

Minutes



Formal Council Questions and Responses

Date: 15 August 2022

1 **Question to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing: 2022/12 - Temporary Family Accommodation**

Councillor Howells asked:

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Regulation and Housing will be aware of the recent case, I have copied him into correspondence about, in relation to families being placed in unsuitable accommodation under the authority's homelessness duties. I have also come across several other cases of similar circumstances and I am hearing details of many others across the authority. The Cabinet Member may also be aware of the recent ITV Wales news coverage on housing and homelessness issues in a neighbouring authority. Could the Cabinet Member please answer the following questions;

1. How many families (households including dependent children) has Newport City Council currently got placed in bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation in discharge of our interim and permanent duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014?
2. How many of those families have been there more than 6 weeks?
3. How many of these placements are out of area?
4. What is the average time families have spent in bed and breakfast/hotel accommodation over the past 12 months?
5. What is the average weekly cost of providing this accommodation to Newport City Council?
6. In those circumstances, what arrangements does the authority make to provide cooking and washing facilities?
7. What plans has the Cabinet Member put in place to reduce the numbers in unsuitable accommodation including plans to increase the provision of suitable family temporary accommodation?
8. As the situation is only likely to get worse with both the cost-of-living crisis, increasing rents and landlords exiting the market because of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, will the Cabinet Member commit to convening a Task and Finish group (made up of both key officers and members) to look at this issue in detail and make recommendations to cabinet and council?

Councillor Clarke responded:

Thank you for your very detailed question. The information requested in relation to questions 1-6 relate to operational matters and will be referred to the relevant Head of Service to respond.

In relation to questions 7 and 8, I would comment as follows:

What plans has the Cabinet Member put in place to reduce the numbers in unsuitable accommodation including plans to increase the provision of suitable family temporary accommodation?

Elected members will recognise that social housing is in very high demand and the Housing Team are working very hard to support those in need of temporary accommodation and those looking for move on or alternative accommodation. We are continually working with Welsh Government to identify funding for new accommodation and we have successfully administered over £16m of Social Housing Grant in the last year and plan to distribute over £18m in the current financial to support the delivery of new affordable homes with our RSL partners. Our Housing Solution Officers also support residents with clearing debts as well as offering support to access bonds and advance rent payments in order to secure private rented accommodation.

As the situation is only likely to get worse with both the cost-of-living crisis, increasing rents and landlords exiting the market because of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, will the Cabinet Member commit to convening a Task and Finish group (made up of both key officers and members) to look at this issue in detail and make recommendations to cabinet and council?

The Leader of the Council already hosts the Strategic Housing Forum which comprises senior council officers and the Chief Executives of all our RSL partners. This forum has been important to the development of housing strategy and policy but also a platform for scrutiny and problem solving. The perspective of stakeholders from outside of the Council is important and the Strategic Housing Forum is considered the appropriate mechanism to discuss and challenge all partners on the issues our communities are facing.