



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 27TH FEBRUARY 2018

SUBJECT: OUTCOMES OF THE WHQS CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide feedback to members of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on the outcomes and conclusions made by the WHQS Cross Party Working Group, following the review of the Wales Audit Office report and in particular progress made against the recommendations included within the report on the Council's delivery of the WHQS programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following presentation of the WAO report on the Council's arrangements to deliver the WHQS by 2020, members of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee agreed to establish a Cross Party working Group.
- 2.2 The purpose of the group is to focus on the progress being made to address the recommendations made within the WAO report and make a judgement on whether the completion of the WHQS programme by 2020 is achievable.
- 2.3 An Action Plan was developed which set out how the recommendations would be addressed and additional information was provided to the Cross Party Working Group to assist with their assessment of the progress being made.
- 2.4 Following comments made by members of the Cross Party Working Group, the Action Plan has been amended and a revised version attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.5 Overall members were satisfied that considerable progress had been made since the WAO review, which now put the Council in a better position to deliver the programme by 2020, although accepted that this was still a significant challenge and requires ongoing scrutiny.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 This report links to the Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 priority to "improve standards of housing and communities giving appropriate access to services across the county borough".
- 3.2 Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales 2010 which sets out the national context on meeting housing need, homelessness and housing related support services.
- 3.3 The National Housing Strategy 'better homes for people in Wales' sets out the Welsh Government's vision 'We want everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good

quality, affordable housing’

- 3.4 Corporate Plan 2016/17 sets out the Corporate Priorities which includes ‘invest in our council homes and their communities to transform lives’.
- 3.5 This report links most closely to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2016:
- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 As part of the 2016/17 performance audit plan, the WAO, during March and April 2017, undertook a review of the Council’s arrangements to deliver the WHQS by 2020. WAO sought to answer the question “*does the Council have effective arrangements in place to enable it to meet the WHQS by 2020?*”.
- 4.2 The Wales Audit Office presented their report to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 14th November 2017 and set out the recommendations made within the report.
- 4.3 Following detailed debate members subsequently agreed that a Cross Party Working Group should be established to review the recommendations and progress made in more detail.

5. RECOMMENDATION 1

- 5.1 The first meeting of the Cross Party Working Group was held on the 5th December 2017 and focussed on Review Recommendation 1:-
- By September 2017 develop a comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme, setting out how the Council will achieve WHQS by 2020.*
- 5.2 Officers provided more detailed evidence in support of the progress made against Recommendation 1 and this is attached as Appendix 2.
- 5.3 Officers provided copies of the revised WHQS programme and were challenged on how this had been created as members noted the concerns raised by the Wales Audit Office.
- 5.4 Reference was made to the supporting papers and the fact that due to improved survey information, combined with more accurate costs to replace previous Savill’s estimates, the revised programme satisfies Recommendation 1 by providing a comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme that sets out how the Council will achieve WHQS by 2020.
- 5.5 Members queried progress on the environmental programme and requested that an update report be presented to Caerphilly Homes Task Group and Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee. A report has subsequently been scheduled for the CHTG
- 5.6 Members also requested that the Action Plan be updated to show current status with objectives going forward and target completion dates (Appendix 1).
- 5.7 Members were satisfied with the current position and progress made on Action point 1a:-

- 5.8 Members noted that progress was being made in relation to Action point 2 – to undertake an independent benchmarking exercise in relation to the single source supply arrangement to assess value for money. Target completion for March 2018.
- 5.9 The Cross Party Working Group suggested that Action point 3 be amended so that value for money is “ensured” rather than “considered”. The group also agreed that value for money needs to consider quality and performance as well as cost and noted that tenants were extremely supportive of the in-house workforce. Members noted the favourable performance of the in house team in the customer satisfaction surveys. The tenant representative agreed to compile a letter in support of the in-house workforce which they suggested be shared with the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter the Wales Audit Office.
- 5.10 Members accepted that the Dynamic Purchasing System was implemented at the time of the WAO Review and that this was proving to be very successful and was also acting as a contingency for works throughout the borough.
- 5.11 Action 5 has been amended to reflect comments made by members that officers should deliver best value for money rather than “attempt”.
- 5.12 In relation to Recommendation 1b officers provided members with the revised WHQS programme in draft as an example of the information that was proposed to be made available to all members and tenants. The deadline to complete this recommendation is March 2018 and it is intended that the information will be made available on-line as well as circulated in hard copy form.
- 5.13 A high level WHQS Performance scorecard was also shared with members which could be used to track performance across a range of disciplines including internal/external completions, full compliance, finance and customer satisfaction.
- 5.14 Members requested that the Action Plan be amended to reflect that the performance information would be updated in a timely way for ongoing monitoring and checking purposes.
- 5.15 The Cross Party Working Group also suggested that Action point 5, under Recommendation 1c, be amended to emphasise the fact that “experienced” in-house resources are being utilised to support the programme.

