



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 15TH MAY 2018

SUBJECT: WALES AUDIT OFFICE REVIEW OF THE WHQS DELIVERY PROGRAMME

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of a follow up review by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) delivery programme following the previous report submitted to Cabinet on the 1st November 2017.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 During March and April 2017, as part of the WAO performance audit plan, the WAO undertook a review of the Council's arrangements to deliver the WHQS by 2020.
- 2.2 At the time of the review, the WAO concluded that the *"majority of tenants homes remain below the WHQ Standard due to longstanding inefficient and ineffective programme management and the Council is unlikely to achieve the standard by 2020"*.
- 2.3 Whilst officers accepted the recommendations within the WAO report, they did not agree with the overall conclusions made, as it did not reflect the position of the programme and evidence to justify this view was provided in the report to Cabinet.
- 2.4 The WAO have now arranged for a follow up review to be conducted to determine whether the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting the commitments made to the Cabinet on the 1st November 2017.

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 WAO Review resulted in a number of recommendations which were set out in the Cabinet report of the 1st November 2017, together with comments from officers in response.
- 4.3 Progress made in addressing the recommendations were reviewed by a Cross Party Working Group which contained representations from the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.4 A report on the outcome of this review was presented to the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 27th February 2018 and it was agreed that the recommendations had been progressed by the required timelines.
- 4.5 Following the Cabinet meeting held on the 1st November 2017 a commitment was made to the Council, WAO and Welsh Government that 75% of internal works and 40% of external works would be completed by the end of March 2018.
- 4.6 Following this commitment, the WAO have arranged to undertake a further review to determine whether the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting the commitments made to Cabinet on the 1st November, 2017 in an effective, economic and efficient way.
- 4.7 The review will enable the WAO to assess the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations and ensuring it has appropriate arrangements and systems in place to enable it to meet the WHQS by 2020.
- 4.8 The review being conducted by the WAO will be undertaken in two parts:-
- A Service User Perspective Review**, which will focus on the views from tenants and leaseholders in relation to their opinions of the WHQS programme, and
- A Follow Up Review**, which will determine whether the Council is meeting the commitments made to Cabinet on the 1st November 2017. Copies of the project briefs for both are attached as Appendix 1 and 2.
- 4.9 The Service User Perspective Review will involve a telephone survey of approximately 400 households, together with meetings of various tenant groups. This review is anticipated to take place during April/May 2018.
- 4.10 The follow up review will involve a review of various documents and reports to establish the Council's own assessment of progress, whilst the second stage of this review will involve interviews with officers, contractor representatives, tenant representatives and members. This second stage will test the accuracy of the Council's information. This review will be undertaken during May/June, 2018 with a final report anticipated to be issued in September, 2018.

4.11 The information that will be reviewed by the WAO in relation to progress achieved by the end of March, 2018 which will be provided by officers, is the following:-

External completions by 31/03/2018 =	4,754 properties (44%)
Internal completions by 31/03/2018 =	8,218 properties (76%)
Percentage of housing stock fully compliant =	34.6%

This information is based on manual records which are retained by the relevant Project Manager which mirrors the process previously assessed by the WAO. However this is in the process of being validated within Keystone which will provide the detail required on key components and assist with our future planned maintenance programme.

4.12 When considering the significant improvement in performance over the last 12 months for completions, together with the advancements made in surveying which assists with forward planning, officers remain confident that the completion of the WHQS programme by 2020 is achievable.

Housing stock (10,805) less external completions (4,754) = 6,051 remaining

Housing stock (10,805) less internal completions (8,218) = 2,587 remaining

4.13 A letter has been sent to Welsh Government from the Leader of Council advising of the above achievement and compliance with the commitments made to deliver 75% of internal completions and 40% of external completions by 31 March 2018.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The WAO have summarised their opinion of the Council's approach to delivering WHQS as:

"The majority of tenants' homes remain below the WHQS due to longstanding, inefficient and ineffective programme management and the Council is unlikely to achieve the standard by 2020." Clearly this was a view taken at the point the original review was undertaken.

5.2 Officers accepted further improvements need to be made and agreed with the recommendations set out by WAO. It is accepted that the recommendations were following the review during March/April 2017, however at that point in time significant changes were already in the process of being made and this has resulted in significant improvements having been realised.

