



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 10TH NOVEMBER 2015**

**SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE IO5 – INVESTMENT IN COUNCIL HOMES  
TO TRANSFORM LIVES AND COMMUNITIES**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

---

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide a 6 month update of progress against Improvement Objective (IO5) - Investment in Council homes to transform lives and communities for the 2015/16 financial year.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 For the first 6 months of 2015/16 the objective has been assessed as partially successful. There has been steady progress with the internal works contracts since April 2015, although only 66% of the original target has been achieved against the number of properties that were profiled for the first 6 months. However, re-profiling has resulted in this increasing to 73%. Maintaining continuity of work for all internal works contracts has been difficult due to delays with asbestos surveys, a backlog of OT referrals, and timescales for meter moves.
- 2.2 The programme of external works in the Eastern Valleys (small lots) has run on from the 14/15 financial year causing knock on delays for this year's work programme. The first contract in Markham has now been completed (53 properties). Another six contracts are due for completion October/November (126 properties). Two contracts have commenced in the Upper Rhymney Valley (338 properties). Although there is a significant pipeline of external works contracts to follow, the 15/16 programme is not anticipated to be completed until late in 2016. External works typically include roofing, doors and windows, external wall insulation, paths, fencing, retaining walls, etc. Absorbing the slippage is challenging due to the knock on impact to future years. A re-profiling of the programme from 2016/17 through to 2019/20 is currently in preparation and will underpin the capital programme for 2016/17.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to achieve specified standards. The Welsh Government requires that the standard is achieved by 2020.
- 3.2 The Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 has a priority to "Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough".
- 3.3 The Council's Local Housing Strategy "People, Property and Places" has the following aim:- "To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations".

3.4 The WHQS Programme contributes to the Council's anti poverty strategy launched in June 2015.

#### **4. THE REPORT**

4.1 The Local Government Measure 2009 requires all Council authorities in Wales to set and publish a set of priorities called Improvement Objectives.

4.2 The Wales Audit Office (WAO) uses Improvement Objectives and other data/information to evaluate the Council's likelihood of improvement and the level of actual improvement that is achieved for the citizens of Caerphilly.

4.3 In 2012 the Council's tenants voted to remain with the Council as their landlord. This was based on a commitment that all Council homes would be brought up to WHQS by 2019/20.

4.4 There were a number of major setbacks during 2014/15 resulting in significant slippage and a large underspend.

4.5 A report was presented to Cabinet in February 2015 on a revised investment strategy and this provided the basis for the capital programme for the current financial year. The re-profiled programme that was approved in February 2015 was front end loaded in an attempt to catch up on the slippage. However this has presented challenges with some contractors under resourcing the work resulting in too many properties being open for unacceptably long periods of time. This in turn has placed a strain on the Council's resources to maintain contact with tenants leading to complaints.

4.6 In respect of internal works, progress has been made with work completed to 745 properties by the end of September. This is lower than the target due to a combination of reasons. The main current concern is continuity of work for all contractors due to delays with asbestos surveys, a backlog of OT referrals and timescales for meter moves. Action is being taken to address all these matters. Internal improvements relate to the modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms, rewires and energy efficient heating systems.

4.7 The external works programme has continued to slip due in the main to slow progress with some of the small lots contracts in the Eastern Valleys. Only one contract has reached completion for 53 properties in Markham. However, there are a number of contracts that will be completed within the next couple of months involving 120 properties. Two external works contracts have commenced in the Upper Rhymney Valley in Phillipstown (160 properties) and New Tredegar (178 properties). Realistically a major part of the 15/16 external works programme is not expected to be completed until late 2016.

4.8 Three Environmental Officers are now in post making it possible to begin the engagement process with tenants/residents on the Council's estates to explore the opportunities for environmental enhancement schemes.

4.9 A further re-profiling of the programme is necessary and this will aim to smooth out the numbers of properties for all contractors so there is a more consistent number per year for the internal works. This will involve community sequence changes and some properties will be removed from 15/16 to 16/17.

4.10 The re-profiling will be presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group in December and this will be the basis of the capital programme for 2016/17.

4.11 Process changes continue to be introduced to maximise the efficiency of the staff resources and include the outsourcing of kitchen designs and the use of the OptiTime system for controlling surveyor appointments. Currently there are some critical gaps in front line areas which are subject to redeployment/recruitment including Clerk of Works and Tenant Liaison Officers.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required as the report is for information.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Capital Programme for 2015/16 is £36.2m. Expenditure for period April to September is £10.0m. Although £3.9m relates to contracts that should have been completed in 2014/15.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Additional staff resources have been or are in the process of being recruited to strengthen the team, particularly in front line areas (e.g. Clerk of Works, Surveyors, TLOs).

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 Comments received from consultees have been incorporated within the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and to agree or challenge the judgement of partially successful at the half year stage.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To advise members of the progress made at the half year stage in meeting the improvement objective and to gain agreement on the judgement of the service as to progress made to date.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Measures 2009.

Author: Phil G Davy, Head of Programmes

(Tel: 01443 864208, Email: [davyppg@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:davyppg@caerphilly.gov.uk))

Consultees:	Cllr D Poole	-	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
	Cllr D Hardacre	-	Cabinet Member for Performance & Asset Management
	C Burns	-	Interim Chief Executive
	N Scammell	-	Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer
	C Harrhy	-	Corporate Director – Communities
	C Davies	-	Chair Caerphilly Homes Task Group
	Cllr E Forehead	-	Vice Chair Caerphilly Homes Task Group
	S Couzens	-	Chief Housing Officer
	M Lloyd	-	Deputy Head of Programmes
	R Roberts	-	Performance Manager
	I Raymond	-	Performance Management Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Improvement Objective 5 Scorecard