6. RECOMMENDATION 2

- 6.1 The second meeting of the Cross Party Working Group was held on the 11th January 2018 to review Recommendation 2:-

Assure itself that the Council is meeting its statutory landlord responsibilities in relation to gas servicing

- *All properties have a valid gas safety certificate in place, or are having the Council’s non-compliance arrangements applied to them fully and,*
 - *Arrangements for undertaking asbestos surveys and recording the results of these surveys, is robust.*
- 6.2 Officers provided members of the Cross Party Working Group with an update and written supporting information in relation to progress made against Recommendation 2 and 2a (Appendix 3).
- 6.3 At the time of the meeting on the 11th January 2018, performance for gas servicing had improved from 98% to 99.71% and all actions listed on the Action Plan in relation to this recommendation had been completed. Members noted the forced entry policy is a “last

resort" and agreed the policy was in part responsible for the upturn in gas servicing (as evidenced above).

- 6.4 Members of the Cross Party Working Group were satisfied with the progress made, but asked that consideration be given to vulnerable tenants and that any required support was provided. Officers confirmed that support for vulnerable households was included within the no access procedure; members were supplied with a copy of the procedure outlining the steps taken to support vulnerable people.
- 6.5 Having reviewed the Actions completed in relation to Recommendation 2a, Cross Party Working Group members were satisfied with the progress made.

7. RECOMMENDATION 3

- 7.1 The meeting of the Cross Party Working Group on the 11th January 2018 also considered progress against Recommendation 3:-

Ensure the Council has sufficient project management capacity to deliver the WHQS programme by 2020.

- 7.2 Officers provided members with an update and supporting evidence in relation to the progress made against Recommendation 3 (Appendix 4).
- 7.3 Members of the Cross Party Working Group were satisfied with the progress made against this recommendation and in particular the support being provided by other service areas within the Council.
- 7.4 Officers were questioned on the use of agency workers, but it was explained that this was necessary due to market conditions and also provided flexibility as the workforce would be required to reduce post 2020. Members asked further questions on the capability of agency workers to undertake the tasks. The Chief Housing Officer was confident the work undertaken by agency staff was very good and cost effective.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Members of the Cross Party Working Group requested a number of amendments be made to the Action Plan and these have been implemented and indicated in red within Appendix 1.
- 8.2 Members requested that a progress report on the environmental programme be presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- 8.3 Members requested that accurate and timely performance data is provided to ensure progress can be monitored and checked on a regular basis.
- 8.4 The Cross Party Working Group challenged officers in detail on the progress made against each recommendation and although some amendments have been made to the Action Plan and additional assurances provided as detailed within this report, overall members were satisfied with progress.
- 8.5 The Cross Party Working Group suggested that the chair of Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee writes to the WAO to make them aware of the progress and conclusions made.
- 8.6 The Cross Party Working Group agreed that tenants should provide a letter of support in relation to the in-house workforce.
- 8.7 Members of the Cross Party Working Group requested that site visits be arranged for Policy &

Resources Scrutiny Committee members to see the standard and extent of work being delivered as part of the WHQS programme.

- 8.8 It was acknowledged that the Cross Party Working Group had made a positive contribution to the scrutiny of the Council's progress regarding the recommendations of the WAO review report and the Chair thanked all members, tenant representatives and officers who took part in the meetings and contributed to the outcomes reached.

9. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 9.1 The report outlines the contribution made towards the Well-being Goals as set out in the Links to Strategy section above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that our processes have been developed in collaboration with Welsh Government and the local authority's housing partners, taking a long term approach to the development needs of the county borough. The programme itself assists the prevention agenda being delivered by our Homelessness Team and the affordable housing programme delivery plan integrates the work of the local authority alongside the work of the Housing Associations who themselves have similar aims.

