



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 3RD JULY 2013

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN - UPDATE

REPORT BY: ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide a communications update.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 There is a continuing need to raise the profile of the Caerphilly Homes and the Council's responsibility in achieving the WHQS by 2019/20 to key stakeholders: - Staff, Tenants and Councillors. It is also important to ensure the wider public audience understand the beneficial impact of delivering improved housing across the County Borough.

2.2 Communications has a key role to play in delivering this transformational programme and there must be a robust plan in place to be able to deliver a clear vision, mission and key messages to all stakeholders.

2.3 All employees need to be included and made aware of what the organisational aims are to enable them to project a positive image and deliver the highest standard of customer care.

2.4 There is a priority to improve the website as key information is not easy to find and the information is not as customer focused as it needs to be. The pages need to be rebranded with Caerphilly Homes and there is a need to create online forms to support online service provision.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

3.1 Local Housing Strategy. Providing good quality, well managed homes in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meets their needs and aspirations" Local Housing Strategy 2008-13, Aim 6

3.2 WHQS Communication Strategy 2012-15 with the following objectives:

3.3 "To effectively communicate the council's commitment to delivering the highest standards within the WHQS programme and housing as set out in the offer document Your Home Your Choice. Ensure residents are aware of the opportunities, changes and improving services by Caerphilly Homes".

3.4 "To provide two way communications to increase tenant engagement and participation and encourage feedback enabling them to shape and scrutinise the services and support provided".

- 3.5. “To provide two way communications to engage with stakeholders to develop strong relationships and partnerships in order to provide awareness of ongoing activity in the area and provide local procurement and job opportunities”.
- 3.6 “Encourage and improve two way communication to create a well informed and engaged workforce who trust and understands the organisational aims, their roles and the needs of the tenants enabling them to deliver a more customer focused service”.
- 3.7 “Proactively promote media relations – showcasing successes and evidence of transformation of council homes, live and communities”.
- 3.8 Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS).
- 3.9 The National Housing Strategy 2010 ‘Improving Lives and Communities’ emphasises the need to “Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them” and that Services should reflect the needs of those who use them, not the needs of the organisations that deliver them”.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The communication action plan sets out the objectives, aims, actions and responsibilities required to implement the communication strategy to ensure the general public and professionals, partner organisations and the key stakeholders are informed and engaged in the process of the programme.
- 4.2 The introduction of the new WHQS Delivery Team and the changes in organisational structure and staff roles has created some challenges with internal communication channels across the Housing Division.
- 4.3 A new housing organisational structure has been drawn up to inform housing staff and to assist in identifying communication flow. It is advocated that an internal communications working group be set up to bring about a consistency and timely flow of information. An employee newsletter has been drafted and will shortly be circulated.
- 4.4 The first priority would be to set a baseline and create a communication survey for housing staff to enable management and the communications group to make an informed decision on the way forward and guidelines set for team meetings to include set agenda items with Communications and staff panel issues.
- 4.5 To facilitate an engagement for the WHQS programme awareness sessions should be held for all staff to enable them to realise the vision and organisational aims. Communications group would be instrumental in organising sessions across the Division.
- 4.6 Work has commenced on ensuring plain English of information and correspondence to tenants.
- 4.7 A working group to restructure web pages has been set up. Focus groups of stakeholders will be set up to review the changes.
- 4.8 There have been several press releases issued and subsequent coverage in the press, although there needs to be a more proactive effort in identifying potential news stories.
- 4.9 Uniform consultation on branding for frontline staff is a priority to ensure a positive image for Caerphilly Homes.
- 4.10 Branding of stationary and vehicles need to be agreed.
- 4.11 A newsletter has been issued to tenants.

5. KEY OUTCOMES

- Implementation of communications action plan, which is simple, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound.
- To alert and engage key stakeholders to the timetable and targets involved in achieving the WHQS Programme and their role in contributing to the process.
- Employees have been engaged and are equipped to positively promote the WHQS and housing service improvements.
- To create a sense of common purpose between tenants and professional staff in this activity.

5.1 The prime audience in the early stages are the professional officers who through an extensive engagement process feel comfortable and understand the improvement programme, the commitment to review improvements and the wider aspiration to improve lives and communities

Key Stakeholders:

- Tenants
- Members
- Employees
- Trade Unions

Stakeholders:

- AM/MPs
- Professional Associates
- Contractors

Initial Activities:

- Website restructure.
- Communication group set up to include a senior manager, communications officer and officers from TP, TLO, EMO teams
- Communication survey
- Uniform consultation
- Branding guide with branded stationery

5.2 The communications action plan has identified the following key areas of work: -

- Engagement
 - Employee Engagement activities
 - Tenant Engagement Activities
 - Working closely with Tenant Participation Officers
 - Contractor engagement
 - Wider government representatives engagement
- Brand and Information
 - Development of a brand and guidelines for use
 - WHQS Internet and Intranet content
 - Including FAQ, key contacts, programme information
 - Appropriate information brochures for use with tenants
 - Marketing materials for procurement process with suppliers

- Media Activity
 - Flagship profile
 - Key Milestones
 - Key messages
 - Your home, our promise.
 - We're listening to you.
 - Your home means jobs, security and success
 - Your home is creating real jobs
 - £200 million will be spent on improving your homes
 - Quality and modernisation.
 - Investing in homes and communities
 - Community impact
 - Tenant experience
 - Positive progress
 - Dealing with adverse media issues
 - Development of bespoke social media stream

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Councils EqIA process does not need to be applied.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Effective communications will require to be properly resourced. The Project Board will need to approve expenditure to implement the action plan outlined. The recent newsletter issued to tenants cost £7,500.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This report has no direct personnel implications.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Comments received from consultees have been incorporated within the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The report is for information.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To outline the ongoing work to inform and engage stakeholders in the WHQS Programme and housing service

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub-Committee function.

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Consultees: Cllr. Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Nigel Barnett, Acting Chief Executive
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Dan Perkins, Head of Legal Services.
Mandy Betts, Tenant and Community Involvement Officer
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Graham North, Public Sector Housing Manager
Alan Edmunds, WHQS Project Delivery Implementation Manager
Jason Owen, Supervisor WHQS Team
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