



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 30TH JUNE 2016 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

C. Davies – Chair
E. Forehead – Vice Chair

Task Group Members:

Mrs Y. Bryant, Mrs S. Jones, Miss A. Lewis and D.V. Poole.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), M. Betts (Community Participation Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), E. Lucas (Head of Procurement) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from L. Ackerman, J. Gale, K. James, B. Jones, C. Mann, D. Moore, J. Moore and J. Smith.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs Y. Bryant, C. Davies, Mrs S. Jones and Miss A. Lewis, as Council Tenants declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items.

3. MINUTES – 19TH MAY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19th May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. WHQS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

Mrs S. Jones, Caerphilly Homes Task Group Member called the information item forward for discussion at the meeting.

The report, which was presented by P. Davy, Head of Programmes outlined the arrangements for implementing the WHQS environmental programme.

The Task Group noted that, as part of the Wales Housing Quality Standard Programme requirements, in particular, Part 6, the Council committed to utilising £10.6m of the total investment to deliver an environmental programme. Part 6 specifies that 'all opportunities should be taken to make improvements to the immediate environment (within property boundary) and to the general environment' and that consultation with residents should be used to inform the process.

In September 2015, the Council appointed three Environmental Officers (EO's) to lead a programme of consultation and engagement which would underpin the delivery of the WHQS environment programme. The officers were each allocated a housing area and focused their efforts initially on gathering data and intelligence from previous research, the land asset review and intelligence from officers and local community groups who are familiar with the issues that are regularly notified by residents to the Council.

Since their appointment, the officers have been based within the Community Regeneration Team. On 6th June 2016, the three Officers moved from the Community Regeneration Team to Public Sector Housing to establish closer working relations with the Estate Management Officers (EMO's).

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought on consultation with tenants, and it was noted that discussions thus far have only been with Officers. Officers highlighted that the role of the EMO's and EO's is to communicate with tenants within their Estates, gather information on complaints, concerns or suggestions and feed the information back for consideration. The Task Group were asked to note that the initial phase of the Environmental Programme would include "quick win" projects such as replacing bollards/ fences/ benches etc. The identification of the works has come from local knowledge of EMO's and EO's as a result of contact with tenants and local ward members. Larger projects will be subject to wider consultation with estates and there will be the opportunity to provide any comments and/or suggestions for project proposals. The Task Group would be provided with progress reports.

Discussions ensued and the Task Group sought reassurance that there would be opportunity for placements on projects. Officers explained that, where possible links will be made with other initiatives and the programme will be underpinned by engagement with tenants.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group were pleased to note that the Environmental Officers have moved to Public Sector Housing, thanked the Officer for the report and noted its contents.

5. PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT

Mr C. Davies, Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group Member called the information item forward for discussion at the meeting.

The report, which was present by E. Lucas, Head of Procurement, provided the Task Group with an update on the Procurement activity, which is currently in place to support the delivery of the WHQS programme.

The report detailed the number of contracts procured since the start of the WHQS Programme in October 2012, which included details of all Mini Competitions and Small Lots. In addition, the report provided details of arrangements which are currently out to market as part of new contracts necessary to deliver the WHQS.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the detailed report and discussion ensued.

Clarification was sought on the Procurement arrangements for suppliers and labour and issues encountered as a result. The Officer explained that Robert Price is the sole supplier of materials for the WHQS contracts and there have been no issues in terms of the supply contractor. The Programme has experienced a number of issues in relation to the works contracts and contractors in that there have been capacity issues.

The Task Group noted that, in terms of Procurement, there have been 223 completed contracts that have been awarded to contractors and 32 are currently ongoing. The contracts vary in scale, and although complete from the Procurement perspective, does not necessarily mean the contract has been completed on the ground.

The Task Group sought further clarification on the contract award dates and length of time open, as well as the Procurement Order and process. Officers agreed to circulate additional information to the Task Group.

A Task Group Member queried the response rate to tenders and the process undertaken where responses have been poor and whether Procurement Processes have caused delays. The Officer explained that all Procurement is subject to EU Procurement guidance; therefore, tenders are advertised across the EU with invitations to bid. It was confirmed that, due to the responses received and capacity issues, there have been instances in which procurement processes have been followed but a contract could not be awarded. In these instances there can be delay until alternative arrangements are made.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and noted its contents.

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Task Group noted the following items for information, full details of which were included within the Officers reports. They were not brought forward for review.

1. Housing Repair Operations Annual Performance Update
2. Summary of Community Benefits Delivered During 2015/16 as a Result of the WHQS Programme.
3. Communications Action Plan Update.

7. TO RECEIVE ANY REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following requests were received:-

1. A. Lewis requested a report on the Welsh Government guidance and interpretation of WHQS. The Task Group was reminded that the Compliance Policy had dealt with the interpretation of WHQS. It was agreed that Officers would provide the Caerphilly Homes Task Group with the External Works Guidance note to Surveyors.
2. A. Lewis requested a report on the impact leaving the EU will have on the WHQS. It was noted that such a report could not be provided at this time as the implications were unknown.

The meeting closed at 5.57pm

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2016.

CHAIR