

Pecyn Dogfennau Cyhoeddus



The following reports are Information Items for the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

- 1. Review of Local Lettings Policy - Rowan Place**
- 2. Treasury Management and Capital Financing Prudential Indicators Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 Monitoring Report (1st April 2017 to 30th September 2017)**
- 3. Write-Off of Debts - 01/04/17 - 30/09/17**



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY – ROWAN PLACE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the outcome of the 12 month review of the Local Lettings Policy introduced in 2016 for the allocation of two bed flats at Rowan Place, Rhymney.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Housing Act 1996 enables the introduction of Local Lettings Policies. The procedure required to be followed by Caerphilly Homes in relation to the adoption or review of a Local Lettings Policy is defined in the Common Allocation Policy which was entered into with Housing Association partners in December 2016.
- 2.2 A comprehensive regeneration programme has recently been completed in Rowan Place and, in order to create a sustainable cohesive community and improve its reputation a decision was taken in 2016 to implement a Local Lettings Policy for the void flats on the estate. The report provides details of that Local Lettings Policy together with an assessment of its impact to date.
- 2.3 The report confirms that, in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy, a Local Lettings Policy Panel has considered the proposal submitted by Caerphilly Homes and approved the extension of a revised Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy for a further 12 months.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 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'.
- 3.2 The Authority's Local Housing Strategy 'People, Property and Places' has the following aims:- 'To provide good quality, well managed homes in communities where people want to live and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations'.
- 3.3 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 sets out the following wellbeing goals which link with the aims of this report:-
- A resilient Wales
 - A prosperous Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A globally responsible Wales.

4. THE REPORT

Local Lettings Policies

- 4.1 The Housing Act 1996 provides the statutory basis for local lettings policies (LLPs). It allows the Council to allocate accommodation in a defined location to people of a particular description provided that, overall, it is able to demonstrate compliance with its statutory obligations in relation to allocations.
- 4.2 Prior to December 2016 decisions on the introduction of LLPs for Caerphilly Homes stock were taken by the Council however, in December 2016 the Council signed up to a Common Housing Register and Common Allocation Policy, developed in partnership with housing associations operating within the County Borough. This partnership ensures that all applicants applying for social housing in the County Borough are provided with a single route of access and assessed using a single policy.
- 4.3 The Common Allocation Policy requires that the Council and all partner landlords agree the locations where a LLP may be appropriate and why. A clear evidence base must be provided to a panel of partners to support the adoption or extension of a LLP.
- 4.4 The panel consider whether a local letting policy is appropriate based on the following test:
- (i) That there is a clear definition of the objective to be achieved by that particular LLP;
 - (ii) That there is a clear evidence base to back up the need for a local lettings policy;
 - (iii) That any potential equality impact has been considered;
 - (iv) How long the LLP is intended to operate; and
 - (v) When the policy should be reviewed.

Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy

- 4.5 Rowan Place is located within the Twyn Carno ward and is part of the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) known as Twyn Carno 1. It currently comprises 64 Council properties which include 7 x 3 bedroom houses, 40 x 2 bedroom ground and first floor flats and 17 x 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows. 8 flats have recently been demolished as part of the improvement programme. There are also 6 private houses and bungalows and four leasehold flats.
- 4.6 Following the identification of severe damp and external defects to the fabric of the properties in Rowan Place, in 2013 the Council approved a comprehensive refurbishment programme of the Council owned properties which required the occupied flats to be vacated. Subsequently, the Council also approved the demolition of two blocks of flats in recognition of the low demand in the area, to improve the environmental aspect of the estate and to achieve financial savings. The programme, which has recently been completed, was enhanced by funding from the Welsh Government as part of its Vibrant and Viable Places programme which facilitated enhancements to the environment within Rowan Place.
- 4.7 In previous years, the area of Rowan Place in which two bedroom flats are located were plagued by high levels of antisocial behaviour, crime and substance abuse. It was regarded locally as a 'no go zone' and was largely home to transient single people and families with particular challenges, including drug and alcohol issues, criminal and antisocial behaviour issues. The stigma attached to the area led to potential tenants refusing the offer of accommodation in Rowan Place despite the accommodation lending itself to small families, couples and single people who may have been affected by welfare reform. As a consequence, and for the benefit of existing tenants, on 3rd February 2016 Cabinet approved the adoption of a LLP for the Rowan Place flats.
- 4.8 The LLP was developed with a focus on supporting the creation and maintenance of a sustainable mixed community within Rowan Place, with a view to contributing to a reduction in levels of antisocial behaviour, crime and substance misuse, thereby increasing demand from

applicants for this accommodation and the wider community. By preventing applicants with a history of such behaviour from automatically being offered housing in the area, it was anticipated that this would support the settlement of existing tenants and residents as well as encouraging prospective tenants to Rowan Place and neighbouring communities, thereby facilitating the development of sustainable communities in which households will want to remain.

