



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 23RD JANUARY 2014

**SUBJECT: YOUR HOME YOUR CHOICE ADDENDUM REVIEW OF COMMITMENTS**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To meet the request of the Task Group for an update on the promises made to tenants at the time of the ballot in 2012.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report sets out progress against the promises that were made in the addendum document at the time of the ballot in February 2012. Changing circumstances are highlighted which may affect the ability to achieve full compliance with WHQS by 2019/20.

### 3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to achieve specified standards.
- 3.2 The Single Integrated Plan 2013 – 2017 has a priority to “Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough.”
- 3.3 The Council’s Local Housing Strategy “People, Property, and Places” has the following aim:  
“To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.”

### 4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In October 2011 the Council adopted the 2019/20 business plan as the Council’s WHQS plan in the event of a no vote in the stock transfer ballot. In order that tenants could be fully informed of the Council’s retention plan an addendum document was issued. The important points presented to tenants in the addendum were that the Council would be able to achieve WHQS by 2019/20 and would plan to spend the same total amount as the RSL (Castell Mynydd) on investment in Council homes and estates over the same thirty year period. Furthermore, all the service improvements proposed for Castell Mynydd would be matched by the Council and all future service changes would be subject to consultations with established representative tenant groups and the wider tenant population when appropriate.
- 4.2 The addendum became part of the formal consultation with tenants together with the original Offer Document. Tenants were given a real choice and were assured that whatever the outcome of the ballot homes would be improved to the WHQS and maintained to that standard for the next thirty years. In the event tenants voted to remain with the Council.

- 4.3 The addendum incorporated a table setting out a list of commitments which the Council would meet. The table has been extracted and in the appendix to the report an update has been provided on action taken since the ballot to meet the commitments.
- 4.4 Overall good progress has been made since the ballot result in February 2012. The investment plan and implementation strategy have been agreed in consultation with tenants, a Charter for Trust has been implemented setting out standards, the internal works improvements have progressed in a number of communities, the sheltered housing service review has been completed, a new tenant participation strategy has been drafted and approved and the Community Improvement Fund has been launched. However, changing circumstances are now presenting some challenges to the ability to meet the 2019/20 target for WHQS.
- 4.5 The major concerns are:
- impact of welfare reform on the business plan
  - HRA savings proposals due to austerity measures which could delay the environmental programme beyond 2019/20
  - affordability and value for money considerations arising from tender submissions for WHQS improvement works
  - HRAS buy out
  - organisation capability to manage the scale of the programme within tight deadlines.
- 4.6 The above matters have been or will be the subject of separate reports. The best efforts will continue to be made to mitigate the impact of changes in circumstances on the delivery of the programme. But there are some major risks that may affect the ability to achieve full compliance with WHQS by 2019/20
- 4.7 Notwithstanding the challenges ahead over 800 properties will have benefitted from internal improvements by the end of this financial year and positive feedback has been received from tenants about the work carried out in their homes.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The capital programme for 2013/14 is £15.5m. The programme is subject to significant variances and at period 6 an underspend of £2.6m was being projected largely due to the high volume of previously achieved work being identified when properties were surveyed.
- 6.2 The business plan will be updated in January 2014 to support the MRA application for 2014/15. The HRA savings proposals advocate that the £10.5m environmental programme is deferred to 2020/21. This will be determined as part of the budget for 2014/15.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The successful delivery of the WHQS programme is entirely dependant on having the necessary staff resources properly aligned with the strategy for implementation. Over the last 12 months considerable changes have been made to the organisation and to the processes and procedures. These will take time to bed down and there will be continuing adjustments in light of operational experience.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 There have been no substantive comments on the report but some minor changes have been incorporated.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Task Group are invited to consider progress against the addendum commitments and indicate any particular area of concern.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To enable the Task Group to be satisfied that all the commitments made to tenants at the time of the ballot are being taken forward.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts. This is a Cabinet Sub Committee Function.

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Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Your Home Your Choice Addendum – Review of Commitments (at December 2013)