



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

**Appendix 6 - Not for publication pursuant to Regulation 5(2) & (5) of Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2290 and Paragraph(s) 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Pursuant also to Paragraph 21 of the Schedule, and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption is considered to outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information.**

**Appendix 7 - Not for publication pursuant to Regulation 5(2) & (5) of Statutory Instrument 2001 No. 2290 and Paragraph(s) 15 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. Pursuant also to Paragraph 21 of the Schedule, and in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption is considered to outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information.**

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL  
SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY  
CABINET BOARD**

**25<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

**Report of the Head of Housing and Communities**

**Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027**

**Purpose of the Report**

To inform members of the outcome of the consultation on the Draft Neath Port Talbot Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan (“the Plan”) and to seek endorsement of the updated Plan.

## **Executive Summary**

Following a 90 day public consultation process, endorsement of the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024-2027 (Appendix 1) is now being requested.

## **Background**

### Draft Plan Development.

Over the last few years, there has been a significant rise in the number of people presenting as homeless and a sharp decrease in access to affordable housing.

The links between access to sustainable affordable housing and homelessness mean that both issues need to be tackled together if we are to successfully prevent homelessness and create cohesive communities.

The Plan sets out a clear statement of intent to take actions that ensure all people of Neath Port Talbot (“NPT”) are able to quickly access quality housing that is affordable and that there are sufficient interventions to prevent and alleviate homelessness.

Nine strategic principles underpin the work that will be taken forward by Neath Port Talbot Council (“the Council”) in this Plan, they are:

- **Plan** by working more strategically with the wider Council, Registered Social Landlords (“RSLs”), developers, private landlords and service providers in the way we utilise our available resources to implement sustainable housing and homelessness interventions in line with population needs.
- **Prepare** for Neath Port Talbot’s future by making best use of our available resources to create sufficiency of housing to ensure thriving and prosperous communities in line with our anticipated needs.
- **Placemaking** principles to underpin our development plans so that we promote sustainable communities.

- **Preservation** of our future through minimising our environmental impact and maximising opportunities for decarbonisation and energy efficiency.
- **Partnership** working by building on our relationships with stakeholders to take forward a collaborative approach to addressing NPTs housing needs and ending homelessness.
- **Prevent** homelessness wherever possible and if it does happen, prevent recurrence through the development of targeted support services and suitable accommodation.
- **Personalised** responses to supporting those with housing needs by putting the person at the centre of our approach, thereby enabling people with complex and/or multiple needs to live in stable accommodation.
- **Positive** outcomes for people with social care needs, including young care leavers, through the development of specialist accommodation models that promote independence and reduce the need for more institutionalised care.
- **Provide** our workforce with the skills and resources to implement a new preventative way of working and providing people with the right interventions and accommodation so that they are able to fulfil their potential.

The Plan also sets out four priority areas, under which are a number of actions for the Council to undertake in order to ensure delivery of our strategic objectives. These priority areas are:

- **Priority Area One** - Implement a More Strategic Approach.
- **Priority Area Two** – Prevent Homelessness.
- **Priority Area Three** - Increase Access to Appropriate Affordable Housing.

- **Priority Area Four** - Support those with Social Care Needs to Live Well in their Communities.

### Consultation Process

On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023 the Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet Board approved a 90 day public consultation of the Plan. This consultation period began on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2023 and ended on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

An Easy Read version (Appendix 2) and a Plan on Page (Appendix 3) was developed to support the consultation and Welsh language versions of all documents were published alongside the English language versions.

The aim of this consultation process was to strengthen the final Plan by:

- Raising awareness of the draft Plan with stakeholders and members of the public.
- Understanding what stakeholders and members of the public thought about the draft Plan.
- Enabling stakeholders and members of the public to inform the priorities and actions within the Plan.
- Helping to identify any potential negative impacts of the Plan to inform the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 4).

The consultation was made available to members of the public through the Council's web page and a number of hard copies were distributed within Council owned buildings and in commissioned provider services.

To promote the Consultation, the Council's social media accounts were used to raise awareness. These posts were monitored for comments, however no comments in relation to the content of the Plan was received.

In addition, electronic copies and a link to the Council's web-page was distributed to a number of stakeholders including RSLs, homelessness service providers and charities, in order for them to distribute to those that may have an interest in being part of the consultation process, such as residents and users of services.

