

No.

HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid meeting held on 10th April, 2024.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor A.M. Collins (Chair); Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards (Vice-Chair); Councillors J. Aviet, G. Ball, S.J. Haines, S.M. Hanks, W.A. Hennessy, S. Lloyd-Selby, M.J.G. Morgan and H.M. Payne.

Also present: C. Ireland (Citizens Advice Cardiff and Vale) and G. Doyle (Representative from Tenant Working Group / Panel); Councillors A. Asbrey, C.P. Franks, S.D. Perkes (Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement), N.C. Thomas, E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health) and M.R. Wilson (Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services).

978 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

979 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor S. Campbell.

980 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 7TH FEBRUARY AND 4TH MARCH, 2024 –

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the minutes of the meetings held on 7th February and 4th March, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

981 DECLARATION OF INTEREST –

Councillor H.M. Payne declared an interest in Agenda Item 4 – Presentation from Llamau and Platform. The nature of her interest was the reference to Llamau in the presentation, which was her employer. She had dispensation to speak only at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings when matters regarding housing and homelessness were discussed relating to finance and property given the Councillor’s role for Llamau (paragraphs (c), (d), (f) and (h) of the relevant regulations).

982 PRESENTATION FROM LLAMAU AND PLATFFORM –

The Committee welcomed the representatives from Llamau and Platfform, who were two key organisations that the Vale of Glamorgan Council worked with in order to provide support including housing support for a range of young people, women and children and other vulnerable groups impacted by mental health and other wellbeing issues.

The representatives from Platfform started their part of the presentation, which highlighted the following key areas:

- Who we are: a mental health and social change charity, with 30 years' experience of working in partnership with statutory services to achieve sustainable outcomes for people with complex mental health needs;
- Platfform's projects in Cardiff and the Vale i.e. Linden House – 24hr Crisis House; the 'Hangout' drop-in service for young people, etc.;
- The range of housing support schemes currently being undertaken in conjunction with Platfform within the Vale of Glamorgan. These included the 24-hour Supported Accommodation at East Quay and Holmes Street/Windsor Road, as well as the Dispersed Scheme;
- An outline of the process undertaken by Platfform in order to provide social, emotional and practical support to people experiencing challenges with their mental health and emotional wellbeing. For example, there was the Sanctuary, a brand-new project offering an out of hours service for people in a crisis, as well as taking referrals from NHS 111, which would help to provide a 'middle ground' and alternative to people instead of attending at Accident and Emergency.

Following this presentation the representative from Llamau also outlined to the Committee the work undertaken by their organisation, which included the following key areas:

- The background to Llamau and its work as well as the numbers of persons, including young people, women and children, supported to live independent and purposeful lives and their vision and mission i.e. 'that no young person or woman should ever have to experience homelessness';
- The five key values at the heart of Llamau ('We Learn', 'We Encourage', 'We Respect', 'We Never Give Up' and 'We Listen');
- The specific work undertaken by Llamau across the Vale, where the very first project opened in 1989. A number of projects were currently being undertaken within the Vale offering a range of various services. These ranged from supported accommodation projects for young people, through to floating support and early intervention services;
- The use of the Psychologically Informed Environment model (PIE) and the understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences and other trauma with regard to homelessness and the work of Llamau in order to address these issues;

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- The five key steps or stages in applying the PIE model plus the Llamau values in helping support young people and others. The stages included providing a sense of security, through to moving on to a new job, accommodation, etc. for young people;
- The outcomes of the work undertaken by Llamau in the Vale were outlined, i.e., 100% of respondents (previous service users) said that the support they received was helpful;
- Examples of feedback were provided from young people on their experience in engaging with Llamau;
- The various trends and challenges faced in the work that Llamau undertook were outlined. The included safeguarding (contextual) and the growing complexity of needs, through to challenges with funding and accessibility and availability to the services Llamau provided.

Following the presentation the Supporting People Co-ordinator from Housing Services informed the Committee of the role of the Vale of Glamorgan Council in relation to the work undertaken by Llamau and Platform. This included the Council's role as the key commissioner for these services as well as working in partnership with Welsh Government and others. As well as commissioning these services the Council was involved in monitoring them. He also cited the new Platform project at East Quay which was the first 24 hour accommodation of its type. He explained that similar older projects that had been inherited could not be staffed for the 24 hour window that the new project could do. He outlined his role and that of his team in the Council who undertook needs mapping to look at what services were needed and to identify any gaps in services. One such 'gap' being that the existing service provision struggled to meet the needs of people with high mental health issues or other similar issues and with previous projects not really being equipped to deal with these. Due to the commissioning of the new service, and working in partnership with Welsh Housing Association, had meant a big step up in terms of the provision that the Council could undertake in conjunction with partners, which also worked as a form of homelessness prevention. The new project would help to support people moving from hospital where it may not be appropriate to place them straight into a tenancy. East Quay was able to provide a service to meet the needs of vulnerable people, albeit this was temporary accommodation not a permanent setting, with the aim for people to move on within two years or sooner if appropriate. The ultimate aim was to move people on into independent accommodation who could also rely upon floating support with the onus on ongoing help in order to meet their needs and to be able to live independently. There was also the possibility for people who were vulnerable out in the community who were struggling with their tenancy to be moved into such supported accommodation in order to develop their living skills and build their confidence and then move them back into independent living and accommodation. It was important to stress the important role the Vale of Glamorgan Council, working in partnership with providers in order to deliver such services, and that this funding had come from the Housing Support Grant which the Local Authority administered on behalf of Welsh Government.