10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified; therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Following the exercise to replace Savill's estimated costs with more accurate costs based on tender submissions, completed contracts and advanced survey information, the business plan has been reviewed. This has resulted in projected costs increasing by £10M, however the business plan continues to be financially viable and well within our borrowing cap level.

12. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 A business case for additional resources has been approved by CMT which allows flexibility to recruit additional resources to meet the changing demands of the programme. The recruitment of a Technical Officer to address the specific concerns raised in relation to the management of asbestos is being progressed. Generic job descriptions have also been developed to provide increased flexibility of resources across the team.

13. CONSULTATIONS

- 13.1 The report reflects any views of the consultees.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 14.1 This report is for information and provides members of Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee with the outcomes and conclusions of the WHQS Cross Party Working Group following a review of progress made against each of the recommendations made in the Wales Audit Office report.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To ensure that members of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee are aware of the review work undertaken by the WHQS Cross Party Working Group on the report submitted by the WAO.

13 STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003.

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Consultees:

Cllr Lisa Phipps	- Cabinet Member for Home and Places
Cllr James Pritchard	- Chair WHQS Cross Party Working Group
Dave Street	- Corporate Director of Social Services & Housing
Cllr Mike Adams	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr Kevin Etheridge	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr Gez Kirby	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr Colin Mann	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr John Ridgewell	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr Royston Saralis	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Cllr Lyndsay Whittle	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Member
Dianne Moore	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Tenant Representative
Sandra Jones	- WHQS Cross Party Working Group Tenant Representative
Marcus Lloyd	- WHQS and Infrastructure Strategy Manager
Steven Harris	- Interim Head of Corporate Finance
Elizabeth Lucas	- Head of Procurement
Alan Edmunds	- WHQS Project Manager
Steve Greedy	- WHQS Project Manager
Colin Roden	- WHQS Project Manager
Kath Webb	- Relationship Manager
Rhys Lewis	- Systems and Performance Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Appendix 2 – WHQS Cross Party Working Group Briefing Notes – 5 December 2018

Appendix 3 – WHQS Cross Party Working Group Briefing Notes – 11 January 2018

(Recommendations 2 and 2a)

Appendix 4 – WHQS Cross Party Working Group Briefing Notes – 11 January 2018

(Recommendation 3)

WALES AUDIT OFFICE WHQS REVIEW – ACTION PLAN – AUGUST 2017

Recommendations	Actions	Owner	Progress/ Due Date
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>Develop a comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme setting out how the Council will achieve WHQS by 2020.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that the Keystone Asset Database provides up to date survey information. 2. Review projected programme costs by replacing Savill's estimates with more accurate actual costs based on recently completed contract information. 3. Amend existing programme in order to reflect communities where work has been completed, is currently ongoing or is planned. Programme to also incorporate a breakdown of the communities to clarify which streets are included. 4. Ensure adequate resources to enable surveys to be completed at the earliest opportunity in order to better inform future investment requirements and budget forecasting. 	<p>MRL</p> <p>LA</p> <p>MRL</p> <p>MRL</p>	<p>Sept 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Sept 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Sept 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 1a</p> <p>Review procurement arrangements to ensure value for money.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure adequate procurement arrangements are in place to cover all aspects of the programme. 2. Undertake an independent benchmarking exercise in relation to the single source supply arrangement to assess value for money. 3. Undertake an exercise to compare costs of the in-house workforce to those of external contractors, whilst also considering ensuring quality and performance to determine value for money. 	<p>MRL</p> <p>KRW</p> <p>MRL</p>	<p>April 2017/ Completed</p> <p>March 2018</p> <p>March 2018</p>

	<p>4. Introduce a flexible Dynamic Purchasing System for the external works in the lower Rhymney valley, whilst also providing options to deliver contracts for internal and external works throughout the borough.</p> <p>5. Contracts for internal works are in place until 2020 and were procured in open competition. External work packages are tendered individually from existing frameworks and more recently the D.P.S. Tenders are evaluated on receipt and if deemed to be uncompetitive, the work is re-tendered in an attempt to deliver improved value for money.</p>	MRL	April 2017/ Completed
		MRL	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 1b</p> <p>Provide clear and transparent information to members and tenants about the current position of the programme and a commitment to stakeholders with accurate projected completion dates.</p>	<p>1. Review existing programme information being provided to members and tenants and amend this to ensure it is accurate, easily understood and timely.</p> <p>2. Review the way performance information is presented to all stakeholders to ensure that this provides a good overview on the progress of the overall programme and is easily understood and timely, to assist with ongoing monitoring.</p>	MRL	March 2018
		SC/MRL	Dec 2017/ Completed
<p>Recommendation 1c</p> <p>Secure the resources needed to deliver the programme by 2020.</p>	<p>1. Business case approved for the appointment of additional staff and operatives to support the in-house team in view of the additional work they will be undertaking to deliver WHQS works to our sheltered housing schemes.</p> <p>2. Business case approved for the appointment of Surveyors/Clerks of Works to support the delivery of the external works programme following the implementation of the DPS.</p> <p>3. Use of agency workers ongoing to supplement directly employed staff as workforce will need to reduce post 2020.</p>	MRL	April 2017/ Completed
		MRL	April 2017/ Completed
		MRL	Ongoing