The Head of Housing and Communities led a number of workshops and attended various meetings as part of the consultation, this included:

- Housing Strategy Forum Workshop, facilitated by Thrive
- Third Sector Workshop, facilitated by CVS
- Lived Experience Workshops, facilitated by the Salvation Army
- Housing Options Team Workshop
- Community Independence Service Team Workshop
- RSL Strategic Partnership Forum
- Llais Service Change Forum
- NPT Community Safety Partnership Board Meeting
- Adult Social Care Senior Managers Meeting
- Children and Young People Senior Managers Meeting
- Planning and Public Protection Senior Managers Meeting

#### Response from Consultation Events

Feedback from the above sessions was positive, not just in terms of information provided to inform the final Plan, but also the commitment from strategic partners to work with the Council in order to deliver the Plans aims and objectives.

It is important to recognise the invaluable contribution of those with lived experience of homelessness in the development of this plan. Two workshop events were facilitated by the Salvation Army and those that attended provided powerful and insightful feedback, which will directly inform service improvement. These comments highlighted the need for more joined-up working across organisations to support those with co-occurring and complex needs, the impact of undiagnosed neurodiversity on a person's ability to sustain housing, the effects of the stigma attached to those that become homeless, the benefits of increased contact and 1-2-1 work with Housing Options Officers and the need for better models of temporary accommodation. All of these requirements are incorporated within the actions set out within the Plan.

The Plan objectives can only be achieved through close partnership working with Third Sector Providers and RSLs. The overall response to the Plan from these stakeholders was positive and organizations that were part of the Consultation offered their support in delivering the aims of Plan.

In addition to the workshops, the CVS provided a formal written response on behalf of the Third Sector, which was positive and underlined the important partnership between the Council and the Third Sector in tackling the issues within the Plan. Cwmpas also provided a formal written response highlighting how Community Led Housing could support achievement of the Plans objectives.

A new action has been included under Priority One, 'Implement a More Strategic Approach', to strengthen the recognition of the important role that the Third Sector will play in supporting delivery of the Plan. In addition, specific mention has be made to the Council wishing to explore the promotion of community led development within the 'Community Cohesion' action, in order to strengthen its commitment to this.

Operational teams working within the Council to support households that are at risk or are experiencing homelessness offered significant insight to how service delivery could be optimised, and what measures needed to be taken to improve housing and homelessness provision in the borough. These measures will be addressed through the progression of the actions within the Plan.

The Plan also recognises the need to work across Council Directorates, attendance at various senior manager meetings helped to ensure that the Plan was aligned to wider Council and Directorate strategic plans and strategies. It also helped to confirm shared objectives in order to prioritise areas of joint working.

#### Response from the Public Questionnaire.

Alongside the workshops, important information was gathered from the public questionnaire responses, the questionnaire focused on four questions about the plan and a number of additional questions to help inform the Intergraded Impact Assessment. Fourteen online questionnaire responses were received, alongside three hardcopies.

A numerical overview of data received from this questionnaire can be found at Appendix 5.

#### ➤ Question 1 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed Plan?

The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the draft Plan (67% - 10 respondents), however it is important to note that 27% (4 respondents) stated that they strongly disagreed with the draft Plan.

Whilst 4 respondents strongly disagreed, comments in relation to this question did not indicate any particular issues that needed to be rectified within the Plan. Some comments under this question appeared to be in relation to a consultation on Council Tax for second

and empty homes and this may have been related to some respondent's strongly disagreeing to the Plan.

Other comments noted a feeling that there was a lack of detail in some aspects of the Plan. Whilst acknowledging the importance of these comments, no changes have been made to this Plan, as the intention is for this to be a 'high level' overarching Plan and a number of more detailed specific strategies will be created in order to progress the actions. These specific strategies include youth homelessness, which was the area that these comments related to.

This question also generated a number of positive comments, in which respondents agreed with the Plan and its aims.

*"Agree with the plan, it will be a lengthy process but positive strategy to have in place in time."*

*"I currently work in the housing and homelessness sector and strongly agree we cannot sustain things as they are. The lack of affordable housing means people are staying in temporary accommodation for longer. In turn this impacts on their mental health and well-being"*

*"I agree with the necessary steps but feel that it won't work without a significant amount of properties being built via social landlords."*

*"Young people need housing the same as every age group - there is a shortage of 1 bed properties in NPT for young people and we need a range of different types of accommodation for young people - not just 24/7 complex and/or floating support..."*

➤ Question 2 -Do you think the plan will achieve our aims?

Interestingly only 13% (2 respondents) felt that the Plan would achieve our aims, with 47% (7 respondents) saying that the Plan would partly



achieve our aims and 33% (5 respondents) stating that it would not achieve our aims.

However, comments received for this question indicate that the reasoning behind this response is not due to a deficit within the Plan, but rather an acknowledgment of the challenging situation and that there are many other factors that impact on housing and homelessness, which sit outside the council's control.

Comments to this question also highlighted the significant amount of resources that would be required and questioned the ability to fund the proposals. As with question one, there were a number of responses that appeared to relate to proposals around Council Tax on second and empty properties.

