



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3RD JUNE 2014

**SUBJECT: END OF YEAR UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVE 6 (2013/14) -
IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR
HOUSING TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS WHO MAY
BECOME HOMELESS**

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee with an end of year update on the progress made in 2013/14 against Improvement Objective 6 - Improve the availability of private and public sector housing to reduce the number of residents who may become homeless.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report outlines progress made in 2013/14 against the actions contained within Improvement Objective 6.
- 2.2 Good progress was made throughout the year against the actions contained within Improvement Objective 6. We have successfully completed all but one of those actions identified to realise this Objective.
- 2.3 To reflect the council's on-going commitment to preventing homelessness, Improvement Objective 6 will be carried forward to 2014/15.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales (Welsh Government, 2010) which sets out the national context on meeting housing need, homelessness, and housing-related support services.
- 3.2 Caerphilly Delivers (Single Integrated Plan, 2013): P2: "Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the county borough."
- 3.3 People, Property, Places: A Housing Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough (2008-2013) provides the context for the provision of housing and related services in the county borough.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Local Government Measure 2009 requires all local authorities in Wales to establish and publish a set of priorities called Improvement Objectives. The Wales Audit Office use

Improvement Objectives and other data/information to evaluate the council's likelihood of improvement.

- 4.2 In assessing the progress of an Improvement Objective, there is no criterion as to what constitutes success. Progress is normally summarised as being Successful, Partially Successful or Unsuccessful. This is largely a judgement call from those delivering the service and the council members scrutinising that judgement.
- 4.3 In terms of overall performance made throughout the year against IO6 the following applies:
- Risks – Nine risks were identified and assessed in accordance with corporate guidance. Eight risks have been closed and one risk (04) remains open. This risk relates to the introduction of a social letting agency and has been assessed as a medium risk.
 - Tasks/Actions – Twenty actions were identified. The performance of each action has been reviewed. Nineteen actions have been successfully completed and one action has been partially completed (04 – set up an in-house social letting agency). A report on the progress of this action is due to be presented to P&R Scrutiny Committee in the next few months.
 - Performance Indicators – Eight performance indicators were identified. Of these eight indicators, 6 performed above expectation, one below and, on the remaining one, the data is still not available. The indicator that performed below expectation was 05 – the average number of days taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant. Although the target for this year was not met, we did actually record a 2.27% increase in our performance when compared to 2012/13.
- 4.4 In terms of the actions completed, we have successfully:
- reconfigured the housing advice section to enhance the focus on homelessness prevention, including the recruitment of one (FTE) homelessness prevention officer. The reconfiguration will allow us to improve the level of service we provide to people who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.
 - amended the procurement practices in respect of minor works of adaptation. This will further reduce waiting times for clients.
 - implemented a revised procedure for minor works of adaptation for housing association tenants. The revised procedure will increase the level of available funding for private sector clients.
 - developed a website to provide additional advice and support to private landlords. We also increased the level of engagement with private landlords via the landlord forum.
 - recruited an officer to improve access to emergency accommodation for young homeless people.
 - provided grant assistance to vulnerable households to enable them to live safely and independently.
 - we took action, where appropriate, to ensure that minimum standards of accommodation in the private sector were enforced.
 - implemented an exit strategy for the renewal area in Llanbradach.
 - assisted people in threat of losing their home due to mortgage arrears.
 - provided a range of advice and assistance to people affected by welfare reform.

- facilitated access into the private rented sector through continued support of the bond scheme.
- agreed new assessment criteria for the allocation of discretionary housing payments.
- secured the additional provision of emergency homelessness accommodation by providing a new short-term, family hostel in Caerphilly and the refurbishment of Ty Croeso.
- worked closely with our housing association partners to develop new, affordable homes. Funding for the development of 140 homes was drawn down from Welsh Government.
- paid out 5 loans totalling £231,894, under the Houses into Homes scheme, to provide 13 additional units of accommodation. We also worked closely with United Welsh Housing Association to offer support, advice and other help to owners of empty properties, in order to return them into use.

4.5 Full details of the risks, actions and performance indicators are provided in Appendix 1.

4.6 Homelessness will continue to remain a priority for the council for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, Improvement Objective 6 will be carried forward to 2014/15 with a revised set of risks, actions and performance indicators.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 An equalities impact assessment (EIA) is not needed because the issues covered in this report are for information purposes only, therefore, the council's full EIA process does not need to be applied.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial Implications directly associated with this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications directly associated with this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of the Consultees have been included in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 It is recommended that Scrutiny, along with officers, reach agreement on the success or otherwise of the Improvement Objective.

9.2 It is further recommended that should the Improvement Objective not be judged successful Scrutiny consider means of monitoring future progress towards achieving success.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To ensure the council continues to improve the quality of services it provides to residents.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Measure 2009

Author: Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Consultees: Cllr Gerald Jones, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr David Hardacre, Cabinet Member for Performance & Asset Management
Stuart Rosser, Chief Executive (Interim)
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151
Gail Williams, Head of Legal Services (Interim)
Colin Jones, Head of Performance & Property Services
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Kenyon Williams, Private Sector Housing Manager
Graham North, Public Sector Housing Manager
Mark Jennings, Housing Strategy Officer

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Improvement Object 6 Ffynnon Dashboard Report 2013/14