	<p>4. Introduction of DPS has provided an additional pool of contractors to deliver all aspects of the programme and to act as a contingency in case any issues are encountered with existing contracts.</p> <p>5. Use of other experienced in-house teams, both within and outside Caerphilly Homes, has been implemented to provide further assistance and resources for the delivery of the programme, e.g. Housing Repair Operations, Network Contracting Services, Highways Operations Group, Grounds Maintenance.</p> <p>6. Additional financial resources being sourced to assist with the delivery of the programme and to provide additional improvements to the housing stock and communities, e.g. ECO, Arbed, V.V.P.</p>	<p>MRL</p> <p>SC/MRL</p> <p>MRL/JRW</p>	<p>April 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>Assure itself that the Council is meeting its statutory landlord responsibilities in relation to gas servicing.</p>	<p>1. The Council's performance in relation to gas servicing averages 98% which results in approximately 200 properties not having a valid gas safety certificate, which has been identified as an issue with no access. A review of the no access procedure has been undertaken.</p> <p>2. To improve compliance the gas servicing cycle will be changed to operate on a 10 month cycle rather than the existing 11 months.</p> <p>3. To reduce issues with no access, a charge will be introduced for tenants who fail to provide access at the appointment time.</p> <p>4. The timescales for issuing letters to tenants seeking access will be reduced and if required a Notice of Seeking Possession will be issued prior to the expiry of the gas certificate.</p> <p>5. Failure to provide access during the NOSP period will result in arrangements being made to force entry, with the tenant being provided with advanced notice of such action.</p>	<p>SC</p> <p>PS</p> <p>PS</p> <p>Housing Managers</p> <p>Housing Managers/ PS</p>	<p>July 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Sept 2017/ Completed</p> <p>August 2017/ Completed</p> <p>August 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Sept 2017/ Completed</p>

<p>Recommendation 2a</p> <p>Ensure that arrangements for undertaking asbestos surveys and recording the results of these surveys, is robust.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the accuracy and timeliness of asbestos information being recorded within the Keystone Asset Database. 2. Ensure that all relevant staff have access to asbestos records to ensure these are checked prior to commissioning surveys. 3. Submit a business case to appoint a Technical/Admin Officer to input surveys and cleanliness certificates into Keystone in a timely manner, and also act as a central point of contact. 	<p>PS</p> <p>PS</p> <p>PS</p>	<p>August 2017/ Completed</p> <p>Dec 2017/ Completed</p> <p>August 2017/ Completed</p>
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>Ensure the Council has sufficient project management capacity to deliver the WHQS programme by 2020.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business case approved for the appointment of additional resources, allowing recruitment to take place as and when required. 2. Project management of the sheltered housing programme being carried out by the in-house team following consultation with tenants. 3. Project management of various aspects of the programme is being undertaken by other services to spread workload and maximise use of existing resources, e.g. work to leaseholder properties being managed by Private Sector Housing, WHQS work to voids and statutory maintenance being undertaken by Housing Repair Operations Team, environmental programme being progressed by utilising services of Grounds Maintenance, Highways Operations Group, Network Contracting Services. 4. A restructure of Caerphilly Homes to be undertaken to further improve integration and better align key functions with the aim of improving capacity to support the programme. 	<p>MRL</p> <p>MRL</p> <p>SC/MRL</p> <p>SC</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

WHQS WORKING GROUP – 5 December 2017

WAO Recommendation 1

By September 2017 develop a comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme setting out how the Council will achieve WHQS by 2020.

The programme should:-

Establish the full scope of investment needed in the Council's housing stock based on accurate, comprehensive and up to date stock condition information.