- 4.9 The LLP applied to all 2 bedroom flats in Rowan Place. The Caerphilly Homes Allocation Scheme in place at the time allowed for the allocation of families with 1 or 2 children and childless couples. Due to the size of the second bedroom, under the LLP, only families with 1 child, or families with access were considered for the flats and to reduce excessive child density in the area, childless couples took precedence over families with one child.
- 4.10 A strict set of criteria was devised and any applicant that met any of the criteria would not be offered a tenancy for the flats for a period of at least 2 years. In addition, prospective tenants were required to satisfy an income/expenditure assessment of their affordability of the tenancy and where two or more applicants had equal priority, preference would be given to applicants who were in employment or training. The policy was subject to a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment.
- 4.11 At the time the LLP was approved there were 22 void flats within Rowan Place. It was unclear, until the Policy was implemented, whether the void levels would increase as a result of the LLP, however it was agreed that a review would be conducted 12 months following implementation to determine its effectiveness. It was anticipated that the Policy would be withdrawn once the flats were fully allocated.

Review of the Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy

- 4.12 The LLP for Rowan Place became operational in August 2016 (appendix 1). At the time of this first review 12 of the flats in Rowan Place were void, compared with 10 in 2013 and 22 in 2016. The Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office have been operating the LLP for approximately 12 months and makes clear to existing and prospective tenants, the circumstances in which a new tenancy within Rowan Place will be granted. All applicants for Rowan Place are required to complete a supplementary application form in order that their eligibility under the LLP can be considered. In total 12 allocations have been made to the flats since August 2016 with a number of applicants refused as they have been unable to satisfy the LLP criteria. Applicant households who are not offered an allocation of a flat in Rowan Place have been considered for an allocation elsewhere in the County Borough in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy.
- 4.13 Unfortunately, there have been unavoidable delays in completing the extensive environmental and demolition works in Rowan Place and allocation issues associated with the implementation of the new Common Housing Register and Common Allocation Policy, and the associated new IT system with both staff and applicants having to adapt to these changes which, now largely resolved, are considered to have had some impact on allocations across the County Borough. In addition, the Common Allocation Policy restricts the number of offers of accommodation made to an applicant, which are based on preferences they have expressed. In order to minimize the likelihood of their applications being suspended from the Register for 12 months as a result of unreasonable refusals, applicants are increasingly refining their preferences, and there has been a reduction in applicants selecting Rhymney North, the Housing area in which Rowan Place is located, as a preference.
- 4.14 In addition there are wider issues of low demand being experienced by all partner landlords in the north of the Upper Rhymney Valley. These factors are all considered to have had an impact on demand in Rowan Place resulting in fewer applicants being assessed using the LLP than originally anticipated and a number of the flats remain vacant. Following a review of available information and discussions with Police and local Councillors officers concluded that an extension of the LLP is needed to ensure that a stable, cohesive community develops, for the benefit of all local residents and partner landlords operating in the Rhymney area.

- 4.15 Prior to submitting a presentation to the Panel requesting an extension of the LLP the eligibility criteria were reviewed by officers, taking into account their experiences of implementing the original LLP and minor changes were made for the purposes of clarity. In addition, in order to potentially widen the eligibility of applicant households without prejudicing the objective of creating a sustainable community, the LLP was amended to provide all applicant households who may be refused an allocation in the flats due to the criteria imposed, the opportunity to attend a meeting with officers, to consider their individual circumstances, discuss their potential suitability and opportunities for additional support provision, prior to a final decision being taken. The preference given to households working or in training where applicants had equal priority was also removed as it is no longer required, due to the prioritisation system implemented under the Common Allocation Policy. The revised LLP is attached as appendix 2.
- 4.16 Following completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment (appendix 3) an application to extend the Rowan Place LLP was presented to the Local Lettings Policy Panel on 27th September 2017, who determined that the revised policy was appropriate and satisfied the relevant criteria. It therefore approved the extension of the revised LLP which will now be reviewed in a further 12 months.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act:

Long Term – provides cohesive and sustainable communities in affordable housing for tenants, providing a fair and transparent service for tenancy sustainment.

Prevention – supports tenants and assists in the prevention of eviction and homelessness.

Integration – improved standards of housing and stable community environments.

Collaboration – joined up working arrangements within the organisation and with partners to support the provision of cohesive and sustainable communities.

Involvement – Engages tenants and support agencies in relation to sustainment of tenancies.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on the revised LLP which has determined that the proposal will impact positively on the following groups: Older people, disabled persons and those with limited mobility, families, prospective tenants who have not previously been involved in antisocial behaviour and those who may be receiving support to tackle drug / alcohol dependency.
- 6.2 The proposal will impact negatively on the following groups: Those who are known to have been involved in antisocial behaviour in the last two years; prospective tenants who have convictions that could be relevant to housing management e.g. drug dealing, criminal damage, arson; persons who have previously been tenants of the Council and who have excessive outstanding rent arrears or recharges that would deem the rent unaffordable.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications for this information report.
- 7.2 Prior to the refurbishment programme there were a number of long term void flats in Rowan Place. The continuing presence of void flats in Rowan Place following their refurbishment and implementation of the LLP results in an ongoing loss of rental income, however, this must be balanced against the ambition to create a sustainable, cohesive community which will, in the longer term, reduce void and management costs associated with Rowan Place.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 All responses from consultations have been incorporated in the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 This report is for information only.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 N/A.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Housing Act 1996.

