <p>As well as Social Media, use has been made of email with surveys and information shared with Council tenants via the Gov Delivery email subscription service.</p> <p>The value and benefits of paper based communication is being reviewed in light of the costs, time involved in getting information out and the fact that it becomes out of date quite quickly.</p>	
Target groups who are currently underrepresented e.g. young people, single mums, BME backgrounds	On-going	There has been an increase in the range of tenants involved in more informal tenant engagement activities. Over the last year, over 2,500 people have	

etc. and put in place different means of getting them involved		<p>engaged with various projects and initiatives. Younger people taking part in employment and training opportunities, families and children getting involved in healthy living and sporting initiatives and also tenants in rural areas joining in local events within their communities.</p> <p>The more formal tenant groups continue to be made up of older people with many living in sheltered housing.</p>	
Meet with existing Tenants and Residents Associations and explore opportunities for further involvement, additional projects etc.	On-going	Staff regularly attend Residents Boards meetings and have discussions about potential projects and initiatives in their area.	
Engage local people in development of local actions e.g. local action plans, estate walkabouts, spending estate budgets	On-going	There has been significant consultation with tenants to inform the Neighbourhood Plans. As well as the estate level information from the large scale tenants' survey; emails, roadshows and door knocking in different estates took place to help identify key issues and priorities for action in each neighbourhood.	
Establish tenant consultation panel/ sounding board which can be used to provide feedback on specific themes	April 19	It has not yet been possible to establish a consultation panel. This work will be a priority for the next six months.	

**Objective 3: BUILD CAPACITY-** provide support, training and development opportunities to enable tenants to make a difference

Action	Target date	Progress	Status
Carry out skills audits of existing tenants groups to identify gaps and opportunities for further development	Oct 18	Broad discussions have taken place with tenants groups and for the most part, they feel they have the skills and knowledge to undertake their work. There are some groups who have identified further training needs and this has been delivered.	

Develop training/ development plans for existing tenants groups	Nov 18	Tenants groups are asked to think about any training development needs and there is funding available from the Council to support groups who feel they need development or new skills.	
Promote training opportunities for individual tenants to improve employability	On-going	<p>The work undertaken to improve employability has been very effective with over 20 training courses run, over 100 people taking part and a number of tenants have secured employment as a direct result of the support they have received.</p> <p>There continues to be a focus on training and employment and joint work with Communities for Work, Job Centre Plus and local Housing Associations is taking place to provide comprehensive support for job seekers but also to improve access to work experience and employment for tenants. A good example is the construction opportunities being created on the Council house building programme, where local people will be able to get paid site based work experience in a number of different trades at the new Brecon Court and Holm View developments.</p> <p>Since the launch of the Tenant participation strategy and the community investment strategy the team have Launched 2018 the “Opportunity Knocks” employment and skills programme in partnership with Newydd Housing, Vale Homes and Inspire 2 Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported 140 residents through our Vale Employability Road Shows</li> <li>• Supported 60 residents with CVs and Interview Skills preparation through our pre employment training programme</li> <li>• Supported 30 residents via our residential employability boot camp</li> <li>• Created 7 x 6 weeks work placement within with Council Departments</li> <li>• Secured through targeted recruitment and training clauses via our housing development programme 369 weeks’ worth of training</li> <li>• Helped 110 residents gain employment</li> <li>• Helped 961 residents gained accredited vocational qualifications</li> <li>• Helped 7 residents gained apprenticeships</li> </ul> <p>Helped 7 people become self employed</p>	

Produce toolkit for new tenants groups to start up	Sept 18	There is a variety of information and support available from TPAS which tenants groups are able to access as part of the Council's membership. Specific advice, information and support is provided to any new group looking to set up.	
Work with Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and/or Welsh Tenants Federation (WTF) to provide training and/or support to existing tenants groups	March 19	TPAS training has been provided to existing Tenants Groups and further sessions are scheduled to take place with other tenants and staff. The Council continues to be a TPAS member so that tenants groups have access to a wide range of support and assistance specifically around tenant involvement.	

**Objective 4:** LISTENS AND LEARNS- feedback is sought from a wide range of tenants and this drives improvements in the services provided

Action	Target date	Progress	Status
Run large scale tenant satisfaction survey every two years in order to drive improvements in standards	Jan 19	<p>A specification has been developed for a large-scale tenants' survey and suitably qualified contractors have been invited to submit quotations via the Sell2Wales procurement website. Subject to appointment of a contractor, it is planned to post out a survey to every tenant in the late Summer/ early Autumn. This survey will provide valuable insight from tenants about a range of services provided and will also allow tenant satisfaction to be benchmarked with a range of other housing providers.</p> <p>A tenant focus group will be consulted about the survey design and choice of questions and when the exercise is completed, the final report will be presented to the Tenants Working Group.</p>	
Undertake monthly tenant surveys on specific issues e.g. ASB, new lettings etc.	On-going	Monthly telephone surveys are undertaken of new lettings and neighbor nuisance which enables staff to monitor trends and identify any concerns. The satisfaction with property condition (at letting) is very high and positive feedback has been received regarding the paint voucher scheme and the welcome bowls (which contain some basic items for new tenants).	
Put in place action plan to address issues identified in tenants survey	June 18	An action plan was developed from the 2017 tenants' survey and several key issues were addressed. In addition, the main issues for each estate has been incorporated into the Neighborhood Action Plans, which are deigned to drive improvements in different areas. A new action plan will be drafted later this year when the latest survey is complete, and the results have been received.	