Whilst recognising the challenging environment, it is important for the Council to remain ambitious and as such, no changes have been made to the plan in light of these consultation responses. The comments underline the Plans objectives of ensuring that the Council promotes good partnership working with key stakeholders, such as RSLs.

Given the changing and complex landscape, Officers will closely monitor progress of the Plan, including the new Department KPIs to help identify the Plans impact. The Plan will also be reviewed annually, with a progress report provided to Scrutiny.

One comment noted the need for more joining up of youth services and homelessness services. This is an area of great importance to the Directorate and a Youth Homelessness Strategic Group is in place. In addition, a Youth Homelessness Strategy is in the process of development, which will be jointly led by Children and Young Peoples and Housing and Communities Heads of Service.

*“The lack of houses are an issue.”*

*“PRS doesn't feel like a viable option due to the cost and stability of this tenure. Increased support is needed and with the HSG not being increased, this will significantly impact the plans that the LA have.*

*Better pay for support staff and more money available for organizations who are proving to be successful is crucial.”*

*“It would be good to see more 'joining up' of YSG and HSG services.”*

- Question 3 - Is there anything that you feel is missing from the Plan that we need to include?

This was an open question and the comments provided suggest that there were no notable changes required. Many of the comments were suggestions of how to take forward the Plan and will inform the operational delivery of the Plan.

*“Not at the moment, it is a comprehensive plan.”*

*“...I think consideration should be given to the number of empty properties in disrepair within the local authority, including old office buildings and pieces of land which could accommodate housing "pods" and supported self-contained housing units...”*

*“More prevention needed such as work with young people, schools, youth services and communities.”*

- Question 4 - Do you have any more comments about the Plan or the things that the Plan is aiming to achieve, that you would like to share?

This was also an open question, again the comments did not indicate the need to make changes to the Draft Plan and many appeared to endorse the Plan actions.

A number of comments were specific to the operational delivery of the actions and these comments will inform how we take the actions forward. For example, there was a comment in relation to the importance of bus usage, which will form part of our commitment to the Placemaking Charter (Background Paper 1) in regards to promoting active travel when supporting housing developments.

*“We need to ensure rapid rehousing is rolled out. Often people with complex needs are not having their needs met, this often means they have a cycle of failed tenancies and this then is a barrier to them having housing. If the correct support was given this would more likely prevent this from happening.”*

*“Streamlining the application process is better and utilising 3rd sector support to a wider degree, working collaboratively with other agencies would target specific problems with a multi-agency interest.*

### Next Steps

In general, the consultation responses from the stakeholder events endorsed the draft Plan and the substance of the draft Plan has remained unchanged.

Many comments from the public consultation provide important feedback into the operational delivery of the plan. All comments have been recorded and will feed into the respective delivery work streams.

Actions within the Plan will be taken forward through a number of project groups, oversight of which will be provided by the Housing and Communities Department Programme Manager. The Programme Manager will directly report to the Head of Housing and Communities, who will have overall responsibility for delivery.

Links with stakeholders will be maintained through task and finish working groups and also established strategic groups, such as the Strategic Housing Partnership. In addition, a new group is to be set up

to maintain good communication with people that have lived experience, in conjunction with the Salvation Army.

New KPIs for the Department have already been established in order to monitor the impact of the actions. An annual review of the Plan and progress of the actions will be provided to Scrutiny, alongside a six monthly Department update.

### **Financial Impacts**

The allocated budget for homelessness services in 2023/24 is £1,261,820, alongside this £1,100,000 has been earmarked for 'pressures to be monitored'.

This year's total overspend is projected to be £1,370,000 (which is £270,000 more than that allocated under the 'pressures to be monitored'). This year's overspend was projected to be even higher, however Welsh Government provided a one-off grant of £309,000 that helped to off-set some of this overspend

By 2027/28, it is anticipated that the homelessness overspend will increase to £2,566,000 per annum. The reason for this overspend is because of the high numbers of people being placed in B&Bs due to the limited ability to prevent homelessness from occurring and the lack of other temporary accommodation options.

The Plan is key to improving outcomes for residents and reducing the financial impact of homelessness on the Council. However there is a need to invest in the Council's workforce in order to deliver the Plan and a business case in relation to this was presented to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023 (Background Paper 2).

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

An overview of the Integrated Impact Assessment (“IIA”) has been included below in summary form only and it is essential that Members read the Integrated Impact Assessment, which is attached to the report at Appendix 4, for the purposes of the meeting.

An initial IIA was undertaken prior to the consultation process and this document has now been updated in light of the consultation responses.