5.3 Officers, therefore, remain of the view that the delivery of WHQS by 2020 is achievable although the programme remains challenging.

5.4 This pending review will assess the Council's position and result in a further report in September which will highlight their findings and the conclusions drawn.

6. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

6.1 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.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 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.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report is for information; therefore there are no financial implications.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 This report is for information; therefore there are no personnel implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The report reflects any views of the consultees.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 This report is for information only.

12. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1 To make members aware of the WAO follow up review on the delivery of the WHQS programme.

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003.

Author: Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
(Tel: 01495 235314/01443 864208/Email: couzens@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Cllr Lisa Phipps - Cabinet Member for Home and Places
Dave Street - Corporate Director Social Services & Housing
Marcus Lloyd - WHQS and Infrastructure Strategy Manager
Jane Roberts Waite - Strategic Co-ordination Manager
Steven Harris - Interim Head of Corporate Finance
Alan Edmunds - WHQS Project Manager
Steve Greedy - WHQS Project Manager
Colin Roden - WHQS Project Manager
Kath Webb - Relationship Manager
Lesley Allen - Principal Accountant
Rhys Lewis - Systems and Performance Manager

Background Papers:

Cabinet Report – WAO Review of the WHQS Delivery Programme – 1 November 2017

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – WAO Project Brief – Service User Perspective Review

Appendix 2 – WHQS Project Brief – Follow Up Review



WALES AUDIT OFFICE
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

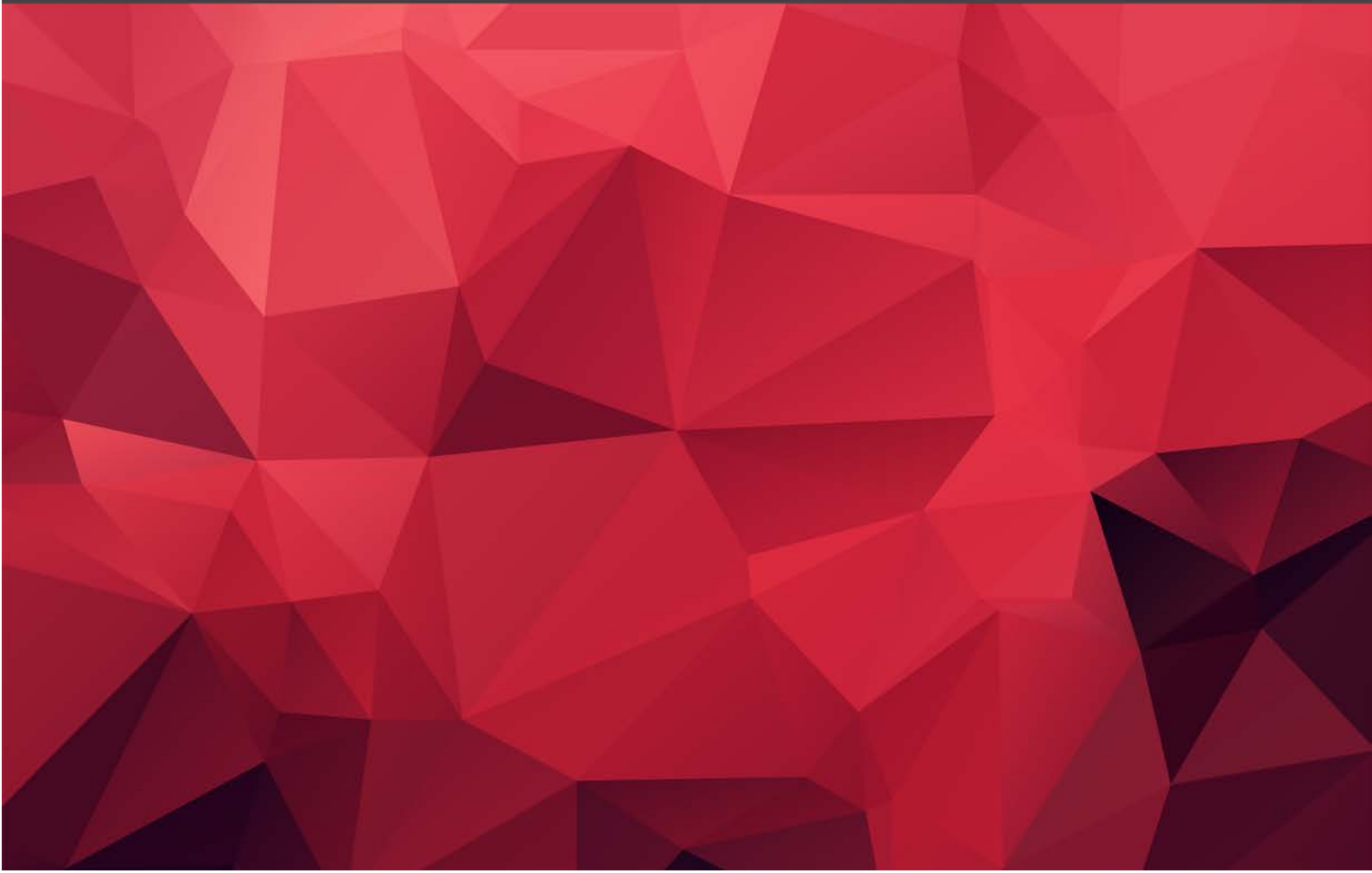
Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Project Brief –Service User Perspective Review – **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