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Consultees: Christina Harray, Corporate Director, Communities
Councillor Lisa Phipps, Cabinet Member for Homes and Places
Councillor Carl Cuss, County Councillor (Twyn Carno)
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Debbie Bishop, Area Housing Manager
Julie Reynolds, Area Housing Manager
Rachel Thornett, Tenancy Enforcement Manager
Suzanne Cousins, Principal Housing Officer
Mark Jennings, Housing Strategy Officer
Todd Rawson, Solicitor

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Approved Local Lettings Policy 2016

Appendix 2 Revised and approved Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy 2017

Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment. September 2017

ROWAN PLACE – LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY (Agreed 2016)

1. The sensitive lettings policy covers all 2 bedroom flats in Rowan Place, Rhymney. Caerphilly Homes Allocations Scheme allows for the allocation of families with 1 or 2 children and childless couples. Due to the size of the second bedroom only families with 1 child, or families with access will be considered and to reduce excessive child density in the area, childless couples may take precedence over families with one child.
2. Any applicant that meets one of the following criteria will be bypassed and not offered a tenancy of the 2 bed flats in Rowan Place for a period of at least two years if the applicant:
 - Is known to have been involved in anti-social behaviour in the last 2 years.
 - Is unable to demonstrate an ability to sustain a tenancy for a minimum period of the last 12 months. References may/will be taken up which will include from private landlords/hostels.
 - Has an unspent criminal conviction
 - Has convictions for drug dealing
 - Has been convicted of, or has been held responsible for criminal damage or arson within the last 12 months
 - Has a history of chaotic behaviour
 - Has drug or alcohol related support needs unless on a rehabilitation programme – continuing on the programme will be an additional condition of tenancy
 - Has high support needs that may affect their ability to sustain a tenancy, and is not engaging with support. If there are high support needs but support is in place, fully engaging with the support will be an additional condition of tenancy.
 - Applicants or members of the household who were former tenants of the council and who have excessive outstanding rent arrears and/or recharges that makes the repayments together with current rent and other charges unaffordable.
3. All prospective tenants will be required to satisfy an income/expenditure assessment of their affordability of the tenancy.
4. Where two or more applicants have equal priority, preference will be given to applicants who are working or in training.
5. The Sensitive Lettings Policy will be reviewed after 12 months.

Local Lettings Policy – Rowan Place (Approved September 2017)

The Local Lettings Policy covers all 2 bedroom flats in Rowan Place, Rhymney. In accordance with the Caerphilly Homes Property Lettings Criteria priority will be given to the allocation of these two bed flats to adults or couples with one child or expecting a child, with lesser priority given to couples with no children, or access. Allocations will not be offered to the lower priority groups of single adults or single adults with access.

Prior to any decision being made any applicant household that meets one of the following criteria will be invited to attend a meeting with officers, to consider their individual circumstances and discuss their potential suitability for an allocation of a two bed flat in Rowan Place:

- Is known to have been involved in anti-social behaviour in the last 2 years.
- Is unable to demonstrate an ability to sustain a tenancy for a minimum period of the last 12 months. References may/will be taken up which will include from private landlords/hostels.
- Has an unspent criminal conviction for an offence considered relevant for housing management purposes e.g. drug dealing, criminal damage, harassment, threatening behaviour or arson, or has been convicted of such an offence in the last 2 years.
- Has drug or alcohol related support needs unless on a rehabilitation programme – continuing on the programme will be an additional condition of tenancy
- Has high support needs that may affect their ability to sustain a tenancy, and is not engaging with support. If there are high support needs but support is in place, fully engaging with the support will be an additional condition of tenancy. Assistance in ensuring the provision of such support may be considered in the pre allocation meeting.
- Applicants or members of the household who were former tenants of the council and who have excessive outstanding rent arrears and/or recharges that makes the repayments together with current rent and other charges unaffordable.

All prospective tenants may be required to satisfy an income/expenditure assessment of their affordability of the tenancy.

Applicant households who are not offered an allocation of a flat in Rowan Place will be considered for an allocation elsewhere in the County Borough in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy.

The Local Lettings Policy will be reviewed after 12 months.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

APPENDIX 3

THE COUNCIL'S EQUALITIES STATEMENT

This Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

NAME OF NEW OR REVISED PROPOSAL*	Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy September 2017
DIRECTORATE	Communities
SERVICE AREA	Caerphilly Homes
CONTACT OFFICER	Deb Bishop, Upper Rhymney Area Housing Manager
DATE FOR NEXT REVIEW OR REVISION	September 2018

*Throughout this Equalities Impact Assessment Form, 'proposal' is used to refer to what is being assessed, and therefore includes policies, strategies, functions, procedures, practices, initiatives, projects and savings proposals.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that Equalities issues have been consciously considered throughout the decision making processes of the work undertaken by every service area in the Council and work done at a corporate level.

The form should be used if you have identified a need for a full EIA following the screening process covered in the Equalities Implications in Committee Reports Guidance document (available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal on the intranet).

The EIA should highlight any areas of risk and maximise the benefits of proposals in terms of Equalities. It therefore helps to ensure that the Council has considered everyone who might be affected by the proposal.

It also helps the Council to meet its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and the Welsh Language Measure 2011. There is also a requirement under Human Rights legislation for Local Authorities to consider Human Rights in developing proposals.

The Council's work across Equalities, Welsh Language and Human Rights is covered in more detail through the Strategic Equalities Objectives and Action Plan 2012.

This approach strengthens work to promote Equalities by helping to identify and address any potential discriminatory effects before introducing something new or changing working practices, and reduces the risk of potential legal challenges.

When carrying out an EIA you should consider both the positive and negative consequences of your proposals. If a project is designed for a specific group e.g. disabled people, you also need to think about what potential effects it could have on other areas e.g. young people with a disability, BME people with a disability.