Background

In order to support the ballot for housing stock transfer back in 2012, the Council was required to develop a financial business plan to establish if the delivery of the WHQS programme was viable. In order to inform the business plan a stock condition survey was undertaken in compliance with WG guidance based on 15% of the stock.

Following the outcome of the ballot in February, 2012, consideration was given to commissioning a new 100% stock condition survey, but a decision was made not to progress this as delays would be incurred whilst the process was procured, and the cost was estimated to be in excess of £1m.

Whilst it is accepted that a full stock condition survey would have provided an indication on the extent of work required to each property, e.g. which require new kitchens, bathrooms, heating, this would not provide detailed information on the full scope of work for accurate financial projections, e.g. structural works, asbestos removal, kitchens designed to each individual tenant's needs, plastering, tiling. Also, if a stock condition survey had been progressed so early in the programme, the extent of work would very likely change over time due to the deterioration of elements and changing tenants' circumstances.

Current Position

For the reasons stated above surveys are being undertaken in-house which detail the full extent of works required which are then used to specify the scope of works into contract packages. These surveys are also completed in a more timely manner in advance of the works commencing, and this therefore improves the accuracy of survey information whilst also allowing for any tenancy changes.

The survey information has now been used to calculate projected costs, based on average rates previously obtained from competitive tenders. This has replaced previous projections which were based on Savill's estimated costs submitted with the original stock condition survey.

(L.A. to provide a summary of the process undertaken to establish more accurate costs)

These revised costs have been used to update the Housing Business Plan which has resulted in the overall investment increasing by approximately £11m. This increase cost however is still affordable, with our Business Plan continuing to be viable and well within our borrowing limits.

The survey information, revised costs, historical and projected contract progress has now been considered and used to inform a new comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme.

The programme sets out those communities where internal or external works have already been completed and also identifies the financial year that other communities are anticipated to benefit from internal and external works. These communities are further broken into individual contracts and each contract can then be broken down to display the streets that will be covered.

As a further check, each contract will be provided with an actual or estimated cost based on the more accurate average costs recently calculated. This again demonstrates that the programme continues to be affordable which further supports the business plan.

Whilst the programme also sets out the operational delivery of this major project, this continues to be closely monitored by officers to ensure the 2020 deadline is achievable.

For contract and delivery purposes and following tenant and Council approval, the programme is being progressed on the basis of external and internal works being undertaken separately.

Current Performance

The Council currently has a housing stock of 10,822 which includes all our sheltered housing schemes and members will be aware that the improvement of 6 schemes may be postponed until after 2020 for potential remodelling, subject to the outcome of feasibility studies. The following statistics however assume that that all schemes will be improved to WHQS until the outcome of the feasibility studies are known.

See attached breakdown.

Internal completions since the commencement of the programme, including the current year total 7,376. Our overall completion target to the end of 2017/18 is 8,372. Based on performance achieved since 15/16, completions are averaging 2,000 per year. Our projected completions for 18/19 are 1,754 and for 19/20, 696 which indicates that internal completions for 2020 is deliverable.

It is accepted that there will be annual slippage, but there is contingency within the final year of the programme to address this.

In relation to external works, this element of the programme did not commence until 2015/16. Progress has been slow with only 1,320 properties being completed by the end of March 2017. Since March there has been a stepped change in performance which has been aided by a new Dynamic Purchasing System. Completions for the current year stand at 2,123 which provides an overall total of 3,443. The anticipated completion target for 2017/18 is 4,329, for 2018/19 3,400 and for 2019/20, 3,093. The external programme is challenging but is achievable if we meet the target set for 2017/18.

See below:-

North

6	Contracts ongoing in the North	1219	Completed
8	Contracts completed in the North		
402	Properties ongoing in the current year		

East

11	Contracts ongoing in the East	1312	Completed
19	Contracts completed in the East		
529	Properties ongoing in the current year		

South

9	Contracts ongoing in the South	669	Completed
0	Contracts completed in the South		
696	Properties ongoing in the current year		

Private Sector Housing

13	Contracts ongoing	243	Completed
13	Contracts completed		
223	Properties ongoing in the current year		

1,850 Total ongoing

3,443 Total Completions

WHQS Cross Party Working Group

11 January 2018

Wales Audit Office WHQS Review

Recommendation 2

Assure it that the Council is meeting its statutory landlord responsibilities in relation to gas servicing by September 2017

Background

At the time of the Audit the Council's performance in relation to gas servicing averaged 98% resulting in approximately 200 properties not having a valid gas Landlord Safety Certificate (LSR)

Non compliance in this area was a result of no access. At the time of the audit the council believed that it was meeting its statutory responsibilities in relation to gas servicing.

