



## **CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE SIRHOWY ROOM, PENALLTA HOUSE, ON  
TUESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 5.00 P.M.**

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PRESENT:

Councillor D. Price - Chair  
C. Davies - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

M. Davies, L. Harding, A. Hussey, B. Jones, L. Phipps, L.G. Whittle

Tenant Representatives:

Y. Bryant, M. James, S. Jones, D. Moore, L. Pewtner

Officers:

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), F. Wilkins (Public Sector Housing Manager) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer)

Also present :

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR 2018/19**

It was moved and seconded that Councillor D. Price be appointed as Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year 2018/19 and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: that Councillor D. Price be appointed Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year 2018/19.

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR 2018/19**

It was moved and seconded that C. Davies be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year 2018/19 and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: that C. Davies be appointed Vice-Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year 2018/19.

### **3. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Tenant Representative R. Thompson.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Tenant Representatives Y. Bryant, C. Davies, M. James, S. Jones, D. Moore, L. Pewtner and Councillor B. Jones declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items in that they are Council Tenants.

### **5. MINUTES – 17TH MAY 2018**

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 17th May 2018 be agreed as a correct record and by a show of hands was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2018 (minute no, 1-6) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **6. CAERPHILLY HOMES ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Chief Housing Officer presented the report which sought the views of Members on the proposed Asset Management Strategy for Caerphilly Homes housing stock following the anticipated achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard in 2020. It was noted that following consideration by the Task Group, the report would be presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet.

It was noted that the Strategy is to ensure that the Council's housing portfolio continues to provide affordable, quality homes that meet customers' needs now and for the future. There is a Delivery Plan which supports the Strategy and there are a number of elements that feed into the Plan.

The Members were informed that the Energy Efficiency Improvement program will continue past 2020 and the Housing team was currently pursuing grant funding from Welsh Government to support this.

Members were advised that a consultation, on the Strategy, with tenants was in progress and was due to conclude on Monday 11th September 2018. Results from the consultation so far indicated that 87% of tenants were in favour of the Strategy's proposals.

Discussion took place regarding the identification and prioritising of properties targeted in the Energy Efficiency Improvement Programme and WHQS. With views expressed that older properties should be given greater priority over newer ones particularly in regards to Trecenydd where damp issues in the older properties is prevalent. Officers clarified that damp issues would be prioritised in addition to energy efficiency improvements and offered to investigate individual properties, as identified by the member raising the concerns, in need of more immediate improvement.

A member questioned whether the procurement process would be reviewed in light of this Strategy and whether consideration had been given to the use of a Dynamic Purchasing System. Officers stated that this question would be address under a later item on the Agenda.

Concerns were raised regarding the turnaround times in cases where improvements are made to the property once they have become void, and the properties being tenanted.

Officers will provide more detailed information as part of the 'WHQS - Acceptable Fails' and Annual Performance Reports which will be coming to the next meeting of the Task Group.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration and thereafter Cabinet approval. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet, that:-

- (i) The establishment of a 5 year Asset Management Strategy as set out in the Officer's report.
- (ii) Agreement to the proposed delivery plan as indicated in item 6 of the Officer's report.
- (iii) Members agree the assumptions which have been included in the Business Plan that outlines the affordability envelope and has been set out in Appendix 1 and paragraph 12.2 of the Officer's report, whilst noting that these may be subject to change which may result in further reports being submitted.
- (iv) Separate detailed reports be submitted in relation to the remodelling of sheltered housing schemes and new Council housing.

## **7. PROPOSALS FOR INCREASING COUNCIL HOUSING SUPPLY**

The Chief Housing Officer presented the report which advised Members of proposals for increasing the supply of council housing and outlined principles of development mechanisms and options for delivery. It also sought the views of Members on the options to enable Officers to further develop proposals resulting in a more detailed report to be brought forward for building new Council homes on specific sites. It was noted that following consideration by the Task Group, the report would be presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet.

The Members were advised of each of the options available for increasing Council Housing supply which were as follows - new development using HRA land, new development using General Fund land, redevelopment of existing HRA sites, purchase via Section 106 Agreements and purchase of private properties/former Council properties.

The Chief Housing Officer outlined to Members the funding options available to support the Council housing supply options particularly highlighting HRA, Affordable Housing Grant, Innovative Housing Grant, Health and Housing programmes and Borrowing, supported by the HRA as potential funding streams.

Members welcomed the options regarding the Council undertaking new development and redevelopments of sites to build new housing stock. A Member asked that single persons and young people be considered regarding the types of new housing built. A Member also asked if the approximate 1100-1500 empty private properties in the County Borough could be taken into consideration as an option for increasing affordable housing availability through working with property owners. Officers confirmed that bringing empty properties back into beneficial use is a key aim of the report, but engaging with the relevant owner has been a difficult in the past.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for

consideration and thereafter Cabinet approval. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet, that:-

- (i) Agree the principle of building new council homes and access the AHG in full or in part.
- (ii) Agree the HRA sites to progress with detailed viability studies and agree the principle of identifying and pursuing suitable General Fund or open market sites for the development of affordable housing.
- (iii) Agree to the transfer and purchase of new homes through Section 106 agreements where there is an identified housing need and associated business case.
- (iv) Agree to the selective acquisition of existing properties to support housing need and subject to value for money being demonstrated, as set out in item 4.7 and 4.8 with individual acquisitions being progressed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places.
- (v) Agree to review of resources to support the preferred approach.
- (vi) Consider the report and the delivery options outlined and provide guidance on the officers' preferred Options 2 and 5 with the aim of the Council accessing AHG and delivering new council homes within stated timeframes, i.e. 2019/20.
- (vii) Agree to the submission of future reports for approval providing more detail on any viable development sited for new Council home provision.