There are a number of supporting guidance documents available on the Equalities and Welsh Language Portal (the Committee report guidance mentioned above, the Consultation and Monitoring guidance) and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language team can offer support as the EIA is being developed - the contact email is equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk.

PURPOSE OF THE PROPOSAL

**1 What is the proposal intended to achieve?
(Please give a brief description of the purpose of the new or updated proposal by way of introduction.)**

Rowan Place is an area in the north of Rhymney comprising 64 Council properties, which include 7 x 3 bedroom houses, 40 x 2 bedroom ground and first floor flats and 17 x 1 and 2 bedroom bungalows. 8 flats have recently been demolished as part of the improvement programme. There are also 6 privately owned houses and 4 leasehold flats.

In previous years, Rowan Place has been plagued by high levels of anti-social behaviour, crime and drug and alcohol abuse, which has had a detrimental effect on the long standing tenants and the community as a whole. As a consequence of this and for the benefit of existing and future tenants, the Council proposes to continue to operate a local lettings policy until the flats are fully let, in an effort to ensure the development of a sustainable community.

In October 2013 Cabinet approved a targeted regeneration effort aimed at raising the profile of the area through improvements to housing conditions and subsequently invested around £5 million, refurbishing all the properties in Rowan Place to a standard over and above the WHQS. A programme of selected demolition was also agreed and 2 blocks of 4 flats have now been demolished.

The regeneration scheme also included external and environmental works, including giving each of the flats a designated garden, to make them more desirable for families with young children, the alleyways have been closed and the bin storage areas have been removed to reduce the likelihood of anti-social behaviour.

Current tenants of Rowan Place have been transferred into improved flats within Rowan Place on a permanent basis to facilitate the works programme.

The Area Housing Team has been operating Local Lettings in the area for approximately 12 months and makes clear to existing and prospective tenants, the circumstances in which a new tenancy within Rowan Place will be granted.

The local lettings policy was developed for the flats only with a focus on supporting the creation and maintenance of a sustainable mixed community within Rowan Place, contributing to a reduction in levels of anti-social behaviour, crime and drug and alcohol abuse, thereby increasing demand from applicants for this accommodation in Rowan Place and the wider community. By reducing applicants with a history of such behaviour from being offered housing in the area, it is anticipated that this will support the settlement of existing tenants and residents as well as encouraging prospective tenants to Rowan Place.

The policy should not be viewed in isolation to the multi agency approach that has been adopted and is underway in Rowan Place, which seeks to support tenants with complex needs through improvements in their housing conditions, and facilitating

greater access to support services to help sustain tenancies and reduce anti-social behaviour and crime within the area.

Unfortunately, due in part to delays in completing environmental and demolition works and issues associated with the introduction of the new Common Housing Register and the new IT system, an increase in demand has not yet been evidenced and a number of properties remain vacant. It is, therefore, considered that it is appropriate that the Local Lettings Policy be extended for a further 12 months, with some minor amendments which have since been identified, to ensure that a stable, cohesive community develops, for the benefit of all local residents and partner landlords operating in the Rhymney area.

It is anticipated that with the continuation of the Local Lettings Policy for a further 12 months and improvements to our marketing strategy this will increase interest in these properties to ensure continued stability.

**2 Who are the service users affected by the proposal?
(Who will be affected by the delivery of this proposal? e.g. staff members, the public generally, or specific sections of the public i.e. youth groups, carers, road users, people using country parks, people on benefits etc.)**

Prospective tenants seeking 2 bedroom accommodation within flats at Rowan Place, Rhymney will be directly affected by the proposal. The proposal will have a positive impact on the community who in the past have experienced anti-social behavior and crime perpetrated by previous tenants.

IMPACT ON THE PUBLIC AND STAFF

**3 Does the proposal ensure that everyone has an equal access to all the services available or proposed, or benefits equally from the proposed changes, or does not lose out in greater or more severe ways due to the proposals?
(What has been done to examine whether or not these groups have equal access to the service, or whether they need to receive the service in a different way from other people?)**

The Common Allocation Policy already allows for the assessment of persons with a history of the following in order to determine their suitability for an offer of tenancy:

- Persons who have been charged with or convicted of a serious sexual offence or violent crime
- Persons released from custody having served a sentence for a serious sexual offence or crime of violence (including arson and / or serious criminal damage)
- Persons being discharged from other institutional care whose history includes offences of a violent and / or sexual nature
- Persons with a history of drug, alcohol or other substance misuse who have been convicted of related offences

The proposal to continue the local lettings policy suggests that any applicant household who meets one of the following criteria will be invited to attend a meeting to consider their individual circumstances and discuss their potential suitability for an allocation to Rowan Place prior to a decision being made, and incorporates the opportunity for people who may be considered vulnerable to receive the necessary support and be allocated a home:

- Is known to have been involved in anti-social behaviour in the last 2 years
- Is unable to demonstrate an ability to sustain a tenancy for a minimum period of the last 12 months. References may/will be taken up which will include from private landlords/hostels.
- Has a criminal conviction for an offence considered relevant for housing management purposes e.g. drug dealing, criminal damage, arson, harassment or threatening behaviour, or has been convicted of such an offence in the previous 2 years.
- Has drug or alcohol related support needs unless on a rehabilitation programme – continuing on the programme will be an additional condition of tenancy.
- Has high support needs that may affect their ability to sustain a tenancy and is not engaging with support – if there are high support needs but support is in place, fully engaging with the support will be an additional condition of tenancy. Assistance in the provision of such support may be considered in the pre allocation meeting.
- Applicants or members of the household who were former tenants of the council and who have excessive outstanding rent arrears and/or recharges that makes the repayments together with current rent and other charges unaffordable.

