



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP –16TH FEBRUARY 2017

SUBJECT: WHQS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide a high level overview of the WHQS environmental programme for information.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot in February 2012, the Council agreed that it would deliver the promises made in its Offer Document to tenants and deliver the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by March 2020. The Council also agreed that its capital investment in homes would deliver social outcomes to 'transform lives and communities'.
- 2.2 Part of the commitment to deliver the WHQS across all 10,865 homes also includes a requirement to comply with Part 6 which aims to ensure that 'all dwellings should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live'.
- 2.3 £10.6m has been set aside in the business plan agreed with Welsh Government specifically for this purpose.
- 2.4 Three Environmental Officers were recruited to work with the Area Housing teams and local members in order to initially identify environmental maintenance / repair issues. The issues were identified and collated into a single spreadsheet with each project being detailed in a proforma.
- 2.5 Over 300 projects have been identified across the county borough to date and colleagues across several departments have become involved in providing support and advice, with many projects requiring specialist input from Highways, Waste and Parks Services in order to assess feasibility and options.

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 specified standards.
- 3.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that the WHQS investment transforms not only homes but also lives and communities.
- 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 delivery of the WHQS environmental programme is coterminous with the aims of the Council's Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 which aims to 'improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the county borough' and the recently approved, Caerphilly Poverty Strategy 2015.
- 3.5 The delivery of the WHQS environmental programme is coterminous with the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires public bodies to work towards a shared vision comprising 7 goals and adopt the 5 "Ways of Working". The goals and the 5 Ways of Working will underpin the delivery of the programme and include planning and acting for the long term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention.
- 3.6 Delivery of the WHQS environmental programme links directly with the goal identified in the Future Generations Act to create a more prosperous Wales through helping to indirectly create new employment opportunities in the environmental sector as a result of the improvements undertaken via the programme.
- 3.7 The proposal relates directly to the ambition to create a resilient Wales and will create and enhance the natural environment thereby creating and enhancing new habitats and ecosystems which support the social, economic and ecological resilience of the local area.
- 3.8 The proposal is coterminous with the goal to create healthier communities through improving the immediate environment within communities, creating safer communities, increasing accessibility to the environment and through projects that promote the relationship between the outdoors and positive mental health and well being.
- 3.9 It will directly assist in the development of cohesive communities through the delivery of environmental improvements that increase the attractiveness, viability, connectivity and safety of communities. It will support the ongoing creation of a vibrant Welsh culture through promoting and protecting heritage and the unique Welsh environment; it will contribute towards the development of a globally responsive Wales through protecting and enhancing the environment, creating new habitats, protecting indigenous flora and fauna and through creating new opportunities for employment and enjoyment within an environmental context.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In February 2012 tenants voted overwhelmingly for the Council to retain its housing stock as opposed to transferring its homes to a registered social landlord. As a result the Council made an ambitious commitment to utilise its £200m capital investment not only to transform homes but also lives and communities. It also committed to utilising £10.6m of the total investment to deliver an environmental programme that would ensure that all homes 'are located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live' (Welsh Housing Quality Standard, Part 6).
- 4.2 Part 6 specifies that 'all opportunities should be taken to make improvements to the immediate environment (within the property boundary) and to the general environment' and that consultation with residents and external audits can be used to inform the process.
- 4.3 Welsh Government has suggested that the following key elements must be taken into consideration by organisations seeking to deliver the standard:
- Attractive environments
 - Safe environments
 - Environments that people can relate to
 - Environments that people can feel proud of

- 4.4 To date, the three Environmental Officers employed to deliver the environmental programme have concentrated on identifying low level environmental requirements. This is largely due to a decision that was taken by the WHQS Project Board to focus initially on small scale environmental maintenance and improvements to housing estates that would have been previously raised by tenants, officers or members or highlighted by the area housing managers. Some of these environmental works are required to address health and safety issues, anti-social behaviour or security, as well as making general improvements to the overall aspect of our estates.
- 4.5 In the last 12 months over 300 projects have been identified by the officers. On balance, approximately 50% are considered to be maintenance related and 50% are new projects such as additional car parking, street lighting, paving etc.
- 4.6 A significant number of projects relate to car parking provision, works adjacent to the highway, street lighting and speed ramps and therefore need to be referred to colleagues in Highways / Engineering to consider feasibility, options and design work. In some cases it has also been necessary to seek advice from colleagues in Planning to determine whether a planning application is necessary.
- 4.7 The future maintenance of projects has also been a key consideration as there is no budget from which to fund additional maintenance costs for new proposals.
- 4.8 It has also been necessary to package works together where possible in order to ensure that they are undertaken by the appropriate department and/or contractors.
- 4.9 Projects have been identified across the county borough and in all communities. Overall, circa 100 projects have been considered to date and are in the process of being progressed. The remainder will be considered and progressed where possible by the end of the 16/17 financial year and a comprehensive report produced in late Spring 2017.
- 4.10 Projects have been identified initially by the Environmental Officers through conversations with local ward members, Area Housing Managers and Estate Management Officers who frequently identify maintenance and improvement issues that may have been brought to their attention by tenants.
- 4.11 Moving forward, the Environmental Officers will continue to have conversations with elected members and members of the area management teams in order to identify projects however, they will also be developing a consultation programme during the final quarter of 2016/17 to engage with communities throughout the county borough and ensure that any projects identified and approved are delivered by the 2019/20 deadline. The programme will feature within the comprehensive report planned for late Spring 2017.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 The WHQS environmental programme contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act as outlined in section 3.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This is an information report; therefore there are no potential equality implications and no requirement to complete a full Equalities Impact Assessment.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 £10.6m has been identified within the WHQS business plan to support the delivery of the environmental programme. An update on expenditure will be provided in a further report planned to be submitted in late Spring 2017 as currently projects are in the process of being undertaken with many others at the feasibility and design stage so expenditure to date is limited.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from the report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Responses from consultees have been incorporated within this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The report is for information only. Members are asked to note the contents.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To advise members of the current position in respect of the delivery of Part 6 of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004, 2014 and Local Government Act 2000.

Author: Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Coordination Manager

Consultees: Cllr David Poole - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
Christina Harrhy - Corporate Director – Communities
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Fiona Wilkins - Public Sector Housing Manager
Marcus Lloyd - WHQS and Infrastructure Strategy Manager
Mandy Betts - Tenant and Community Involvement Manager