



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH QUALITY HOUSING STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD JULY 2013 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

R.T. Davies - Chair
A. Lewis - Vice Chair

TASK GROUP MEMBERS

Ms. L. Ackerman, C. Davies, B. Hoskins, K. James, G. Jones, Mrs S. Jones,
Mrs. A. McConnell and J. Moore.

Officers: P. Davy (Head of Programmes), S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), G. North (Public Sector Housing Manager), V. Parsons (Supported Housing Manager), M. Betts (Housing Strategy Manager) J. Carter (Senior Housing Officer, Customer Services), S. Greedy (WHQS Implementation Project Manager), C. Roden (WHQS Implementation Project Manager), A. Edmunds (WHQS Implementation Project Manager) and E. Sullivan (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from K. Reynolds, C. Mann, Mrs D. Price and Mr. 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 16th May 2013, be approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

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

No requests were received for future agenda items.

5. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW - PROGRESS REPORT

The report updated Members on the progress made on the Sheltered Housing Review since the presentation of the independent Consultants' report on the 4th April 2013.

Officers confirmed that a series of seven consultation meetings had been organised throughout the County borough and invitations sent out to 2086 tenants living in designated older persons housing. Transport was also offered to the different venues in order to encourage attendance.

In total 39 tenants attended the meetings and although the turnout was disappointing it did provide tenants with the opportunity to express their views. Those that did attend were very supportive of the proposals to introduce new services and were pleased by the proposal to upgrade the community alarm service. The introduction of a floating support service and establishment of an Activities Coordinator was also welcomed. Unfortunately many of the comments made during the meetings were concerning individual repair issues or the WHQS works programme queries and were referred to the appropriate Officers to respond.

The second round of sheltered housing consultation commenced with 30 meetings held to date. All tenants in attendance were in favour of the cluster group reconfiguration and were satisfied with the assessment and banding proposals.

With regard to the changes to utility charges, a formal notice of a variation to the terms and conditions of tenancy would be served to all tenants affected by the change during July 2013. Full support would be provided including a dedicated telephone enquiry line and help and advice given regarding tenants eligibility for discounts.

Confirmation had been received on the funding of 4 Floating Support Officers and business cases and job evaluation procedures had been completed and posts would be advertised shortly. These Officers would carry out the support assessments for all sheltered housing tenants and other older persons across the borough.

Members were assured that the consultation process had been as comprehensive and inclusive as possible and tenants had been given ample opportunity to feedback on any issues of concern. Officer's felt that in general tenants were very comfortable with the proposed changes.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Member's questions were welcomed.

Members welcome the extent of the consultation process and noted that the final decision on the review would be published in a newsletter to tenants, and were pleased that tenants would continue to be part of the implementation process going forward.

A Member expressed concern that the small turnout could not be considered as fully representational of the views of older people. Officers were confident that every effort had been made to be as inclusive as possible during the consultation process and those in attendance had responded well and asked relevant questions. Members agreed that Officers had done everything possible to facilitate the consultation process and the low turnout did not in any way reflect the quality of the consultation undertaken.

The different banding suggestions were fully discussed and clarification was given with regard to the Bronze, Silver and Gold services. Members noted that these services did not replace or change any packages of care received from Social Services. Clarification was also given in relation to the minimum requirement under the Bronze service, which would be a condition of accepting sheltered housing accommodation.

The Task Group having fully considered its content noted the report.

6. RECHARGE PROCEDURE OF COUNCIL TENANTS

The report provided information on the Rechargeable Repairs Procedure for Council tenants and how it contributed to the efficient and effective maintenance of the Council's housing stock.

The responsibilities of the tenant were clarified and the circumstances within which a recharge would be applied were explained. Officer's confirmed that the vast majority of tenants would never experience a re-charge but all tenant's were given general advice on their repair and maintenance responsibilities at the sign up stage of the tenancy. Out of hours Services carried a standardised message to tenants on recharging and advice leaflets were available to all tenants on request.

Members were advised that over the last 4 years the average percentage of repairs that had been recharged back to tenants was 2.86%, less than 1000 per annum.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and Members comments were welcomed.

Clarification was sought in relation to missed appointments criteria, reference was made to older people that may have mobility or hearing difficulties that would prevent them from answering the door promptly and concerns were expressed that there seemed to be a lack of consistency in applying the policy.

Officers confirmed that tenants would only be charged when appointments that had been specifically made were missed, and advised that staff would wait around for 5 minutes or so to give the tenant ample time to respond. In terms of consistency of application Members concerns would be taken back and further investigations undertaken into the different charging systems in order to bring some uniformity to the process.

Repairs criteria was discussed and Members were advised on what constituted normal wear and tear, blocked sinks and light bulbs would be considered the tenants responsibility however there were discretionary elements included and these would be reviewed.

Members recognised the need for procedures but felt it equally important that discretionary elements and consistency of approach be applied. The importance of regular communication with tenants on recharging was emphasised in order to raise awareness of charges and ensure that costs were fully understood.

The Task Group having fully considered its content noted the report.

7. COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS - HOUSING DIVISION

The report provided information in relation to complaints and representations received by the Housing Customer Services Section from the 1st April 2011 to the 31st March 2013.

The total number of contacts from the public was confirmed as 713 from April 2011 to March 2012 and 520 from April 2012 to March 2013. These figures included requests for information about a service as well as actual complaints. An analysis of the data was presented for information and a small increase had been experienced in certain areas, including 'planned maintenance'. Praise or thank you contacts were noted in section 4.4 of the report and an analysis of actions requested by service users was outlined. Members noted a decrease in the contact from Councillors and were advised that this was due to a change in recording procedures.