Prospective tenants may be required to satisfy an income/expenditure assessment of their affordability of the tenancy.

The proposal ensures that everyone has the opportunity to obtain a tenancy providing they do not meet the criteria above. Those that do not meet the criteria will be given the opportunity to discuss their situation and have it considered.

Applicant households that are not offered an allocation of a flat in Rowan Place will be considered for an allocation elsewhere in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy.

The proposal will impact positively on the following groups:
Older people, disabled persons and those with limited mobility, families, prospective tenants who have not previously been involved in anti-social behaviour and those who may be receiving support to tackle drug / alcohol dependency.

The proposal will impact negatively on the following groups:
Those who are known to have been involved in anti-social behaviour in the last two years. Prospective tenants who have convictions which could be relevant to housing management e.g. of drug dealing, criminal damage, arson. Persons who have previously been tenants of the Council and who have excessive outstanding rent arrears or recharges that would deem the rent unaffordable.

Actions required

None

4	<p>What are the consequences of the above for specific groups? (Has the service delivery been examined to assess if there is any indirect affect on any groups? Could the consequences of the policy or savings proposal differ dependent upon people’s disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language, religion/belief?)</p> <p>The consequences of the policy will not differ according to a disability, race, gender, sexuality, age, language or religion / belief.</p> <p>If a prospective tenant meets one or more of the criteria included within the local lettings policy they will be invited and supported to attend a meeting to determine their suitability. If they are refused a tenancy within Rowan Place, they will be assisted by the Area Housing Office to identify and obtain alternative, appropriate accommodation elsewhere within the county borough via the Common Allocations Policy.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Staff involved in the allocation of properties within Rowan Place will receive training to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently and that its implementation does not differ depending any protected characteristic.</p> <p>We will monitor this process to ensure that it does not discriminate against any person on the basis of a protected characteristic.</p>

INFORMATION COLLECTION

5	<p>Is full information and analysis of users of the service available? (Is this service effectively engaging with all its potential users or is there higher or lower participation of uptake by one or more groups? If so, what has been done to address any difference in take up of the service?)</p> <p>The service is available to prospective tenants seeking two bedroom Council flat accommodation in Rowan Place, Rhymney. The service is actively engaging with all potential tenants through the marketing of available flats, promotional events, application process and the area management process.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

CONSULTATION

6	<p>What consultation has taken place? (What steps have been taken to ensure that people from various groups have been consulted during the development of this proposal? Have the Council's Equalities staff been consulted? Have you referred to the Equalities Consultation and Monitoring Guidance?)</p> <p>The refurbishment and redevelopment of Rowan Place is a much wider scheme than housing management, involving a targeted regeneration effort by multiple services. As a result, consultation and engagement with tenants and residents has been ongoing and has been undertaken via face to face contact between the designated Tenant Liaison Officers, questionnaires and events held at the show flat. The initial proposal to implement the local lettings policy in Rowan Place was subject to consultation with tenants and Members through the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG), Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee (P&R) and Cabinet.</p> <p>The EIA produced when the local lettings policy was first introduced was fully considered by Equalities staff.</p> <p>Tenants, residents and local Members have indicated on numerous occasions that they do not wish to see a return to the situation that prevailed prior to the Council's investment programme in the area where anti-social behaviour and crime was a common occurrence.</p> <p>Letters of support for the continuation of the Local Letting Policy have been received from local councillors and the Police and a local community action group has recently been established in Rhymney, which has voiced concerns about drug and alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour they are experiencing locally, urging the Council to take positive action to address their concerns.</p> <p>The proposal has borne these requests in mind and as a result, has been designed specifically to create a cohesive and thriving community in the heart of Rhymney.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>

MONITORING AND REVIEW

7	<p>How will the proposal be monitored? (What monitoring process has been set up to assess the extent that the service is being used by all sections of the community, or that the savings proposals are achieving the intended outcomes with no adverse impact? Are comments or complaints systems set up to record issues by Equalities category to be able analyse responses from particular groups?)</p> <p>The allocations process will be monitored by Caerphilly Homes to ensure compliance with the Common Allocation Policy and Equalities policy. The effects of the proposal will be reviewed and reported to CHTG and P&R after a further 12 month implementation period.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>12 month review / report to be drafted</p>
8	<p>How will the above be evaluated? (What methods will be used to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are being met?)</p> <p>The allocation of flats within Rowan Place will be monitored by Caerphilly Homes as part of their standard allocation policy monitoring process and reported to CHTG and P&R, as appropriate.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>None</p>
9	<p>Have any support / guidance / training requirements been identified? (Has the EIA or consultation process shown a need for awareness raising amongst staff, or identified the need for Equality training of some sort?)</p> <p>Staff who are directly involved in implementing the policy will receive appropriate training to ensure that the service provided to prospective tenants with a protective characteristic does not differ.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>Training to be identified and delivered during 2017/18. Equalities training needs identified will be discussed with the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team</p>