Following the presentations, a number of comments and queries were raised by the Committee, which included:

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- Councillor Aviet queried the maximum age for residents who were involved in the Llamau and Platform schemes. It was explained that for Platform residents, they were given supported accommodation from 18 years plus and for Llamau the age range was 16-21 years, although this could be extended up to 25 where there were additional support services needed and subsequently Llamau would link in with Platform and other providers in order to make any necessary referrals in a multi-disciplinary way via offering help and support for adults living in the community.
- Councillor Aviet followed up her question by asking that, prior to young people requiring the need to be rehoused, who looked at trying to prevent them from leaving home in the first place i.e. did either Platform or Llamau work with families to try and help keep them at home. It was explained that in the case of Llamau there was the offer of a family mediation service given to young people as part of a package of early intervention so that services worked with both the young person and the family to help rebuild or repair relationships. However, on some occasions there may still be a need for young people to be provided with supported accommodation and that would be through the housing / homelessness assessment route and the focus was always about where the person could be housed safely and if appropriate, to try and support young people to return home, although it was not always possible or safe to do so.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby referred to the new Platform service and the face to face element for young people in crisis, which was currently housed in Cardiff. She noted the potential challenges for young persons within the Vale in terms of travel etc. in order to access such services and that they could face barriers as a result. She further asked what steps Platform would take to monitor the take up in such services from residents within the Vale of Glamorgan. It was explained that the potential challenges for young people within the Vale travelling to Cardiff Hub had been discussed internally already. In extreme circumstances transport for persons travelling from the Vale to Cardiff could be funded. In addition, Platform were looking to get additional funding raised in order to provide further travel and transport opportunities for young people in the Vale in order to use the services in Cardiff. Funding had also been provided for a service for young people to open at a new location in Barry and it was hoped that similar funding could be applied in future to the Sanctuary facility which catered for adults.
- Councillor Morgan asked Platform representatives about referrals from NHS 111 and what happened if Platform could not contact or follow up with the persons affected if there was no response from them. The process for dealing with these issues was outlined, which consisted of various stages, whereby Platform took on referrals from NHS 111 of persons who were under the so called C and D priorities, which included people in crisis but were not suicidal. Platform would garner as much information as possible prior to calling the person concerned. Normally the person would be called within 30 minutes of notification and would then be called again after a further 15 minutes if there was no response. If there was still no answer this would go back to 111 in order to resolve it.
- The Head of Housing and Building Services noted that a number of points had been made at the meeting around resources and funding on this topic and referred to a report that would be coming back to Scrutiny Committee in

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relation to the news that Welsh Government had identified additional funding in order to try and meet the challenges concerning the Housing Support Grant, including helping to support for longer term career opportunities for people who worked in these various social care services, as well as ensuring better pay and feeling more valued. He stated that it was important for the Committee to understand the challenges that the Council was facing as a statutory organisation concerning budgets. He also stressed the importance of preventative work in dealing with people in crisis, both in terms of statutory authorities and agencies such as the Council, but also for the individuals themselves in terms of their own health and wellbeing. The third sector here played a key role in supporting the Council's services, such as Llamau and Platform through undertaking early intervention and using a trauma informed approach.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the presentations, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the presentation regarding the work of Llamau and Platform be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the presentations and discussions at the meeting.

983 CHANGES TO THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARDS 2023 (DEH) –

The report, presented by the Head of Housing and Building Services and Operational Manager - Building Services, was intended to inform Members of the changes being introduced to the Welsh Housing Quality standards and the impact on the Council's housing stock as well as the implications for the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Following several years of consultation with the sector and research, the Welsh Government launched the second edition of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard in October 2023 (WHQS 2023). The requirements of the original standard remained in the latest version, but there were now additional requirements moving the housing stock towards carbon neutral, or as close as possible towards it together with other requirements. The challenges around achieving these new standards were also outlined, i.e. the Council carrying out a Whole Stock Assessment and produce Target Energy Pathways for its homes by 31st March, 2027; and achieve a Standard Assessment Procedure 75 (SAP 75) in relation to energy efficiency and rating for Council housing stock by 31st March, 2030.