Audit year: 2017-18

Date issued: April 2018

Document reference: 506A2018-19



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infoofficer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

This document was produced by Non Jenkins and Gareth Jones under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Project brief

Background

1. Our Wales Audit Office Local Government Audit Plans for 2017-18 set out our performance work for the year. These include a review relating to the Service User Perspective as follows: 'A user-focussed review. Specific area to be agreed with the Council.'
2. In many local government service areas, the ability of service users to influence services so that services meet their needs relies on 'voice' rather than 'choice.' In some services, there may not be any alternative providers. Alternatively, where there are alternative providers, service users have limited or no access to them for reasons such as cost or other barriers to access. This means that it is important for local government to ensure that it listens to the views of service users in designing and delivering services and interventions so that services meet people's needs, especially at a time of decreasing resources.
3. The context of decreasing resources for local government bodies provides additional impetus to ensure that services and interventions take into account the views, experiences and aspirations of service users. Ensuring that the experiences, views and aspirations of service users are taken into account when determining how and which services to reduce, increase or change in some other way increases the likelihood that services will meet people's need and therefore provide better value for money.
4. The Welsh Government's Local Government White Paper also emphasises the importance of working in partnership with citizens:
 - 'We want to develop a more equal partnership with citizens. The role of public services should be to support people to live independent lives and to seek to de-escalate demand, intervening only when necessary and only for as long as required. In doing so, the focus inevitably shifts to prevention and a public service which is able to put more effort into helping people to avoid crisis, rather than one which is focused on supporting people in crisis. This is about creating prudent public services for the future'.¹
5. The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 (WFG Act) also places a requirement on local authorities and other public bodies to have regard for the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working that define it. 'Involvement' is one of the five ways of working identified in the WFG Act.
6. We are undertaking work to understand the 'service user perspective' at each Council during 2017-18. Whilst following a broadly similar approach at each Council, the specific focus and approach to undertaking the review will be discussed and agreed with each Council.

¹ Welsh Government, **White Paper Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed**, January 2017.

Purpose of the review

7. The purpose of this review is to enable the Wales Audit Office to gain assurance and insight into the extent to which services respond to the needs and expectations of service users both in their design and delivery, and take their views and aspirations into account. We will examine how service users feel they are able to influence the design and delivery of services and what changes to the design and delivery of services would help to better meet their needs, and the implications of this for value for money and achievement of intended outcomes.
8. Through reporting on service users' perspectives on service quality, accessibility and availability there is an opportunity to consider the impact of authorities' arrangements on the delivery of intended outcomes, and value for money.

Focus of the review

9. This Service User Perspective review will focus on the Council's housing tenants and leaseholders.
10. In 2017, we undertook a review of the Council's progress towards meeting WHQS by 2020 and found that although 'the Council has a range of mechanisms to engage with tenants about WHQS these are ineffective and are not being used to shape planning and drive performance.' As part of this work we interviewed the six tenant representatives on the Caerphilly Homes Task Group.
11. The Council's response to this finding was that their own satisfaction surveys point to high levels of tenant satisfaction and that it would be more valuable if we were to speak to more tenants.
12. As part of this Service User Perspective review we will engage with and gather views from a larger number and a wider range of tenants in relation to their opinions of the Council's WHQS programme.
13. We will seek views from tenants and leaseholders on the quality and timeliness of the works, the communications and service they receive from the Council, and whether they feel listened to/able to influence the WHQS programme.