10	<p>Where you have identified mitigating factors in previous answers that lessen the impact on any particular group in the community, or have identified any elsewhere, please summarise them here.</p> <p>Prior to any decision being made any applicant household that meets one of the following criteria will be invited to attend a meeting with officers, to consider their individual circumstances and discuss their potential suitability for an allocation in Rowan Place. This meeting will be used to identify any support needs and make referrals to other agencies.</p>
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11	<p>What wider use will you make of this Equality Impact Assessment? (What use will you make of this document i.e. as a consultation response, appendix to approval reports, publicity etc. in addition to the mandatory action shown below?)</p> <p>The Equality Impact Assessment will be submitted to P&R as an appendix to the report.</p>
	<p><u>Actions required</u></p> <p>EIA, when completed, to be returned to equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk for publishing on the Council's website.</p>

Completed By:	Debbie Bishop
Date:	22 September 2017
Position:	Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Manager
Name of Head of Service:	Shaun Couzens



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND CAPITAL FINANCING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS QUARTER 1 AND QUARTER 2 MONITORING REPORT (1ST APRIL 2017 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2017)

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present Members with details of Treasury Management activities and Capital Financing, together with the related Prudential Indicators for the period 1st April 2017 to 30th September 2017.
- 1.2 To review the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 as set out in the Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Financing Prudential Indicators Report.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services 2009, which was adopted by the Council on 12th October 2010, sets out a framework of operating procedures, which is encompassed in the Treasury Management Practices (TMPs). TMP6 (Reporting Requirements and Management Information Arrangements) provides for the submission of monitoring reports to the appropriate Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 2.2 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003, The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (Wales) Regulations 2003 [The Capital Regulations], and the CIPFA's "The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities" [the Code], the Authority is obliged to approve and publish a number of indicators relevant to Capital Finance and Treasury Management.
- 2.3 The Authority's Annual Investment Strategy and Capital Financing Prudential Indicators for 2017/18 were approved by Council on 22nd February 2017.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18 as agreed by Council on 22nd February 2017.
- 3.2 Prudent financial management contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:-
 - A prosperous Wales.
 - A resilient Wales.
 - A healthier Wales.
 - A more equal Wales.

- A Wales of cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language.
- A globally responsible Wales.

4. THE REPORT

4.1 Treasury Management

4.1.1 Borrowing Activity

The current policy of internal borrowing is not sustainable in the long-term, but where prudent the policy of internal borrowing will be utilised. As at the 31st March 2017 the internal borrowing position was £22m.

The Annual Treasury Management Strategy was approved by Council in February 2017 and indicated that there would be a need to borrow £17.6m in 2017/18 to part fund the General Fund capital programme. As at the 30th September 2017 no new long-term loans were raised.

During the period covered by this report, PWLB loans to the value of £3.78m were repaid on maturity. Such loans had an average interest rate of 6.51%. £30k of the WRU Loan was also repaid. A temporary loan of £6m was repaid during the reported period. The loan was raised during March 2017 for the purpose of cashflow requirements as investments were tied in. Total debt outstanding as at 30th September 2017 was £280.1m and comprised of £239.9m PWLB loans; £30m market loans (LOBOs); £10m Bank loan and £180k WRU loan.

With respect to LOBO loans the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Authority has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. A LOBO loan with a total value of £10m had a rate option reviewed during quarter one and the lender chose not to exercise the option. LOBO loans will be further reviewed again later in 2017/18 by lenders, with a total value of £20m that is exposed to variable interest rate movement. This represents 7.1% of the Authority's debt portfolio, which is within the Council's determination of 30%. The Authority acknowledges there is an element of refinancing risk even though in the current interest rate environment lenders are unlikely to exercise their options.

4.1.2 Rescheduling

The Annual Strategy allows for the utilisation of debt rescheduling providing for both in year and future year savings and additional revenue resources. No rescheduling opportunities presented themselves during the period covered by this report.

4.1.3 Investments

During the reported period the Authority was holding £27.9m of long-term investments where the maturity date is greater than 364 days. These investments are in accordance with the approved Investment Strategy. The long-term investments comprise of covered bonds with UK banks/ building societies and have an AAA rating; UK Gilts and supranational bonds. The covered bonds are secured investments and collateralised against the counterparty's pool of assets. The value of short-term deposits as at 30th September 2017 was £87.90m.

The total investments held as at 30th September 2017 was £115.80m, and had an average rate of return equating to 0.74% which is a significant improvement over placing deposits with the Debt Management Office (DMO) who continue to pay a rate of 0.10%. The rate of return is above the target rate, as detailed in the Annual Treasury Management Strategy report to Council, of 0.25%. The improvement in returns reflect the Authority's change in investment strategy and lending to high creditworthy counterparties that consist of banks; building societies; supranational institutions; the DMO, local authorities; money market fund and corporates using a range of investment products such as corporate bonds; covered bonds;

cash deposits and treasury bills. Whilst the returns have improved, the riskiness of the investment portfolio has been quantified with a weighted average credit score equivalent to an AA rating. The UK government is currently rated by two credit rating agencies at AA. Therefore the Authority's portfolio is on par with the UK Government rating.