The updated IIA concluded that “The Plan will have a positive impact on people that are experiencing or at risk of homelessness as well as those that require affordable housing or social care services, as it aims to proactively address the housing challenges impacting our communities.”

### **Valleys Communities Impacts**

The issues of reduced access to affordable housing and the increasing number of households at risk or experiencing homelessness can be seen across Neath Port Talbot. This Plan will include supporting the development of affordable housing and social care housing in the valley areas.

Responses to the consultation question “*will this plan have a positive or negative impact on valley communities*” were:

- 6 (38%) Positive
- 3 (19%) Negative
- 7 (44%) Don’t know

Comments from those that felt the Plan would have a positive impact included the fact that more housing would be available. There were no comments to explain why some people felt that the Plan would have a negative impact on valley communities.

The issue of those living in valley areas being able to access town based services, a need to commit to rehousing in peoples native communities in order to avoid valley depopulation and the need for buses were highlighted in the comment section. These considerations will inform the implementation of the Plan actions.

### **Workforce Impacts**

This Plan should be considered alongside the investment report presented to Cabinet on 13th December 2023 (Background Paper 2) in relation to the business case to develop the Homelessness and Strategic Housing function. The business case set out a proposal to invest in a restructure of the Strategic Housing and Homelessness workforce.

At this meeting a request was made to present the proposed structure to Members for information at the next Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Cabinet Board Housing. These draft structures can be found at Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 (Restricted). It is important to note that these structures are draft, the new job descriptions have not yet been taken through the Job Evaluation process and the Establishment of Change process has not yet commenced.

The draft structures are confidential and not in the public domain, as employees potentially impacted by the proposed restructure have not been informed of the detail. This is because the posts connected to the proposed structure have not yet been subject to the Job Evaluation or Establishment of Change process.

Advice from HR has been given in the development of the proposed structures and engagement has taken place with the two main Trade Union organisations. All potential service changes will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Management of Change procedures.

No staff will be at risk of redundancy as a result of the proposed restructure and any existing flexible working arrangements will be protected.

It is important to note that the proposed structures do not impact on the decision to endorse the Plan.

### **Legal Impacts**

The Plan has no direct legal impacts, however implementation of a number of actions within this Plan are intended to support the Council in better discharging its statutory homelessness duties.

### **Risk Management Impacts**

#### Implementation of Proposal

The main risk associated with implementation of the Plan are the human and financial implications if these actions do not have the desired result of preventing homelessness and increasing access to affordable housing. However, the proposals within the Plan are all evidence based and independent reviews of interventions such as Housing First demonstrate positive impacts.

#### Non-Implementation of Plan

The biggest risk of not implementing this Plan is the inability to prevent the rising number of people becoming homeless and the increasing utilisation of B&Bs to support these households.

If demand rises in line with our 'do nothing' projections, there will be insufficient availability of B&Bs to temporarily house people. This may then lead to the Council potentially being unable to meet their statutory homelessness duties, as well as having to house more people outside of the area. In addition, rising numbers of households in B&Bs will lead to a significant overspend for the Council.

The human impact of not preventing homelessness and an over reliance on B&Bs, will have wider impacts for the Council. For example, the impact on schooling for those children in B&Bs being moved around the borough.

In addition, non-implementation of this Plan will reduce the Council's ability to encourage the development of affordable housing, which will

result in a negative impact for communities, as people will be unable to access appropriate accommodation for their needs.

### **Crime and Disorder Impacts**

Implementation of actions within the Plan such as establishing Housing First models, specialist complex care services and Triage Centres, alongside embedding Placemaking approaches, is likely to have a positive impact on the Councils duty to reasonably prevent:

- a) Crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and
- b) The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area; and
- c) Re-offending the area.

### **Consultation**

A 90 day consultation process has been undertaken, the results of which can be found within the body of this report and within the updated Integrated Impact Assessment.

Appendix 5 provides a numerical overview of data received from the public questionnaire.

### **Recommendations**

Having had due regard to the integrated impact assessment, it is recommended that Members endorse the Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024-2027, as detailed in Appendix 1.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

To provide the Housing and Communities Department with a strategic plan of action in order to deliver improved outcomes for the communities of Neath Port Talbot.



**Implementation of Decision:**

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Housing and Homelessness Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Appendix 2 - Easy Read Plan

Appendix 3 - Plan on Page

Appendix 4 - Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 5 – Questionnaire Data

Appendix 6 – Draft Homelessness Structure (Restricted)

Appendix 7 – Draft Strategic Housing Structure (Restricted)

**List of Background Papers**

Background Paper 1 – NPT CBC Placemaking Charter -

<https://www.npt.gov.uk/30064>

Background Paper 2 - Funding to Enhance the Homelessness and Strategic Housing Function (restricted) -

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=158&MId=11339>

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