Following the presentation of the report, the following comments and queries were raised at the meeting:

- Councillor Lloyd-Selby raised a number of queries concerning whether the Council had the resources to meet the first major target of the new WHQS which was to survey all homes by 31st March, 2027 as part of achieving the Council's carbon reduction programme; she asked about the revision of the

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WHQS compliance policy; and also referred to the proposed consultation with Vale of Glamorgan Council tenants on the revised procedures and policy (which would result from the reviews being undertaken following the introduction of WHQS 2023) and on the process of how this would be achieved. On the first point, it was explained that the Council was reliant on external consultants in order to visit the relevant properties as part of the survey process. This would be quite challenging as in order to achieve this over the three year period approximately 4,000 properties would have to be surveyed as well as the planning process around this and the subsequent extraction of data and analysis post survey. On the point concerning costs for the implementation of WHQS 2023, it was explained that costs could well increase and it was currently unknown where the market was heading around carbon reduction measures. Solar and battery costs were decreasing but these could be difficult to source due to demands by other Authorities and other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) plus the private sector. In terms of the compliance policy, the timescale for this was to be achieved by March 2025 as set out by Welsh Government, however this was not prescriptive and it did allow local interpretation. On consultation, this would be done in conjunction with the Council tenant working groups of which the Vale of Glamorgan had a number, who were volunteers from the tenant population and who were extremely useful in undertaking these discussions and consultations.

- Councillor Lloyd-Selby also asked about the implications of having an estimated additional 7 days on the void lettings process as part of the new WHQS process on these properties. She asked whether the Council had any information on what pressure or impacts this might have on the provision of temporary accommodation and also in relation to partners, i.e. what the impact would be on other RSLs. In response, it was explained that a key part of the extension to the completion of voids was around providing / installing suitable floor coverings, including carpets, to these properties due to this being one of the last things that would be undertaken and installed within them. The Vale of Glamorgan Council would be using contractors in the first instance to undertake the installation of these floor coverings and with the Council having approximate 5 to 10 voids per week it was estimated that this would probably add at least 5 to 7 days to the process which could easily lead into the weekend. Once the Council got into the practicalities of implementing this the process would be better understood and the Council would seek to make sure that the time period was reduced to a minimum as much as possible. The Housing Team had sat down with colleagues in Contracting to go through the process in order to help ensure that what was being undertaken would not cause any unexpected difficulties. There would also need to be some changes to housing tenancy agreements as well because carpets would need to be gifted to tenant, due to the Council not wanting the ongoing commitment to these floor coverings and carpets once installed, unless a new tenant took over. In relation to other RSLs, they would be expected to experience similar issues and further discussions with these partners would be undertaken under the regularly constituted meetings between RSLs, the Vale of Glamorgan Council and other partner Local Authorities. The Head of Housing and Building Services added that the impact on voids due to the new WHQS measures could have an effect in

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terms of further delays which could increase occupancy for temporary accommodation, hotels, B&Bs, etc. However, the Council were looking to review the end-to-end process concerning voids in order to look at how to return more properties to stock much more quickly.

- The Head of Housing and Building Services added that Welsh Government were funding 6 housing organisations under a pilot scheme in relation to the delivery of the target energy pathway, including looking at the technology that would be required to report on the compliance aspect. The Council was also looking at its new IT system and the related asset management resource in order to see if it would cope with the target energy pathway setting. He also referred to the latest Spring Tenant Newsletter which would help to spread the message about the new WHQS as well as undertaking a number of bespoke events around rolling out the quality standards, in order to help tenants to understand how this would impact them.
- The Chair asked about the pilot scheme in relation to the delivery of the energy pathway and who the 6 organisations involved were. It was explained that it was several Local Authorities and housing associations involved, each of these being at different stages and were facing different challenges due to their housing stock with the Welsh Government having made some initial funding available under the pilot and the Vale receiving some additional funding as well under the retrofit programme recently, which helped to kick start some of the survey work as part of the WHQS. He also went on to say that some external support would need to be commissioned in order to take surveys as part of the WHQS and further tenders would be submitted in due course around the maintenance aspect of WHQS. It was explained that through undertaking the target energy pathway planning it would give the Council and other Local Authorities a better idea of what was required and there would need to be further conversations with Welsh Government around this due to limited resources, etc. at Local Authority level. This was a similar situation that had been seen in other Local Authorities which had retained their housing stock. It was also important to look at the question of affordability versus aspiration and to ensure that new energy efficiency methods did not plunge Council tenants into fuel poverty, particularly those alternative energy sources which required electricity. It was hoped that the Welsh Government would be able to provide more information and help on this. There had also been feedback from those 6 organisations which had been part of the pilot and the challenges in achieving SAP 92.
- The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Building Services, with permission to speak, informed the Committee that it was essential that the housing service was resilient in order to achieve this new WHQS in partnership with both private and public sector bodies. He added that new forms of energy in heating could initially be expensive and that implementation and use of such renewable energy was a learning curve for both tenants and the Vale of Glamorgan Council. However, ultimately these alternative power sources would become cheaper.
- Councillor Lloyd-Selby suggested that a further update be brought on the implementation of WHQS 2023 to this Committee in order to provide an update on, and consider the implications and impacts of, undertaking this long term piece of work on Council capacity, resources and on its tenants.