The portfolio as at 30th September 2017 comprised of the following types of investments:

Counterparty	Investment Product	Sector	£m
Banks	Certificate of Deposits	Financial	7.00
Banks & building societies	Fixed-term cash deposits	Financial	22.62
Banks & building societies	Covered bonds	Financial	25.91
Corporates	Bonds	Automobile/ Transport Infrastructure/ Utilities/ Financial/ Consumer/ Natural Resources	43.67
Money Market Fund	Cash Pooled Fund	Financial	2.78
Supranational Institutions	Bonds	Sovereign/ Financial	3.82
UK Government	Gilts	UK Government	10.00
Total Investments as at 30th September 2017			115.80

4.1.4 Economic Outlook

The UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) index rose with the data for September showing CPI at 3.0% driven by the fall in the value of Sterling following the June 2016 EU referendum. This has continued to feed through into higher import prices for food, fuel, and recreational activity.

The unemployment rate fell to 4.3%, its lowest since May 1975, but the squeeze on consumers intensified as average earnings grew at 2.5%, below the rate of inflation. Economic activity expanded at a much slower pace as evidenced by Q1 and Q2 GDP growth of 0.2% and 0.3% respectively.

The UK economy faces a challenging outlook as the minority government continues to negotiate the country's exit from the European Union. Both consumer and business confidence remain subdued. Household consumption growth, the driver of UK GDP growth, has softened following a contraction in real wages. Savings rates are at an all-time low and real earnings growth (i.e. after inflation) struggles in the face of higher inflation.

The Bank of England made no change to monetary policy at its meetings in the first half of the financial year. Some Monetary Policy Committee Members have changed their view on the state of the economy and implied a rise in Bank Rate in "the coming months". The Council's treasury advisor Arlingclose is not convinced the UK's economic outlook justifies such a move at this stage, but the Bank's interpretation of the data seems to have shifted.

This decision is still very data dependant and Arlingclose is, for now, maintaining its central case for Bank Rate at 0.25% whilst introducing near-term upside risks to the forecast as shown below. Arlingclose's central case is for gilt yields to remain broadly stable in the across the medium term, but there may be near term volatility due to shifts in interest rate expectations.

	Dec-17	Mar-18	Jun-18	Sep-18	Dec-18	Mar-19	Jun-19	Sep-19	Dec-19	Mar-20	Jun-20	Sep-20	Dec-20
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Arlingclose Central Case	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25

4.1.5 Counterparty Update

There were a few credit rating changes during the reported period. The significant change was the downgrade by Moody's to the UK sovereign rating in September from Aa1 to Aa2 which resulted in subsequent downgrades to sub-sovereign entities including local authorities. UK bank credit default swaps continued their downward trend, reaching three-year lows by the end of June. Bank share prices have not moved in any particular pattern.

4.1.6 Regulatory Update

On the 3rd January 2018 the second Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID II) comes into force and embeds into UK law. The Directive will treat local Authorities as "retail" clients. At present local authorities are regarded as "professional" clients. The Directive allows local authorities to opt up if they meet criteria that have been set by the Financial Conduct Authority. The purpose of the Directive is to put in place restrictions on what financial products and services a local authority can have access to. The "retail client" status will restrict access to money market funds; pool funds; bonds; shares and financial advice. Furthermore, there will be additional administration and higher fees. The Authority meets the conditions to opt up to "professional" status and has contacted the relevant financial institutions and intermediaries in order to make them aware of the Authority's MiFID status.

CIPFA has proposed to make changes to the Prudential Code and the Treasury Management Code of Practice. CIPFA intends to publish the two revised Codes towards the end of 2017 for implementation in 2018/19, although CIPFA plans to put transitional arrangements in place for reports that are required to be approved before the start of the 2018/19 financial year.

The proposed changes to the Prudential Code include the production of a new high-level Capital Strategy report to full council which will cover the basics of the capital programme and treasury management, and changes to the prudential indicators. The Proposed changes to the Treasury Management Code include the potential for non-treasury investments such as commercial investments in properties in the definition of "investments" as well as loans made or shares brought for service purposes

4.2 **Prudential Indicators**

4.2.1 Capital Financing Requirement

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) measures the Authority's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose. In accordance with best professional practice, the Authority does not associate borrowing with particular items or types of expenditure. In practice, the raising and repaying of loans is determined primarily by professional / expert advice, and may not necessarily take place in the relevant year. In order to create an operating environment within which the Treasury Manager can legitimately react to appropriate advice, the various authorised limits as identified in Appendix 1 are set at a level in excess of the CFR. In the financial year to date, the Authority has been operating within the approved limits.

Appendix 1 shows a revised projected CFR value of £357.74m as at 31st March 2018. The actual CFR as at 31st March 2017 was £341.55m.

4.2.2 Prudential Indicators – "Prudence"

The Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management are shown in Appendix 1, and the Authority is currently operating within the approved limits.

4.2.3 Prudential Indicators – "Affordability"

There is a requirement to analyse and report the capital financing costs, and express those costs as a percentage of the net revenue streams of the Authority. These are identified in Appendix 2, and currently show a projected reduction from the original budget as a consequence of deferred borrowing.

4.2.4 Capital Expenditure and Funding

A summary of capital expenditure and funding is attached at Appendix 3 and shows no change against the planned position.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

5.1 The effective management of the Authority's borrowing and investments are key in ensuring that the Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 are met.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process does not need to be applied.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As detailed throughout the report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected in this report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 Compliance with the CIPFA "Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services".