In relation to Ombudsman complaints Members were advised of the cases referred and the lessons learned, which included making amendments to the recharge leaflets and the out of hours recorded telephone message.

The actual numbers of complaints received were detailed for the different service areas and a fall in complaints was evidenced. In relation to response target times it was noted that 90% of complaints and representations were responded to within the agreed timescales in 2011/2012 compared with 94% in 2010/2011.

The Chair thanked the Officer for her report and Members questions were welcomed.

Members welcomed the changes to the recharge leaflets and recorded telephone message as a positive step forward and sought clarification as to the timeframe between call and resolution. Officers advised that this would depend on the nature of the call, no specific time frame had been allocated to the process but would look to work toward securing a successful outcome as quickly as possible, but it would be within a 3/4 week turn around.

Quality of workmanship was discussed and Members were advised that complaints analysis allowed the identification of any patterns or clusters of complaints, which would then be picked up and the appropriate action taken.

The Housing Task Group having fully considered its content noted the report.

8. REFURBISHMENT OF KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS AT TRINANT, PENYRHEOL AND CHURCH HILL PARK

The report provided information on the performance of Ian Williams in respect of the kitchen and bathroom contract in Trinant and Penyrheol/Churchill Park areas.

Ian Williams were appointed via a selective tender process to undertake the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms within a framework agreement. The works, timescales, slippage and workmanship considerations were clarified and the number of properties covered by this contract was confirmed as 174 in the Trinant area and 137 in the South area.

In terms of workmanship, it was noted that the contractor addressed minor items either straight away or by the following day. However, a few items had taken a little longer to resolve which had inconvenienced the tenants involved although no formal complaints had been received relating to these works. It was noted that satisfaction surveys were sent out to tenants at the end of each contact, however as the Ian Williams contract was not yet complete forms had not been issued. Previous surveys had achieved a high level of satisfaction with a positive rating of around 84% for this contractor.

The Chair thanked the Officer for his report and Members questions were welcomed.

The satisfaction rating of the contractor was discussed at length and Members were concerned that an 84% rating was considered to be acceptable. Incidents of poor quality workmanship were detailed and Members were assured that this would be picked up during the satisfaction survey process and would be taken very seriously by the company.

Further information was sought with regard to the percentage of works completed on time. Officers confirmed that all works had been signed off within the required time frame.

Members also expressed concern with regard to customer service issues and shared a lack of confidence regarding the way the company was conducting its satisfaction surveys. The role of the Tenant Liaison Officer in reporting back issues and complaints was discussed and clarification was sought of whether there had been any feedback from them. Officers confirmed that complaints were often dealt with as part of the on going renovation process and works were usually rectified as and when the issues occurred. Further information was requested on how these complaints were recorded and Officers confirmed that not all instances would be formally recorded as complaints but would be addressed as part of the ongoing works. Members felt that issues with quality and customer services needed to be

approached in a consistent manner in order to eliminate the need for re-calls and reduce costs. Officers confirmed that this was being looked at as part of the change process going forward.

Members requested that a representative from Ian Williams be invited to attend a future meeting in order to respond to the concerns raised. Officers agreed to contact the company and make arrangements for them to attend the next appropriate Task Group meeting.

The Task Group having fully considered its content noted the report.

9. WHQS PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT (13/14 PROGRAMME)

The report outlined the 2013/2014 WHQS Programme and was accompanied by a verbal presentation on the data being monitored within Keystone.

The monitoring processes, including the Volume Metrics Dash Board and the different tracking elements were demonstrated and Members noted that the system would provide managers with 'real-time' information as works progressed.

An update was provided on the Eastern Valley, Lower Rhymney Valley and Upper Rhymney Valley areas by each of the Project Managers. The demographic of each area was confirmed and the progress made with regard to current and proposed internal works; non-traditional refurbishment schemes and garages were detailed. The start and completion dates for each contract were confirmed and the number of properties involved at each stage clarified.

The Chaired thanked the Project Managers from each of the areas for their reports and Members questions were welcomed.

Members sought clarification as to how the programme was prioritised, and expressed concern with regard to the distribution of works in certain areas. Works had to be spilt in some way in order for the programme to be appropriately managed, particularly when considering larger estates, but assurances were given that there was no specific reason for one street to have been prioritised over another, they just simply couldn't be done altogether.

Members congratulated Officers on the tracking systems and thanked the Project Managers for their hard work.

The Task Group having fully considered its content noted the report.

10. CONTRACT AWARD SUPPLY PARTNER

The report informed Members of the award of the Supply Partner Contract.

Officers confirmed that following an extensive procurement process Robert Price BM Limited were awarded the 10-year supply partner contract, having submitted the most economically advantageous tender.

Officers thanked the tenants involved in the procurement process for their hard work and commitment and confirmed that the contract would start from the 1st September 2013 and marked a considerable step forward for the WHQS programme.

The Chair thanked the Officer for this report and full discussed ensued.

Members acknowledged the work of Tenants, Officers and the Procurement Department throughout the processes.

The Task Group having fully considered it content noted the report.

11. COMMUNICATION ACTION PLAN - UPDATE

The report provided an update on the communications strategy.

Officers confirmed the objectives, aims, actions and responsibilities of the communication strategy going forward and confirmed that the appointment process for the Communications and Tenant Engagement Officer had been completed and an Officer would be in post by the next Task Group Meeting.

The Task Group having fully considered its content noted the update.

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

The meeting closed at 19.12 p.m.

CHAIRMAN