



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH QUALITY HOUSING STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM)
ON THURSDAY 16TH MAY 2013 AT 5:00PM**

PRESENT:

R. Davies - Chair
A. Lewis - Vice Chair

TASK GROUP MEMBERS

Ms. L. Ackerman, C. Davies, R.T. Davies, B. Hoskins, K. James, G. Jones, Mrs S. Jones, Ms. A. Lewis, Mrs A. McConnell, J. Moore, C.P. Mann, Mrs D. Price and K.V. Reynolds.

Officers: P. Davy (Head of Programmes), S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), J. Roberts-Waite (Strategic Coordination Manager), G. North (Public Sector Housing Manager), M. Betts (Housing Strategy Manager), V. Parsons (Supported Housing Manager), E. Bayliss (Tenant Participation Officer), G. Taylor (Tenant Participation Officer) and E. Sullivan (Committee Services Officer).

WITH

Mrs G. Jones (Central Consultancy and Training)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from N. Barnett (Acting Chief Executive).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 4th April 2013 be approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4. REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

A report was requested with regard to Ian Williams Contractor detailing standards of work, slippage times, costs associated with putting right works undertaken by this contractor and any new contracts awarded.

A report was requested detailing the current number of voids, numbers on waiting lists, details of outstanding repairs and targets met.

5. LOCAL TENANT AND PARTICIPATION STRATEGY - PRESENTATION BY CENTRAL CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING

Mrs Gayna Jones of Central Consultancy and Training gave a presentation that reviewed current participation arrangements and outlined proposals for a new Tenant Participation Strategy. Mrs Jones expressed her thanks to Tenants and Officers for their support during the consultation process and for the warm welcome she received.

The national background to tenant participation was given and Members noted that its purpose was to improve the efficiency and quality of housing services. A successful participation strategy placed tenants at the heart of housing management and provided a comprehensive framework for involving tenants in all areas of the housing service.

Members were advised that social landlords were required to review their tenant participation strategy every three years, however Caerphilly's review had been delayed by the ballot process and was now four years old and needed to be renewed. Mrs Jones confirmed that the commitment that Caerphilly had made to its future service delivery was unique and would be breaking new ground for Tenants, Officers and the Council.

The methodology used to review existing arrangements was confirmed and included observations at work streams and task groups as well as consultation with tenant and residents groups, focus groups of involved tenants, the Tenant Information Exchange and the Council's Senior Management Team. This consultation had clearly evidenced the commitment of both Tenants and Officers not only to achieve WHQS but also to raise standards across the board.

It was noted that present services were process rather than customer service based and this focus would need to change, shifting to a service that measured its success by the outcome for the tenant. Computer systems functionality was based on the generation of compliance data and current tenant participation was not mainstreamed. The importance of mainstreaming tenant participation was emphasised making it the priority for all front line staff, irrespective of their service area.

The current issues and the associated strategic solutions were confirmed for the three years of the strategy and Members noted the extent of the cultural change that would be required going forward. The role of key Officers in facilitating tenant participation was emphasised and the need to extend engagement and improve information flow to the wider body of tenants was noted as a priority.

The overarching strategic aim of the strategy was defined and the key objectives detailed. Members noted the proposed structure and Mrs Jones confirmed that if adopted this would enable increased tenant/resident engagement involving both formal and informal methods and this would be further developed as the strategy itself developed.

The Chair thanked Mrs Jones for her presentation and Members questions were welcomed.

Members identified some communication issues experienced and expressed concern that opportunities to engage tenants were being missed. Officers acknowledged the concerns and advised that they were looking at longer-term arrangements including the recruitment of a Communications and Tenant Engagement Officer.

Clarification was sought with regard to mainstreaming tenant participation and Mrs Jones confirmed that this required a shift in the culture of service delivery. The commitment from Senior Managers was evident but this would need to permeate down to all front line staff. This type of culture change would take time, training and commitment from all front line staff.

Members acknowledged the work done by Mrs Jones and thanked her for all her efforts.

A Member noted the reference to Tenant Inspectors and asked that consideration be given to allowing Local Ward Members to be trained as Inspectors as engaging with tenants was an important part of their role.

Members recognised and welcomed the opportunity to enhance participation.

6. LOCAL TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

The report sought to update Members on the progress made in revising the Local Tenant Participation Strategy and proposed key elements for a new strategy.

The four key objectives and the purpose of the strategy were defined and Members attention was directed to Appendix 1 and the full review report. Officers confirmed that £150,000 had been identified in the Offer Document to support improved participation arrangements however the staff training and development required for the mainstreaming of participation had additional resource implications.

It was noted that Tenant Participation Officers continued to work on tenant engagement gathering information and improving communication to ensure the inclusion of tenants across the board.

The recommendations detailed in section 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 of the report were confirmed and Members were asked to consider and make recommendations to the Cabinet Sub Committee for approval.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and full discussion ensued.

Members fully discussed the reports recommendations and the vital importance of communication and tenant participation going forward and felt that this issue warranted a further recommendation to the Cabinet Sub Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that an additional recommendation be made to the Cabinet Sub Committee in that Communication and Tenant Participation be placed as a standing item on the agenda of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group having considered its content fully endorsed the report and recommended that the Cabinet Sub-Committee approve the recommendations as detailed in the Officer's report and along with the additional recommendation proposed by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2013.

The meeting closed at 6:00pm

CHAIRMAN