



## CABINET - 2ND OCTOBER 2013

**SUBJECT: ABERBARGOED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to the principal terms of the disposal of the former Aberbargoed Primary School to United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA).

### 2. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 2.1 The contents of this report link to the following key strategic objectives:-

“To encourage the development and maintenance of high quality, well designed and efficient, sustainable homes and environments which can meet all needs.” (*Community Strategy: Living Environment – Objective 1*)

“To meet housing requirements through the provision of a range of good quality, affordable housing options.” (*Aim 5: Affordable Housing – Local Housing Strategy*)

“To provide good quality, well-managed homes in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.” (*Aim 6: Housing Management - Local Housing Strategy*)

“To promote sustainable and mixed communities that are located in safe and attractive environments.” (*Aim 11: Community Regeneration - Local Housing Strategy*)

There is a need to increase the number of affordable homes for purchase or rent (*Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales – April 2010*)

### 3. THE REPORT

- 3.1 Aberbargoed Primary School shown on the attached plan has been declared surplus to requirements and available for sale.
- 3.2 An operational housing use for the land has been identified at this site for the provision of an affordable housing scheme. The 2012 update of the Local Housing Market Assessment identifies a shortfall of 530 affordable homes throughout the County Borough per annum. It also identifies a high number of households who are living in unsuitable housing because their accommodation no longer meets their requirements arising from disabilities, medical conditions or old age. There are currently 399 unique applications for accommodation within the Aberbargoed area.
- 3.3 As there is housing need in this area of the County Borough, Policy CW 11 (Affordable Housing) of the Council's Local Development Plan will apply to this site, as it is capable of

being developed for 5 or more dwellings. Subject to viability of the development, any developer will be under an obligation to provide affordable housing as part of this development. However, if the land is sold to UWHA, 100% affordable housing will be achieved;

- 3.4 UWHA is the Council's preferred development partner in this location, and it will prepare a scheme in consultation with relevant officers to identify a mix of properties that meets with the needs identified within the Council's Local Housing Market Assessment and Housing register. Other benefits that UWHA can bring are the emphasis on sustainable construction including Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3+ and Targeted Recruitment and Training (TR&T).
- 3.5 The proposal on this development is to deliver a range of property types including a number of bungalows for older persons and a draft layout is shown at Appendix 2, although it may change, since it is subject to planning approval (which will consider the need for open space, playing facilities and address any concerns regarding the highway network).
- 3.6 The development is intended to be tenure neutral, which will have no defined tenure for the units and will allow applicants to choose to rent or purchase an equity share in the properties as Low Cost Home Ownership to create a more sustainable community.
- 3.7 The Protocol for Disposal of Property states, at paragraph 8.1(iv), that in those cases where it is possible to market a property but the Head of Property is of the opinion that this course of action may not be in the best financial or service interests of the Authority, Cabinet approval will be obtained before direct negotiations are opened with a single party, and the views of ward members will be taken into consideration.
- 3.8 In the event that UWHA is unable to proceed at market value (because its total cost of development, including land acquisition and build cost, is limited by Welsh Government regulations), a further report will be brought forward setting out options for members' consideration.

#### **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance and no potential for unlawful discrimination and / or low level or minor negative impact have been identified, therefore a full EqIA has not been carried out.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Should the recommendation be approved, the transaction will realise a capital receipt. Whilst the property remains vacant and in the Authority's ownership, there are ongoing cost implications in relation to NNDR, security, and other holding costs.

#### **6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no personnel issues arising out of this report.

#### **7. CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 Councillor Higgs raised concerns regarding the existing highway network and the need for playing facilities, which will be considered at the planning stage.
- 7.2 Councillor Higgs also suggested that the former school could be used for community purposes, but potential alternative uses were considered prior to declaring the property

surplus and none were identified

- 7.3 Councillor K. Reynolds has declined to comment on the Report as he lives very close to the land.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 That Aberbargoed Primary School be sold to United Welsh Housing Association for the development of affordable housing, on terms to be negotiated.
- 8.2 Approval of the detailed terms of the disposal be delegated to the Head of Performance and Property Services, for the purposes identified in the report.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The asset is surplus to the operational requirements of Caerphilly CBC.
- 9.2 Paragraph 8.1(iv) of the Disposal Procedure in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution states that Cabinet approval will be obtained before direct negotiations are opened with a single party where it is possible to market a property but where the Head of Performance and Property Services is of the opinion that this course of action may not be in the best financial or service interests of the Authority.
- 9.3 To deliver an affordable housing scheme that meets with the needs identified within the Council's Local Housing Market Assessment and Housing register.

## **10. STATUTORY POWER**

- 10.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000, and The Local Government Act 1972: General Disposal Consent (Wales) 2003. This is a Cabinet Function

Author: Colin Jones - Head of Performance and Property Services  
Consultees: Nigel Barnett - Acting Chief Executive  
Nicole Scammell - Acting Director of Corporate Services  
Tim Stephens - Development Control Manager  
John Rogers - Principal Solicitor  
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer  
Councillor D. Hardacre - Cabinet Member for Performance and Asset Management  
Councillor G Jones - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing  
Cllr A Higgs - Ward Member  
Greater Bargoed CF Partnership  
Chair: Mrs Jill Court  
Secretary: Mr Nick Rawlings  
c/o David Boucher Communities First Admin/GIS Officer (4376)  
bouchd1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Location plan  
Appendix 2 Draft site layout