Method

14. We will undertake the review through a combination of document reviews, meetings with existing tenant representative groups, and a telephone survey of a sample of Council tenants and leaseholders. We will also arrange focus groups in four sheltered housing schemes to speak to residents about their experiences.
15. Our initial document request is set out later in this document.
16. We recognise that whilst we will not be able to speak to every tenant, our engagement with a larger sample of tenants will enable us to better understand their perspectives and provide us with key messages and themes that we can

present and explore with the Council. We will agree with the Council the best way to feed back our findings.

17. We may also draw on the findings of this Service User Perspective review to inform our planned WHQS follow-up work in 2018-19.
18. In developing this review, we have had regard for the National Principles for Public Engagement² developed by Participation Cymru. The table below briefly sets out how we have done this.

Exhibit 1: National Principles for Public Engagement

The table below sets out the National Principles of Public Engagement developed by Participation Cymru and how we will have regard for them in undertaking this review.

Principle	Wales Audit Office Approach
Engagement is effectively designed to make a difference	The review will allow tenants the opportunity to tell us how they feel about the WHQS improvement works to their homes, whether those have been completed or not. We will use the information gathered from our engagement with tenants to identify key themes and aspects for the Council to consider and explore when engaging with tenants throughout the remainder of its WHQS programme.
Encourage and enable everyone affected to be involved, if they so choose	As well as working with the Council's existing tenant participation groups we will also seek to engage other tenants through the use of a telephone survey. We will seek to identify tenants who were due to receive works but did not. We would request that the Council support this review by ensuring tenants are aware of it and that they may be contacted to take part in the telephone survey. This could be through a letter that is sent by the council to its tenants or/and through other means.
Engagement is planned and delivered in a timely and appropriate way	We will discuss the timing of the engagement of tenants with the Council. The timing of fieldwork will allow the Council the opportunity to inform tenants about the timing and focus of the survey.
Work with relevant partner organisations	The Wales Audit Office will explore opportunities to work with relevant partner and third-sector organisations, such as Tai Pawb.
The information provided will be jargon free, appropriate and understandable	The telephone survey company will be required to offer surveys in English and Welsh. We will ask the survey company to make arrangements to meet the language needs of those people who speak other languages. All information will be bilingual and comply with the Wales Audit Office's standards for clarity and accessibility. Information about the survey will be available to tenants in a variety of formats upon request.

² Participation Cymru, [National Principles for Public Engagement](#)

Principle	Wales Audit Office Approach
Make it easier for people to take part	The Wales Audit Office will use a selection of engagement mechanisms to ensure that tenants can take part. The survey company will be asked to offer appointments at convenient times for people and also to survey in the evening and also at weekends. The survey company will be required to offer equal access to respondents whose first language is English or Welsh. We will ask the survey company to make arrangements to meet the language needs of those people who speak other languages. We will work with the managers of sheltered housing schemes to understand any access needs of residents when planning and undertaking focus group sessions.
Enable people to take part effectively	Telephone surveys will be carried out at times of the day that suit respondents and arrangements will be made for follow-up interviews. Focus groups and interviews will follow standard Wales Audit Office practice in ensuring that the views of all participants are heard.
Engagement is given the right resources and support to be effective	We will train Wales Audit Office staff involved in delivery in effective engagement and facilitation. We will provide appropriate and sufficient resources to ensure effective delivery. This may include commissioning an external organisation to undertake aspects of the engagement work.
People are told the impact of their contribution	We will make all participants aware of how we will use the information they share. We will tell all participants that we may publish any final report for the review on the Council website and Wales Audit Office website for them to access. We will discuss with the Council opportunities for sharing a summary of our findings with Council tenants.
Learn and share lessons to improve the process of engagement	We will gather feedback from a range of participants as the study progresses. We will consider the feedback as part of the Wales Audit Office post review learning exercise.

