

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 09 June 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Update on the Task and Finish Group for Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on the work of the Task and Finish Group.
Report Owner:	Rob Thomas, Managing Director
Responsible Officer:	Mark Thomas, Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	None
Policy Framework:	The report is a matter for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report asks the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee to consider the progress made so far by the Task and Finish Group for Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan. • The subsequent updates and report(s) produced by the Task and Finish Work Group will be referred back to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration and any recommendations or comments approved be referred on to Cabinet. 	

Recommendation

1. That the Committee considers the progress made and work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group for Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan so far.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To provide Scrutiny with information on how the Group is progressing with this task.

1. Background

- 1.1 All five of the Council's Scrutiny Committees in considering their work programmes for 2020/21 were requested to put forward items for consideration for review and the most appropriate forms of scrutiny for each of these, including "task and finish".
- 1.2 At its meeting on the 14th October 2020, the Scrutiny Committee, identified housing and homelessness provision as part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's recovery from Covid-19 as an area that should be reviewed by the Committee and consideration be given to setting up a Task and Finish Work Group in order to achieve this. This recommendation is in line with the council's adopted Coronavirus Recovery Strategy (min C334 21st September 2020) where an action specifically was agreed to work with partners to sustain the reduction in homelessness achieved during the crisis.
- 1.3 Following a report on the proposed scope and makeup of the Task and Finish Work Group at its meeting on the 10th February 2021, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to the setting up and provisional scope of this Group, with the details of its membership provided at the subsequent meeting on the 15th March 2021.
- 1.4 The initial meeting of the Task and Finish Work Group was on 20th April 2021.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 At the initial meeting of the Group on 20th April 2021, the following matters were addressed:
 - 2.1.1 Councillor Mrs. S.D. Perkes be appointed Chairman of the Task and Finish Group;
 - 2.1.2 Ms. H. Smith (Representative from the Tenant Working Group / Panel) be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Task and Finish Group;
 - 2.1.3 It was agreed that the scope and timetable of review for the Group be more focused on the current, immediate, priorities faced within housing and homelessness provision (regarding allocation, legislation and finance), as these areas could be impacted by the run up to 10th September 2021, when Welsh Government (WG) funding for emergency accommodation (such as the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation (B&B)) would officially end;

- 2.1.4 That, time allowing, the longer-term issues and strategies around such provision would be considered once the immediate priorities around housing and homelessness had been addressed.
- 2.2 Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is the amended scope for the review of Housing and Homelessness Provision, outlining the objectives and desired outcomes for the review, the information that would be required, and the methods to be employed in undertaking the review.
- 2.3 Attached at Appendix 2 to this report is the amended timetable of the Task and Finish Group for its review of Housing and Homelessness Provision.
- 2.4 At the next meeting of the Group on 1st June, 2021, the following items will be considered as part the agenda:
 - 2.4.1 Allocation Priorities around Housing and Homelessness Provision;
 - 2.4.2 Legal Overview of the Homelessness Process and the Effects of the Pandemic on that Process;
 - 2.4.3 The Current Budgetary Situation for Housing and Homelessness Provision.

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

- 3.1 Looking to the long term - the review of housing and homelessness provision will offer recommendations and a strategy around the Council's approach to this provision in order to ensure that such services are sustainable and that future need and demand for services is understood.
- 3.2 Taking an integrated approach - the review of housing and homelessness provision will include looking at the current multi-agency arrangements in place around housing as well as engagement with partners and other external parties in order to carry out this review and ensuring the review takes into account the wellbeing objectives and goals of the Council (such as 'An Inclusive and Safe Vale').
- 3.3 Involvement and Collaboration - the review will involve potential contributions from a variety of external parties such as expert witnesses and other partners or third sector organisations.
- 3.4 Prevention - the review will help to address issues around housing provision that could occur and impact on the ability of the Council to house tenants as well as addressing reasons behind homelessness within the Vale of Glamorgan as we move on to a recovery phase.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications in respect of this report. However, if such implications do arise from the subsequent review undertaken by the Task and Finish Group, these will be brought back to the Committee as part of the final report.
- 4.2** The establishment of a time limited Task and Finish Group is considered to make optimum use of limited resources. In view of the fact that no new group would commence work on a review prior to other work being finalised, it is recommended that the Task and Finish Group undertake its work as soon as is practicable following its establishment.

Employment

- 4.3** There are no employment implications in respect of this report. However, if such implications do arise from the subsequent review undertaken by the Task and Finish Group, these will be brought back to the Committee as part of the final report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** There are no direct legal implications in respect of this report. However, if such implications do arise from the subsequent review undertaken by the Task and Finish Group, these will be brought back to the Committee as part of the final report.

5. Background Papers

Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan - Task and Finish Group - Scope (Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee, Wednesday, 10 February 2021).