## **8. REMODELLING AND RECLASSIFICATION OF OLDER PERSONS ACCOMODATION**

The Chief Housing Officer presented the report which sought the views of Members on a number of recommendations relating to initial feasibility studies for the remodelling, re-classification and decommissioning of a number of older persons accommodation sites. It also sought Members views on the granting of delegated powers to Officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places, to re-classify older persons accommodation to general needs using the principles specified within the Officer's reports. It was noted that following consideration by the Task Group, the report would be presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet.

Members were advised that there is a surplus of older persons accommodation and a lack of single persons accommodation along with increasing housing waiting lists and homelessness. Members were informed that as a result of feasibility studies undertaken by the Local Authority the following preferred options were proposed in relation to the six schemes considered for remodelling – retention of one sheltered scheme, remodelling 2 sheltered schemes, closure of 3 sheltered schemes to be replaced by a single new scheme. Additional proposals included re-designation of a small number of specified units of older persons accommodation to general needs, reclassifying of two older persons accommodation schemes and the full decommissioning of four older person's schemes. The details of which were contained in the Officer's report reflected in the recommendations which the Chief Housing Officer outlined in turn.

The Housing Services Manager advised the Members that detailed consultation with all stakeholders including Members and tenants had taken place since 2015 and every effort has been made to keep tenants informed of progress. Tenants affected by proposed remodelling schemes were informed of potential options in August 2018 and little negative feedback had been received to date. The Officer also informed Members that tenant feedback regarding the decommissioning of schemes was supported providing alternative support options were offered.

Members raised concerns that the tenant remodelling consultation had only been put out in the last few weeks so little time had been given to get full feedback from Tenants. Members felt that Tenants needed to be presented with the same level of detail in terms of proposals and costs that the Task Group had been.

Members also raised concerns that the proposed remodelling and decommissioned schemes would result in accommodation, previously designated as older persons, being made available on the general housing waiting list. The Housing Services Manager clarified that although in some schemes current 'sheltered' accommodation services would be removed, the housing team would be looking at using different cost efficient systems to support older persons in the accommodation and it was not intended that these schemes would be re-designated for general needs accommodation at this time. A communal lounges would be converted in one schemes to provide an additional general needs flat. Members discussed the impact of remodelling on accommodation size, number of units and desirability resulting in increased service charges. The Housing Services Manager responded that in terms of increased services charges, that increases are expected to be covered by Housing Benefit if tenants were eligible to receive the benefit however there was no guarantee that there would not be a small impact of increased charges for some tenants and that since the service charge review the Housing team have endeavoured to give tenants an indication of what the increased costs to them would be if and when services are provided. Officers would also support tenants in relation to income maximisation and if they wished to move to schemes with lower charges

A member raised questions regarding the procurement process and the use of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). The Chief Housing Officer clarified that some of the proposals would come under the DPS however energy efficiency improvements would not. All services procured to undertake these works would be subject to standards and quality tests under government legislation.

In conclusion, the Chief Housing Officer summarised the business plan, for carrying out these proposals and the related costs, for Members.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the following recommendations be referred to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration and thereafter Cabinet approval. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet, that:-

(i) **BRITANNIA COURT**

Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work, and decommission the external flat blocks from the scheme if feasible following further investigatory work and consultation with existing tenants – estimated cost as above plus the provision of dispersed alarms (8 units @ approx. £40 each) for the blocks of flats, totalling £900,320

(ii) **TY MELIN**

Proceed with the WHQS partially compliant remodelling to provide 23 units at the aforementioned cost - £1,720,000.

(iii) **YNYSWEN**

Proceed with the partially WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 13 units at the aforementioned cost - £820,000.

(iv) **CASTLE COURT**

Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site – estimated new build cost £4,513,375

(v) **ST MARYS COURT**

Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site – estimated new build cost £4,513,375

(vi) **WAUNFAWR HOUSE**

Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site– estimated new build cost £4,513,375.

(vii) To agree to the reclassification of the Hafod Y Bryn Sheltered Housing Scheme from Sheltered Housing to designated general needs and older persons housing, subject to consultation and technical feasibility and to convert communal facilities into a ground floor 3 bed flat.

(viii) To agree to the removal of the extra care classification from Tredegar Court thereby returning it to a sheltered housing scheme.

(ix) To agree to the full decommissioning of the 4 partly decommissioned schemes – estimated cost of providing dispersed alarm to 133 units £5,320 if required by the tenants.

(x) To agree to the reclassification of older persons housing stock to general needs use at the specific locations mentioned within this report.

(xi) To agree to the delegated powers for Officers to re-classify older persons' accommodation to general needs using the principles identified in this report, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places.

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

No requests were received for an item to be included on the next available agenda.

The meeting closed at 18.57pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2018.

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CHAIR