Performance at the time fluctuated between 98% and 99% where we could evidence that all properties are visited with the intention of undertaking a service within the 12 month timescale.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) regulations 1998 state that landlords are expected to make all reasonable efforts to carry out the service which does not extend to forced entry. The Council has an agreed no access procedure in place and evidence recorded against each property to demonstrate what efforts that has been made. WAO officers were afforded the opportunity to view our systems and reports in detail but this was not pursued.

It is accepted that at the time of the review that there were 12 properties that were overdue their annual service by more than six months. In all cases, this was due to tenants failing to allow access, despite physical calls to the properties, cards being posted, letters delivered and telephone calls being made. In the event of continued access issues a lengthy court process was progressed via the relevant Area/Neighbourhood Housing Office to ensure access was gained.

Current Position

In accordance with this WAO recommendation, the existing Tenancy Management Procedure for staff has been reviewed in relation No Access for Annual/Bi Annual Servicing of Gas/Solid Fuel Heating Appliance where the following changes have now been implemented.

Once the Heating Contractor has failed to gain access to a property by following the New Heating Appointment and No Access Procedure for contractors (See attached Heating No

Access Procedure) the Tenancy Management Procedure for staff has now been amended which reduces the process from 3 letters and a visit by the Estate Management Officer (EMO) down to 1 letter which is the only letter now sent to the tenant by Housing Repair Operations (HRO) confirming an appointment date for the Heating Contractor to attend.

This letter explains that a recharge is payable (£28.81) if access is not made available to complete the heating service.

If access is not made available following the letter, the relevant Housing office will be contacted in order for the relevant EMO to check all records to establish if there are any exceptional circumstances that need to be considered and discussed with the A/NHM before moving onto the next stage of the procedure.

Once these checks have been completed the EMO will print off a Notice of Seeking Possession (Signed by A/NHM) in order to serve on the tenant or at the property via the letter box if the tenant is not at home.

During the 4 weeks that the NOSP is running a weekly letter will be sent to constantly remind the tenant that access is still required. However 14 days after the NOSP has been served HRO will send an APPOINT 1 letter by hand confirming a date when the heating engineer will be calling and the intension to force entry if access is not available when he calls to complete the service. The date of the forced entry visit must coincide with the expiry of the 12 month service and the NOSP

If force entry is required, the property will be accessed by a HRO trained locksmith and the service undertaken or the gas supply capped off at the meter if no gas supply is live in order to complete the service.

If at the time of calling the tenant is present at the property but still refuses to allow access to complete the service, HRO will prepare an AFFIDAVIT and instruct legal to commence proceedings for court action to take place.

Current Performance.

At the time of writing this briefing note performance on Gas Servicing is 99.71% compliant (and increasing).

To date we have completed 50 forced entries in order to complete the service/cap off the meter. We are also arranging to provide support to tenants where this is deemed necessary, including referrals to relevant services where medical or mental health issues are identified.

Recommendation 2a

Ensure that arrangements for undertaking asbestos surveys and recording the results of these surveys, is robust by September 2017.

Background

At the time of the Audit officers were unaware of the issues being referred to in this item which states that Asbestos surveys of its housing stock are flawed.

The Council requested further information and evidence to support the statement That was being made, however to date this information has not been provided.

All works instructed to Council properties are accompanied with an Asbestos survey, if there are to be any intrusive works to the property. This is fully covered in all contractual arrangements and documents that the authority has in place for WHQS works.

Keystone (Asset management system) contains information relating to the commission of the survey and an electronic copy of all Asbestos survey documents, which is available to all Housing staff.

In accordance with this WAO recommendation a full review of the following Asbestos arrangements were undertaken to ensure continued compliance.

1. Review the accuracy and timeliness of asbestos information being recorded within the Keystone Asset Database.
2. Review to ensure that all relevant staff has access to asbestos records to ensure these are checked prior to commissioning surveys.