Main review questions

Exhibit 2: Main Review Questions

The table below sets out the main questions we will seek to answer in undertaking this review.

Level One
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are tenants and leaseholders satisfied with the quality of services they receive from the Council's WHQS programme?
Level Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are tenants and leaseholders satisfied with the information about the progress of the works (planned and completed)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are tenants and leaseholders satisfied with the timeliness of planned works?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are tenants and leaseholders satisfied with the quality of the works?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can tenants and leaseholders influence the works to their homes?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can tenants and leaseholders quickly and easily contact the Council?

Output

19. We will agree with the Council the best way to feed back our findings. We will discuss with the Council opportunities for sharing a summary of our findings with Council tenants and leaseholders (where they indicate that they would like to receive this information). Our final feedback may also be made available on our website.
20. We may also draw on the findings of this Service User Perspective review to inform our planned WHQS follow-up work in 2018-19.

Timetable

Exhibit 3: Timetable

The table below sets out a proposed outline timetable for the review at the Council.

Proposed timetable	
Draft Project Brief issued	March 2018
Set up meeting/Discussion with the Council	March 2018
Final project brief issued	April 2018
Fieldwork – Telephone Survey and Focus Groups	April to May 2018
Output issued	June 2018

Wales Audit Office contacts

Exhibit 4: Wales Audit Office Contacts

The table below sets out the Wales Audit Office team that will be working on this review at the Council.

Name	Contact details
Performance Audit Director	Huw Rees Huw.Rees@audit.wales 02920 320599
Performance Audit Manager	Non Jenkins Non.Jenkins@audit.wales 07879 848671
Performance Audit Lead	Gareth Jones Gareth.Jones@audit.wales 07970 737433
Performance Specialist	Kevin Sutch Kevin.Sutch@audit.wales

Appendix 1

Fieldwork schedule

Telephone survey

We will commission an external company to survey a sample of Council tenants and leaseholders. We will seek a sample of around 400 tenants and leaseholders. The survey sample will broadly reflect the proportions of tenants and leaseholders, as well as the completion status of homes, across the County Borough. We will work with the Council to obtain the necessary information to achieve the intended sample.

Focus Groups

Exhibit 5: Focus Groups

The table below sets out the list of the focus groups we would like to run with service users as part of this review.

We will work with the Council to arrange times for these focus groups that are convenient to tenants, for example, by organising the focus groups at the end of any existing meetings of the groups where possible.

The focus groups in sheltered accommodation will be developed in conjunction with relevant Council staff and the managers of those schemes. The focus groups will be organised sensitively for a maximum of six people to enable everyone to have an opportunity to share their views.

Focus Groups – Tenants
Tenant members of Caerphilly Homes Task Group
Tenant members of the Repairs and Improvement Group
Focus groups of residents in four sheltered housing schemes and relevant managers/advocates

Appendix 2

Document and information request

The following is a list of documents we wish to review. The list is not exhaustive and we may request additional documents during the course of the review.

Where documents in the list below are publicly available on the Council's website, please direct us to where we can find them.

If there are additional documents that the Council feel help demonstrate their progress, please provide these to us with an appropriate explanation.

Exhibit 7: document and information request

Document Title
Tenant Participation Strategy
The past two tenant satisfaction surveys and results
Terms of reference and membership of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group
Terms of reference and membership of the Repairs and Improvement Group
Information about the role of the tenants who are the Caerphilly Service Improvement Monitors (CSIMs) and any reports produced by these tenants around WHQS since 1 January 2017
Tenants' newsletters since 1 January 2017
Tenant Communication Strategy

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone.: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru

Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru



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SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU

Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru
Auditor General for Wales

Project Brief – Welsh Housing Quality Standard follow up – **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

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This document was produced by Ron Price, Gareth Jones, Allison Rees, Nick Selwyn and Non Jenkins under the direction of Huw Rees.