Appendix 1: Checklist for Scoping

Task and Finish Group	Housing and Homelessness Provision within the Vale of Glamorgan
Chairman	Councillor Sandra Perkes
1	<p>Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An examination of housing and homelessness provision as part of the recovery phase ('Phase 2') that the Council will be undertaking due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2	<p>Objectives and Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review will look to cover the key areas of current and in the near future housing and homelessness provision and policies – allocation priorities, emerging legislative and funding challenges or developments – and to offer recommendations on how to approach, implement or to improve on these in order to ensure that temporary and permanent accommodation can continue to be offered to the homeless once WG emergency legislation ends in September 2021.
3	<p>Desired Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the current funding situation of the Council in terms of housing and homelessness provision. To understand the legal status around housing and homelessness provision – what the Council can and cannot do legally in this area once emergency legislation has been removed and what the potential impact of such changes will have on housing and homelessness provision currently in place due to COVID-19. To review allocation priorities around housing and homelessness provision and to suggest improvements if required. To review, understand and to suggest improvements to the provision of help and support for vulnerable and similar groups in order to aid them with permanent accommodation. To review 'best practice' from other and/or similar local authorities as well as potential testimony from 'expert' witnesses within the Council or externally (such as Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice Bureau). <p>If time is available, to also have as outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the staffing and resources required by the Council in order to deal with these challenges. To review current governance arrangements. To review the current house building programme and surplus land or land disposal for housing development. To review homelessness policy and strategy and how these could be improved, or new ones developed.
4	Information Required

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Previous legislation on housing and homelessness provision. ● Emergency legislation on housing and homelessness provision during COVID-19 (including Welsh Government guidance to local authorities, housing services and social landlords regarding COVID-19). ● Upcoming amendments and changes to the Housing Wales Act 2014 and their potential impacts as well as competing challenges to funding and resources for Local Authorities resulting from these. ● Letters from the Welsh Government Housing Minister on the extension of emergency legislation for COVID-19. ● Audit Wales: Financial Sustainability of Local Government as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic (October 2020) ● Housing Business Plan. ● Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 and monitoring reports. ● Local Housing Market Assessment 2019. ● Coronavirus Recovery Strategy. ● Housing Strategies Update Report. ● Welsh Government regulation and legislation concerning social housing and its supply. ● Evaluation of the current system of housing allocation. ● Cost and statistical analyses on housing provision. ● Funding options. ● Review of research or work undertaken in other parts of UK to improve housing provision. ● Relevant Annual and Service Plans.
<p>5</p>	<p>Format of Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Briefing reports. ● Presentations. ● Background information – current Policies. ● Site visits. ● Consultation. ● Interviews with Service Users and/or Expert/External Witnesses.
<p>6</p>	<p>Methods to be Employed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meetings. ● Visits. ● Interviews. ● Research analysis. ● Discussions with External Witnesses and Council Officers. ● Develop an action plan.
<p>7</p>	<p>External Witnesses and Council officers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Service Users. ● Officers from Housing, Legal, Finance and any other relevant service lines. ● Representatives from Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale (CACV). ● Representatives from Shelter Cymru and Pobl. ● Representatives from external partners from the multi-agency ‘coordination cell’ (such as Probation, Health and Social Services, Registered Social Landlords and Community Safety). ● Other relevant stakeholders to be determined throughout the review.

8	Timescales (including start and finish dates) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial meeting to consider scope and current practices and options.• Final report to be determined by the Scrutiny Committee by no later than March 2022.
9	Resources and Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VOG Officers and Elected Members time.
10	Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommendations of the Task and Finish Group to be submitted for consideration to Scrutiny Committee and, if appropriate, recommendations to be made to Cabinet.

Task and Finish Group: Timetable of Review

N.B. Meetings to be held approx. on a six weekly basis. Each meeting held to last approx. 2 hours.

Meeting 1	Tuesday 20 th April 2021 @ 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of Chairman & Vice Chairman • Scope and Objectives of Review • Timetable of Review
Meeting 2	Tuesday 1 st June 2021 @ 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the current funding situation of the Council in terms of housing and homelessness provision. • To understand the legal status around housing and homelessness provision – what the Council can and cannot do legally in this area once emergency legislation has been removed and what the potential impact of such changes will have on housing and homelessness provision currently in place due to COVID-19. • To review allocation priorities around housing and homelessness provision
Meeting 3	Tuesday 13 th July 2021 @ 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the provision of help and support for vulnerable and similar groups in order to aid them with permanent accommodation. • To look at how to expand temporary and more permanent accommodation in the short term.
Meeting 4	Tuesday 7 th September 2021 @ 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review ‘best practice’ from other and/or similar local authorities as well as potential testimony from ‘expert’ witnesses within the Council or externally (such as Shelter Cymru and Citizens Advice Bureau).
Meeting 5	Tuesday 19 th October 2021 @ 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of Proposals and Recommendations
Date to be confirmed.	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of review to Scrutiny Committee

Further topics for consideration (should there be time available):

- **To understand the staffing and resources required by the Council in order to deal with these challenges.**
- **To review current governance arrangements.**
- **To review the current house building programme and surplus land or land disposal for housing development.**
- **To review homelessness policy and strategy.**