Performance information to be made available to tenants via the tenants newsletter, including comparative information showing how the Vale performs relative to other social landlords	Oct 18	Some performance information has been shared via social media and the Councils web site, however an article on performance, including comparative information with other landlords will feature in the next tenants' newsletter.	
Publish a 'you said, we did' section within the tenants newsletter, highlighting examples of how tenant feedback has led to positive change	Oct 18	There has not been a tenants' newsletter for some time but the next edition will feature some feedback information highlighting examples of changes made arising from tenant feedback.	



## Operational Delivery Plan Environment and Neighbourhoods

### 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 was used at Central Estates and Buttrills estate to monitor 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. During 2019/2020 security fencing has been erected in the St Paul area in Penarth CCTV installed in Gibbonsdown and bollards in Treharne Westbury close.</p>	
Review published crime statistics and liaise with Police and Safer Vale to identify key issues on Council estates	Sept 17	Dec 17	<p>Close partnership working in place with Safer Vale, including joint visits, case reviews and problem solving. New information sharing project is in place where South Wales Police send daily reports of crimes and incidents which relate to Council owned properties. This information enables the Housing Management team to identify issues at an early stage and work with the Police and other partners to resolve problems before they escalate. Crime statistics also being reviewed as part of the Neighbourhood Plans- which identify key concerns and priority actions for different estates.</p>	
Adopt secure by design principles for all Council new build developments	April 17	Sept 17	<p>New build properties at Francis Road incorporated secure by design principles. In addition, future developments at Holm View and the Brecon Court also incorporate the principles.</p>	
Re tender empty property security contract	April 18	Dec 18	<p>No longer appropriate. There has been a reduction in the use of empty property security which reflects fact that long term empties have now been refurbished and re let. Only in exceptional circumstances are steel shutters or alarms used to protect empty properties. Current levels of expenditure mean the service does not need to be subject to formal procurement exercise.</p>	

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. Security concerns continue to be discussed with existing tenants groups as part of their standard monthly meetings. A good example is at St Luke's Avenue, Penarth where the Police have attended the residents' board meeting and discussed concerns of residents and talked about how they can work with local people to address crime and the fear of crime in the local area.	
Develop estate action plans for larger estates to set out responses to residents' concerns	Feb 17	Feb 18	Draft estate action plans have been developed for many of the larger estates which include a range of socio economic data, information about the housing stock and demographics of the people who live there. The Housing Management team have consulted with local tenants about these plans and are in the process of agreeing priorities for future actions.	

**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	Estate walkabouts are now taking place at most estates and a system of estate grading is underway. This involves grading estates against an agreed standard. The standard also breaks down into different elements e.g. car parks, garage areas. 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.	
Encourage tenants to take part in estate walkabouts, including consideration of incentives	April 17	On going	Time credits (which can be redeemed at a range of outlets and leisure facilities) are being offered to tenants who take part in estate walkabouts and other community activities. There has been an increase in the number of tenants taking part in some areas; however there remain low levels of engagement in other areas with no tenants taking part in some 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	The grass cutting contract has been retendered and new contractor appointed. Positive feedback has been received so far regarding the quality of work and the increased frequency of the cuts.	
Work with Cleansing team to develop	Feb	June	Several meetings taken place with the enforcement team and a process has been agreed	

process for tackling fly tipping and dog fouling and take enforcement action against offenders	17	17	and adopted to tackle fly tipping.  Whilst dumping continues to be an issue in the Vale there have been reductions at the sites targeted. A number of fines have been issued to tenants who have been caught fly tipping on Council estates. It is anticipated this will serve as a deterrent to other people. To further support these 32 residents were involved in Skip Amnesty across the county, and 163 residents worked with keep Wales Tidy on litter picks– additionally many garden clearances were undertaken.
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. Hotspot data was used to target skip amnesty and keep Wales tidy project.
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. Further works will be considered for different locations on a site by site basis- dependent on the local issues and resident preferences.
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, Dinas Powys, St Athan 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 property prior to the tenant moving in.