Current position

Asbestos documents are being received on a daily basis from external contractors and these were filed regularly. In June 2016 however the timeliness of filing of the documents lead to a delay in this process due to the fact the administration officer dedicated to the team had left the authority and was not replaced. These duties were then completed by asbestos officers within the team as and when they had time resulting in a number of delays in the timeliness of filing of the documents where very often information was placed in a temporary folder whilst awaiting to be entered into the Keystone data base.

Following the Audit report a business case was approved to re-appoint a dedicated Technical Administrator who would be responsible for uploading asbestos documents into Keystone and filing them correctly. This resource will also assist in preparing documentation for new survey contracts and also acts as an advocate for the housing surveyors when they are on site in order to provide asbestos survey information to avoid any unnecessary sampling taking place.

A new naming protocol has also been created to ensure that the files in the backup temporary folder are named in the same format that they are saved on Keystone. This protocol also dictates that document descriptions will be used more affectively on Keystone attachments and should make the searching for asbestos information clearer. This protocol is being followed with immediate affect and once the filing backlog has been cleared, the Asbestos Technical Assistant will work through all existing files to ensure that they are amended in accordance with it.

Current Performance

The new Asbestos Technical Assistant commenced his position on 21st November 2017. In this time he has completed his initial training and has so far filed 180 documents from our current backlog, in addition to the ongoing current filing he completes on a daily basis.

Currently there are 20101 asbestos documents on file for asbestos and a further 2823 documents waiting to be filed with an anticipated completion date of 31st January 2018.

These include survey reports, bulk sample certificates, waste notes and asbestos removal certificates.

Currently 10652 properties have an Asbestos Management Survey Report held within Keystone.

New Heating Appointment and No Access Procedure

This procedure is what is written within the new Service and Maintenance Contract, once this procedure has been carried out it will then enter the Caerphilly Councils tenancy Management procedure for servicing of gas /solid fuel central heating Appliances.

Appointments

The Contractor is required to arrange an appointment with the tenants of each property to gain access and complete the Landlord Safety check and Appliance Servicing requirements by the required deadline.

The Contractor is required to contact by telephone the tenant(s) of each property to arrange an appointment for the required Landlord Safety check and Appliance Service to be completed.

The Contractor shall as a minimum follow the process set out below when contacting tenants by telephone.

First Call Answered	Caller to explain who you are and that you are working on behalf of the Council and that a Landlord Safety check and Appliance Service of their HHWS is required. Give brief details of how long the work will take and if requested what will be involved.
Call Answered By Machine	Caller to explain who you are and that you are working on behalf of the Council and that a Landlord Safety check and Appliance Service of their HHWS is required. Leave your name and contact number (number must be charged at national geographic call rate or less) and ask that they call you back to make an appointment within two (2) days or an appointment will be allocated.
Call Not Answered	Proceed to second call – see below.
Incorrect Number	Contact the Council as soon as possible

A second call must be made the next working day after an initial unsuccessful call or a message has been left unless the tenant has already called back. The second call must be at a different time of day to the first attempt.

The Contractor shall offer the appointment slots set out in the table below in accordance with the Times and Days of work for this Contract.

Appointment	Appointment Time Slot
AM appointment	08:00 – 12:00 Hours
PM appointment	12:00 – 17:00 Hours

The Contractor shall attempt to make all appointments within five (5) working days of receipt of the Schedule of Safety Checks. Where the Contractor is unable to contact a tenant they shall notify the Council within five (5) working days of receipt of the Schedule of Safety Checks. The Council will attempt to source any alternative or updated contact details for tenants and issue these to the Contractor within two (2) working days. All exchanges of tenants' details will be via *Egress Switch*.

The Contractor shall attempt to make all remaining appointments within three (3) working days. Where the Contractor is unable to arrange an appointment by telephone they shall allocate an appropriate appointment slot accordingly.

The Contractor is to email to the Council a schedule which sets out the appointment time and date for each property that has been arranged or allocated. This schedule must include the property reference number, full property address and the appointment date and time.

The Contractor is required to confirm by bilingual (English and Welsh languages) letter to each property the date and time of the appointment arranged. Where the letter is sent via post it must be posted a minimum of five (5) working days prior to the appointment date. In addition to the appointment date and time, the letter shall also include as a minimum a telephone number (charged at national geographic call rate or less) for tenants to contact the Contractor in order to rearrange their appointment. The layout and specific content of such letters shall be agreed during the contract mobilisation period.

The Contractor is required to call the tenant using the relevant contact number thirty (30) minutes prior to arrival at the property to advise of their estimated arrival time.