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Project brief

Background

1. This review will look at the progress made by the Council in meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS), following our report published in June 2017 and reported to Cabinet on 1 November 2017.
2. Following discussions with the Council, we agreed to undertake a detailed WHQS follow-up after March 2018, a year on since we undertook our fieldwork for our 2017 WHQS review.
3. Investment in Council homes to transform lives and communities through its WHQS programme has been a long standing Council objective and is one of the Council's five Well-being objectives for 2017-18.
4. The Council owns 10,821 properties. Within its 2016-17 Corporate Plan, the Council had set a target of ensuring that by March 2017, 1,263 of all its homes were brought up to the WHQS – this included targets for 2,071 homes to be compliant with the WHQS in respect of their external elements and 1,992 homes to be compliant with the WHQS in respect of their internal elements. The Council did not meet these targets and by March 2017, 552 of the Council's homes fully met the WHQS.
5. The Council has set up a Caerphilly Homes Task group, which involves representatives from the Council and tenants to discuss progress with meeting the WHQS and the improvements to the housing service.
6. As part of our 2016-17 performance audit work we carried out a review of whether the Council had effective arrangements in place to enable it to meet the WHQS by 2020.
7. We concluded in July 2017, **that the majority of tenants' homes remain below the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) due to longstanding inefficient and ineffective programme management and the Council was unlikely to achieve the Standard by 2020.** We came to this conclusion because:
 - the majority of tenants' homes remain below the WHQS and the Council was making insufficient progress to achieve the Standard by 2020;
 - there were weaknesses in the Council's arrangements to meet its statutory landlord responsibilities;
 - the Council had not met all the minimum requirements of the Welsh Government's WHQS policy because it lacked a comprehensive programme that set out to stakeholders how it will meet the Standard by 2020;
 - the Council did not have adequate and up-to-date stock condition information to enable it to shape its housing investment programme;
 - the Council had a range of mechanisms to engage with tenants about the WHQS but these were ineffective and were not being used to shape planning and drive performance;

- the Council is unable to ensure that it was achieving value for money in delivering its WHQS works; and
 - arrangements to oversee, challenge, monitor and scrutinise the progress of the WHQS programme were weak and failed to provide sufficient oversight of the totality of the programme.
8. To support the Council in making the required improvement we made a number of statutory recommendations as shown in **Exhibit 1** below. The Council was required (as per the Local Government Measure) to prepare a statement of any action that it proposed to take as a result of the report, and its proposed timetable for taking that action. This had to be prepared within 30 days of receipt of the report.

Exhibit 1: Statutory Recommendations on action required to achieve the WHQS by 2020

Recommendations	
The Council should take urgent action to achieve WHQS by 2020. It should:	
R1	<p>By September 2017, develop a comprehensive, overarching, financial and operational programme setting out how the Council will achieve the WHQS by 2020. This programme should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish the full scope of investment needed in the Council's housing stock based on accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date stock condition information; • set out how the Council, by March 2018, will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – review its procurement arrangements to ensure value for money; – 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; and – secure the resources needed to deliver the programme by 2020; • contain clear and measurable milestones and relevant performance measures for delivering the programme up to 2020; and • set out the programme management, governance and accountability responsibilities and arrangements so that urgent remedial action can be taken if further slippage occurs and those tasked with delivering the programme can be held to account at appropriate decision making levels.
R2	<p>Assure itself that it is meeting its statutory landlord responsibilities by ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 are robust.
R3	<p>Ensure it has sufficient project management capacity to deliver the Council's WHQS programme effectively by 2020.</p>

9. The Council met the requirement to prepare a statement of action, which was subject to Cabinet endorsement, within the required timescale. Both our WHQS report and a more detailed response and statement of action from the Council's officers were presented to Cabinet on 1st November 2017. At that Cabinet meeting, and at a subsequent meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 14th November 2017 officers and Members made the following commitment: **'Whilst accepting that the completion of the programme by 2020 is challenging based on the current position and anticipated projections, 75% of internal works and 40% of external works are expected to be completed by March 2018. By March 2019, 94% of internal works are expected to be completed and 80% of external works. There is a plan and resources in place to complete the programme by 2020. Officers consider that the measures put in place have resulted in a significantly increased and focused rate of completions and are confident that the programme will be completed by 2020.'**

Purpose and focus of the review

10. The purpose and focus of this review is to determine whether the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting the commitments made to the Cabinet on 1 November 2017 in an effective, economic and efficient way. This will enable us to assess the Council's progress in addressing our statutory recommendations and ensuring it has appropriate arrangements and systems in place to enable it to meet the WHQS by 2020.
11. Between March and June 2018, in parallel with this review, we are undertaking a Service User Perspective review of tenants who live in Caerphilly County Borough Council owned dwellings. We will utilise the findings of that review to inform and shape the final work details of this review.