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 at the recent Festivale event.	
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	Discussions underway with 'Gibby Greenfingers' the tenant volunteer group who manage the Treharne Community garden. They have recently carried out garden work at sheltered complexes and are looking to expand this work to elderly and disabled tenants across the Vale. In addition, a number of focus groups have taken place to explore options of creating a social enterprise which could take on responsibility for cutting communal grass and gardens of vulnerable people.	
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 rolled out for use by front line staff and is used during monthly estate walkabouts.	
Use photo book to grade environmental standards on all Council estates	May 17	Dec 17	The Photobook is in place and all estates have been graded.	
Record the estate grading's as part of performance reporting and target improvements on estates with lower grading's	Dec 17	On going	Gradings are in place for all estates and changes in standards are monitored on a quarterly basis. The gradings are currently upgraded monthly – going forward this will be reviewed to ascertain what is the most effective way to monitor standards and grading in each area.	
Consult tenants and produce business case for a communal cleaning service to improve the cleanliness of shared areas in flats	April 17	March 18	Scope for communal cleaning service is hampered by the fact there is a condition in the current tenancy agreement, which makes it the responsibility of tenants to clean communal areas. As a consequence, any service would not be eligible for Housing Benefit. This action will be put on hold pending the introduction of revised tenancy agreements under the Renting Homes Wales Act. Small scale consultation was undertaken in 2 areas of the Vale and feedback will be factored in which this work is picked up following revision of the tenancy agreements.	

### 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 has taken place with some residents' groups regarding the use of green space by community groups. At two separate sites in Coldbrook (Stratford Green and Hathaway Place), resident consultation events and activities have taken place in order to identify residents' priorities and get volunteers on board to support a grant application to improve green spaces. In addition, tenants at Catherine Meazey House in Penarth are working with the Council to improve the communal areas.	
Explore grant funding opportunities to secure additional funding to improve specific green spaces, including Treetops in Gibbonsdown	July 17	Dec 17	The Community Garden at Gibbonsdown is open again and is being managed by a new group of tenants and residents. Although the part time worker is no longer employed, the Housing team have supported the residents to become a formally constituted group and put in place a range of process governing the use of the garden. It is popular with residents  A bid was submitted for the Treetops area of Gibbonsdown wherein it was envisaged that a large spatial area would be brought back into use – this bid will be further developed this year and resubmitted.	
Prepare a business case for the development of a community garden at Margaret Avenue, Colcot	April 17	Aug 17	The grant application for the Community Garden at Margaret Avenue was not successful. A number of volunteering days have taken place recently involving the Colcot residents association, Parks and the local School where volunteers have tidied up the land, painted the fencing and look at installing raised beds and low maintenance play equipment e.g. mud kitchen, sand pit, tyres etc. Provision was then made in the Environmental Improvement budget- to make further improvements to the space. A proposal was developed in conjunction with local residents. Following a series of consultation and community events with the Margaret Avenue residents, work has started on site to create a play area called 'Everyone's' Garden' making active use of the green space.	

Develop 2 pilot projects to bring unused areas of land into use by local community	July 17	Dec 17	<p>Grant funding was secured (section 106) to develop a parcel of green space adjacent to Oakfield School in Gibbonsdown. Work has now been completed and is proving successful amongst school children and local people.</p> <p>Communal garden and green spaces at Buttrills to give people more ownership over green spaces and try and engender a sense of community pride. This work is being carried out in partnership with the local Residents Board and politicians. Other work which has been ongoing towards making use of unused areas of land back, includes funding being provided to the Gibby green fingers project towards a community garden patio. Meirion Close communal garden has also benefited from a new patio area in a communal garden costing £3000. A Bike Club Pod installed in Treharne - More car park spaces for residents living at St Govans have also been provided equating a spend of £6,875.</p>	
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	<p>Housing team have participated in quarterly task group meetings involving Visible Services, Keep Wales Tidy etc. Litter Picking days in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy on 3 consecutive occasions working with a total of 163 residents. Furthermore, Keep Wales Tidy was a key partner in Tree tops community garden project which was supported Financially by the of the environmental budget. Going forward the Treetop work will be re visited and a funding bid will be submitted to develop the area.</p>	

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

Action	Start date	Finish date	Progress	Status
Encourage tenants to participate in estate walkabouts, including possibility to use incentives	April 17	On - going	<p>Estate walkabouts are now taking place at all larger housing estates and an estate grading system is being used. This involves grading estates against an agreed standard. The standard also breaks down into different elements e.g. car parks, garage areas. The system has been rolled out all estates and is helping to drive improvements in appearance. Dates and times for estate walkabouts have been shared with tenants at the forums and through word of mouth. There has been some take up for example in the Buttrills area.</p> <p>Environmental budgets have been used to purchase notice boards which will be erected in local areas to provide up to date information to residents.</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	Criteria and proforma's have been developed to enable tenants and groups to apply for funding from the estate budgets. This will also enable Officers to priorities bids.	
Promote estate budgets to residents and support tenants to develop projects and secure funding	April 17	Sept 17	A set of criteria has been developed along with a process and forms to be used. This is being promoted to local tenant and residents' groups and partners. Information is also being provided on notice boards – a new local Neighborhood newsletter will be going out to tenants from their Neighbourhood Managers with further details information on the local Neighborhood area plans and details of estate budget will also be included.	
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.	