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Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

- (1) T H A T the Changes to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards 2023 report be noted.
- (2) T H A T the Committee receive a further report, on a six-monthly basis, in order to provide an update on, and to consider the implications and impacts of, undertaking this long-term piece of work on Council capacity, resources and on its tenants.

Reasons for recommendations

- (1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) In order for the Committee to be kept informed on the progress of implementing the new Welsh Housing Quality Standards and for this to be added to the Committee's Work Programme.

984 YOUTH JUSTICE AND EARLY SUPPORT SERVICES (YJESS) MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT (DSS) –

The report, presented by the Youth Offending Service Manager, brought to the attention of Scrutiny Committee the six month performance report for the Youth Offending Service for the period April 2023- September 2023.

The Youth Offending Service Manager went on to outline to the Committee the following key points of the report for their consideration:

- That the report's data was 'backdated' because any related interventions need to be concluded prior to the completion of these figures.
- As part of its grant funding terms and conditions, the YJESS was required by the Youth Justice Board (YJB) to undertake performance reporting in relation to a number of key performance indicators, including national, devolved (Welsh) and local ones. Furthermore, the new Key Performance Indicators (from April 2023) were also referred to, i.e. covering special educational needs, serious violence and victim related indicators. However, Committee were asked to note that due to national technical software issues between the software providers and YJB data systems these new performance indicators would not be available until 2025.
- The performance data was outlined, with positive performance being seen in various areas, i.e. with the 8.3% decrease in first time entrants (FTE) compared to the same period last year, and comparing favourably with other members in the youth justice 'family' across Wales and England. This was a reflection of the work undertaken in the Vale around an increase of the flexible intervention offer for out of courts diversionary interventions outside of the Court arena and a robust, strengths based preventative offer, as well as trauma informed practice that YJESS staff undertook. However, the Vale

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YJESS would face a key challenge from 2025, when funding for early intervention work would be coming to an end.

- However, for the binary rate for reoffending over the 12-month period, this was higher than the South Wales average, but the positive performance in relation to first time entrants in the Vale, meant the number of children that this related to was lower than other comparable areas.
- In terms of access to the restorative justice, for this period there were 36 identified victims from all linked offences to the interventions. All victims were offered the opportunity to engage in direct and indirect restorative justice, with no victims wishing to receive direct restorative justice and 6 having received indirect restorative justice. This was an entirely voluntary process on the part of both the victim and the child / young person. This represented for YJESS a key area for service development, with a new, additional performance measure representing the quality of the offer for victims having been adopted early by the Vale YJESS. Best practice had also been evidenced in case studies reflecting creative and positive areas of restorative interventions and the published performance data was currently being awaited.
- YJESS had been contacted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspectors in connection with the new inspection framework. The HMIP were pleased with the work already undertaken by YJESS in terms of providing better quality victim management.
- A number of case studies and photographs were provided to the Committee, in order to illustrate the reparation and restorative justice work undertaken with victims and young persons, and the work of the YJESS Reparations and Victim Officers who went over and above their role in order to undertake this work and to provide holistic, trauma informed help and support to both victims and the young people involved.

Following the report, Councillor Payne asked whether there were any rewards offered to young people involved in the reparation and youth justice process, using psychologically informed approaches. It was explained that reward and positive reinforcement approaches were used to help prevent reoffending, i.e. identifying opportunities to do outdoor activities, sports, etc. This work and a holistic approach was undertaken with the Reparations Officer and the relevant Case Manager to help rebuild and repair family links, offer mentoring, independent living and to look at education and employability for the young people involved, within YJESS budgetary limits, as well as instilling in young people the value of undertaking reparation work.

The Chair and the Committee also wished to thank the YJESS team and the Reparation Officer for their positive work.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the Youth Justice and Early Support Services (YJESS) Mid-Year Performance Report be noted.

Reason for recommendation

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.