



**CABINET SUB COMMITTEE
(WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY 4TH APRIL 2013 AT 7:30PM**

PRESENT:

Councillor G. Jones - Chairman

Councillors:

K. James and K.V. Reynolds.

Together with:

N. Barnett (Acting Chief Executive), P. Davy (Head of Programme Housing Stock Transfer), and E. Sullivan (Committee Services Officer)

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2. MINUTES - 21ST FEBRUARY 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Cabinet Sub Committee held on the 21st February 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE - GAS AND ELECTRICITY UTILITY CHARGES

Members welcomed the opportunity to bring equity and transparency to gas and utility charging within the sheltered housing service and fully discussed how best to introduce the changes. The importance of continued consultation with tenants was emphasised and the notice required for any change in tenancy agreements was considered.

The Sub-committee having considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (WHQS), that had met earlier that day:-

RESOLVED that

The changes to utility charges as set below be implemented from September 2013.

1. In schemes where one gas and electric meter supplies the whole scheme (Type 1 – paragraph 4.2.2 and Type 4 – 4.2.5 refers), that the actual usage for each scheme be charged retrospectively based on the previous year's charge.
2. In schemes where tenants have their own gas and electricity meters installed (Type 2 – paragraph 4.2.3) and currently pay a standard weekly charge, they should pay their own bills directly to the gas and electricity utilities providers. The council would offer support to those tenants who may have difficulty in administering this process.
3. In schemes where tenants have their own gas and electricity meters installed (Type 3 – paragraph 4.2.4 and Type 4 - 4.2.5 refers) and currently pay their own bills directly to the gas and electricity utilities providers, this arrangement should continue.
4. In schemes where tenants have their own electricity meters installed but where there is a single gas meter (Type 5 - 4.2.6 refers), they should pay their own bills directly to the electricity utility provider and be charged retrospectively for gas based on the previous year's charge.
5. All tenants should continue to contribute towards the cost of electricity and gas consumption in communal areas within their service charge. The amount payable may fluctuate each year depending on consumption and price increases. As promised in the sheltered housing review, the Housing Department is working towards the provision of a complete breakdown of costs included in the service charge and when this is available, it will include details of the contribution payable towards gas and electricity costs for communal areas each year.
6. Subject to confirmation from Legal Services, tenants be served with a variation to their tenancy immediately prior to any changes being introduced.
7. A full investigation be undertaken in relation to the higher than average utilities costs in one sheltered housing scheme to identify the reasons for the costs being significantly higher than in schemes of a similar size and similar number of units.

4. SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICES - WATER RATES

Members welcomed the opportunity to bring equity and transparency to water rates charging within the sheltered housing service and fully discussed how best to introduce the changes. The importance of continued consultation with tenants was emphasised and the notice required for any change in tenancy agreements was considered.

The Sub-committee having considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (WHQS), that had met earlier that day:-

RESOLVED that

The changes to the water rates as set out below be implemented from September 2013.

1. Tenants on the water schedule who currently pay the actual amount would continue with the current arrangement.
2. Subject to consultation those tenants on the schedule who currently pay the standard £6.61 weekly charge for water rates to be advised that their water payments will be based on the rateable value of their properties and they will be required to pay the actual amount identified on the water schedule.
3. For tenants in single metered schemes, the actual usage for each scheme be charged retrospectively based on the previous years charge with an inflationary increase being applied to bring them up to current cost levels.
4. A full Equalities Impact Assessment would be undertaken to ensure the recommendations meet the requirements of the Council's Equalities Policy prior to implementation.
5. Subject to advice from Legal Services, tenants affected by the proposed changes to be served with a variation to their tenancy immediately prior to any changes being introduced.
6. That an options appraisal be undertaken with Welsh Water to determine the practicalities of installing individual meters in place of single meters where this is feasible. Subject to the outcome of this exercise, it is recommended that funding be identified for the installation of individual meters on a rolling programme.
7. Tenants to be advised that if they wish to apply directly to Welsh Water for their own water meter, where this request is not feasible, the company would estimate the usage for the unit and place the person on an assessed measured charge. They should also be advised that the Rent Section would provide assistance to any tenants who wish to make an application for their own meters.

5. SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICES - STOCK APPRAISAL

Members welcomed the feasibility study on all bedsit accommodation and considered the conversion costs and loss of rental income associated with the improvement programme. Members emphasised the need to scrutinise the work programme going forward in order to mitigate any impact on the Business Plan and the WHQS works programme.

The Sub-committee having considered the recommendations from the meeting of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (WHQS), that had met earlier that day:-

RESOLVED that

Option 3 be approved subject to full consultation with those sheltered housing tenants affected by the proposed change;

Option 3

Subject to an in-depth analysis of income loss, identified funding for the improvements and practical considerations, the improvements identified be planned for future work programmes and prioritised as follows:

- (i) Castle Court, Pontywaun
- (ii) Ynyswen, Springfield
- (iii) St Mary's Court, Risca (subject to further information on the feasibility and funding of the vertical lifts for this 2-storey building).

Based on the outcome of the stock appraisals undertaken, the improvements identified for Ty Melin Sheltered Housing would be the subject of further consideration in relation to future viability, high re-design costs, low demand and/or location.

Subject to negotiation with Corporate Services, detailed stock appraisals be undertaken for all remaining sheltered housing schemes. Funding for future remodelling works on a rolling programme would need to be identified to ensure continuous improvements and schemes fit for purpose that meet the needs of existing and future tenants.

Prior to any works being undertaken, tenants be fully consulted about the proposals and implementation plan for their schemes.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the Cabinet Sub Committee Meeting held on the 16th May 2013.

The meeting closed at 7:45pm

CHAIRMAN