In the case of empty properties (those currently untenanted) the Contractor is required to contact the Area Housing Office to make arrangements to gain access to the property in accordance with the above process. For such properties, the Contractor may be required to collect keys from an agreed location in order to gain access to the property. Moreover, confirmation of the appointment time shall be issued via email to the nominated Council officer instead of by letter to the property.

No Access

Where a Contractor is unable to gain access to a property they shall follow the No Access procedures as set out below.

No Access Procedure

Where the Contractor is unable to gain access to a property or site at the appointed time to deliver the required services or works they should return to the property or site and re-attempt to gain access after 30 minutes.

If on the second attempt the Contractor is still unable to gain access to a property or site they shall leave a bilingual (English and Welsh languages) card at the property or site which gives details of the access attempts and requests the tenant contact the Contractor to make a new appointment.

The bilingual card must include as a minimum the following:

- Date and time of the attempted visits;
- Date and time of the agreed appointment;
- Contractor Name, Logo and the name of the operative calling at the property.

- Contractor telephone number (charged at national rate) for tenants to make contact in order to rearrange the appointment.

If the tenant has not contacted the Contractor within five (5) working days of the attempted visit, the Contractor shall complete a Job Record Form detailing the time and date of the attempted visit and send this to the Council via email, this will then be input onto our system where we will start at the first letter stage.

WHQS Cross Party Working Group

11 January 2018

Wales Audit Office WHQS Review

Recommendation 3

Ensure it has sufficient project management capacity to deliver the Council's WHQS programme effectively by 2020.

Members have previously been advised of the procurement strategy that was originally adopted for the delivery of this major investment programme, which complied with strict procurement legislation, but with an aim to also support local business and to deliver community benefits on larger scale contracts, particularly the internal works and the supply partner arrangements.

It has also been reported that there were delays in establishing an arrangement for the external works in the lower Rhymney Valley area, as the original intention was that this work would be undertaken by our own in-house workforce. This was then impacted by the problems found at Rowan Place, Rhymney whereby agreement was reached that the in-house team would carry out the major improvements required as a whole house approach.

Although we had contract arrangements in place for external works in the north and east areas, due to the way the contracts were set up, there was no opportunity to utilise these arrangements for the south area. Subsequently a new Dynamic Purchasing System was progressed to not only provide a mechanism for inviting tenders for external works in the south, but the opportunity was also taken to ensure that this arrangement could be used borough wide for both internal and external works.

The DPS was in the process of being established at the time of the WAO review and was actually implemented in April, 2017. The arrangement has proved to be very successful with good progress now being made on the external works in the south area. This has contributed to the external works completions increasing from 1,300 properties at March 2017 to 3,500 properties currently.

We have three dedicated Project Managers in place, one managing the internal works programme, one managing the external works programme and another managing all work undertaken by the in-house team (internal, external and sheltered housing).

In order to assist with the project management of such a major investment programme, the use of resources is being maximised through improved integration within Caerphilly Homes following changes in the management structure last year and by also utilising the services of other departments within the Council, including Building Consultancy, Grounds Maintenance, Highways Operations Group and Network Contracting Services.

A business case has previously been approved which enables officers to proceed with the recruitment of additional resources without delay, either directly or via a recruitment agency. This allows resources to be brought into the programme as and when required to meet contractual demands, being mindful that post 2020, it is likely that resource levels will need to reduce.

Members will also recall that agreement was reached that the sheltered housing programme would be delivered by the in-house team, as this was the preference of our tenants and considered to provide improved value for money over the option of outsourcing this area of work. This is currently progressing well with the first years phase on programme for completion by March 2018.

The WHQS programme is overseen by the Corporate Director Communities with the Chief Housing Officer as the lead Head of Service, who is supported by a WHQS Programme Manager. This management structure is supported by a multi-disciplined WHQS and Caerphilly Homes staff structure. In order to maximise the use of skills and capacity across both teams, a restructure is already being developed with the aim of ensuring that sufficient capacity is in place to deliver the WHQS programme by 2020 and this will be further informed by the review of our systems.

The Wales Audit Office report makes no recommendations for increasing project management capacity, but requests that the Council ensures that it has sufficient management capacity to deliver the WHQS programme by 2020. Resource capacity will therefore continue to be kept under review and will adapt in order to meet any changes in circumstances which are inevitable in the delivery of such a major project.