Methodology

12. We will undertake this project in two stages. During the first stage we will review the Council's progress reports to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Caerphilly Homes task group since 1 November 2017 on WHQS. We will review the minutes of those meetings. We will also review the Council's reports to the Welsh Government on WHQS since 1 November 2017. In this first stage of the review we will establish the Council's own assessment of progress in meeting its commitments and the progress since our 2017 review. During the second stage we will interview officers, contractor representatives, tenants' representatives and members. This second stage of the review will test the accuracy of the Council's information. We will seek to verify the Council's progress to the end of March 2018 and the effect of that progress on the Council's achievement of the WHQS by 2020.

13. Our initial document request and proposed interviewees are set out below.

Interviews and observations

14. The following is a list of people we would like to interview. The list is not exhaustive and will be informed by discussions with the Council and information provided to us:
- Chair – Caerphilly Homes Task Group
 - Director of Social Services and Housing
 - Interim Chief Executive/Former Corporate Director for Communities
 - Cabinet member for Homes and Places
 - Lead Officer for WHQS
 - Head of Housing
 - Chair of relevant Scrutiny Committee
 - Observation of/discussion with Caerphilly Homes Task group
 - Observation of/discussion with Tenant/officer repairs working group
 - Officer responsible for managing stock condition information, survey and attributes database
 - Senior representatives of the two contractors working on the internal WHQS works
 - Senior representatives of a selection of contractors working on the external WHQS works
 - Principal accountant with responsibility for the Housing Revenue Account
 - Head of the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO)
 - Focus group with staff from the DLO
15. We will also need to access the housing stock condition/asset database to reconcile and test the accuracy of stock condition information and WHQS delivery.

Document request list

16. The following is a list of documents we want to review. The list is not exhaustive and requests for additional documents may be made during the course of the review. Where documents in the list below are publicly available on the Council's website, please direct us to where we can find them.

If there are additional documents that the Council feel help demonstrate their progress, please provide these to us with an appropriate explanation:

- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan
- WHQS Project Plan
- Organisation Chart for Housing and DLO services

- All Progress reports to and minutes of the Cabinet, Scrutiny and Caerphilly Homes task group relating to WHQS since 1 November 2017
- WHQS budget, resource and financial information
- Stock condition survey information and progress information on completing in-house surveys of stock condition
- Stock improvement and maintenance programme
- Performance indicators used to monitor progress with implementing the WHQS
- Reports provided to Welsh Government on the WHQS since 1 November 2017

Output

17. The conclusions of our review will be set out in a report to the Council, and will be summarised in our Annual Improvement Report.

Timetable

18. The Council will collate its end of 2017-18 financial year WHQS position during May 2018. We therefore propose to schedule the fieldwork for early June 2018.

Exhibit 2: proposed timetable

Proposed timetable	
Project Brief Issued and project set up	March/April 2018
Document Review	May 2018
On site fieldwork/interviews	June 2018
Draft report issued	July/August 2018
Final report issued	September 2018

Wales Audit Office contacts for the review

Exhibit 3: contacts

Name	Role	Contact number	E-mail address
Huw Rees	Engagement Lead – Performance Audit	Office: 02920 320599 Mobile: 07799 581886	Huw.Rees@audit.wales
Non Jenkins	Performance Audit Manager	Office: 02920 320500 Mobile: 07879 84867	Non.Jenkins@audit.wales
Gareth Jones	Performance Audit Lead	Office: 02920 320500 Mobile: 07970 737433	Gareth.Jones@audit.wales
Allison Rees	Performance Auditor	Office: 02920 320500 Mobile: 07580 823820	Allison.Rees@audit.wales
Ron Price	Performance Auditor	Mobile: 07800 551217	Ron.Price@audit.wales
Grant Thornton	Financial Audit		

19. Other colleagues may also be involved where relevant to the work.

Wales Audit Office
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone.: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru
24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Caerdydd CF11 9LJ

Ffôn: 029 2032 0500

Ffacs: 029 2032 0600

Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660

E-bost: post@archwilio.cymru

Gwefan: www.archwilio.cymru

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.