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2003.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Treasury Management Prudential Indicators – Prudence

Appendix 2 – Capital Finance Prudential Indicators – Affordability

Appendix 3 – Capital Expenditure and Funding

'Appendix 1 Treasury Management Prudential Indicators- Mid Year report (Quarters 1 & 2)

	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
	£000	£000
Authorised limit for external debt -		
Borrowing	403,699	403,699
Other long term liabilities	34,139	34,139
Total	437,838	437,838
Operational boundary for external debt -		
Borrowing	322,959	305,398
Other long term liabilities	34,139	34,139
Total	357,098	339,537
Capital Financing Requirement	359,522	357,738
Upper limits for interest rate exposure		
Principal outstanding on borrowing	322,959	305,398
Principal outstanding on investments	100,000	100,000
Net principal outstanding	222,959	205,398
Fixed rate limit – 100%	222,959	205,398
Variable rate limit – 30%	66,888	61,619
Upper limit for total invested for over 364 days	50,000	50,000

Maturity structure of fixed rate borrowing	Upper Limit	Lower Limit
Under 12 months	35%	0%
Over 12 months and within 24 months	40%	0%
Over 2 years and within 5 years	50%	0%
Over 5 years and within 10 years	75%	0%
Over 10 years	100%	0%

Gross Debt and Net Debt	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
	£000	£000
Outstanding Borrowing	322,959	305,398
Other long term liabilities	34,139	34,139
Gross Debt	357,098	339,537
Less investments	100,000	100,000
Net Debt	257,098	239,537

Gross and The CFR	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
	£000	£000
Gross Debt	357,098	339,537
CFR	359,522	357,738
CFR Breached?	No	No

'Appendix 2 - Prudential Indicators - Capital Finance- Mid Year report (Quarters 1 & 2)

Ratio of Financing costs to net revenue stream	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
General Fund	£000	£000
Principal repayments	2,373	2,373
Interest costs	8,709	7,869
Debt Management costs	45	45
Rescheduling discount	-153	-153
Investment income	-400	-763
Interest applied to internal balances	813	813
Total General Fund	11,386	10,183
Net revenue stream	324,031	324,031
Total as percentage of net revenue stream	3.51%	3.14%
Housing Revenue Account		
Principal repayments	2,267	2,260
Interest costs	6,083	5,576
Rescheduling discount	-39	-39
Debt Management costs	39	39
Total HRA	8,352	7,836
Net revenue stream	46,400	46,400
Total as percentage of net revenue stream	18.00%	16.89%

Estimate of incremental impact of capital investment on Council Tax and Housing Rents	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
General Fund	£000	£000
Unsupported borrowings - principal	351	351
- interest	804	804
Loss of investment income	34	34
Total	1,189	1,189
Impact on Band D council tax	19.86	19.86
Housing Revenue Account		
Loss of investment income	1	1
Unsupported borrowings - principal	518	518
- interest	907	907
Total	1,426	1,426
Impact on average weekly rent	0.23	0.23

This is a notional calculation

Capital financing requirement [end of year position]	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
	£000	£000
Council Fund	223,337	224,802
Housing Revenue Account	136,185	132,937
Total Authority	359,522	357,738

'Appendix 3 - Capital Expenditure and Funding- Mid Year report (Quarters 1 & 2)

	Budget 2017-18	Estimated 2017-18
Expenditure	£000	£000
Council Fund	16,456	16,456
Housing Revenue Account	50,200	50,200
Total	66,656	66,656
Funding		
Surplus/ (Deficit) Balance b/f	971	971
Borrowings - Supported (GF)	5,002	5,002
General Capital Grant - WG	3,044	3,044
Internal Borrowing		
RCCO Budget	128	128
Capital underspends from previous years		
One off funding- MRP Review 16.17	5,540	5,540
One off funding- MRP Review 17.18	1,929	1,929
RCCO- (HRA)	16,700	16,700
Capital Receipts (HRA)	300	300
Borrowings - Unsupported (HRA)	25,900	25,900
Major Repairs Allowance (HRA)	7,300	7,300
Total	66,814	66,814
Surplus C/f	158	158



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS – 01/04/17 – 30/09/17

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND S151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide Members with a summary of outstanding debts which have been written-off in accordance with the policy previously agreed by Cabinet.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides details of debts written-off for Council Tax, Business Rates, Council House Rents, Sundry Debtors and Housing Benefits overpayments.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 To comply with Financial Regulations.
- 3.2 The writing-off of unrecoverable debts is an important element of prudent financial management. Effective financial management contributes to the following Well-being Goals within the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015:-
- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
 - A globally responsible Wales

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council collects very large sums of money from residents and local businesses each year and inevitably there are instances of non-payment. A 'firm but fair' approach has always been adopted and all legal means are pursued to recover monies owed.
- 4.2 The regular writing-off of uncollectable debts is an important financial discipline. The Council would be criticised by External Audit if debts remained in the accounts when there is little likelihood of recovery. The table below provides a summary of debts written-off for the period 01/04/17 to 30/09/17.

	Total Amounts Written Off In Period (£)	Total Budgeted Income/Grant 2017/18 (£m)	% of Total Income/Grant Written-off In Period (%)	% of Total Income/Grant Written-off 2016/17 (Full Year) (%)
Council Tax	82,159	66.5	0.12	0.35
Business Rates	162,312	37.4	0.43	0.86
Council House Rents	33,419	53.0	0.06	0.50
Sundry Debtors	150,955	31.9	0.47	1.23

4.3 Whilst the sums shown above are significant it is important to put them into context. The column entitled "% of Total Income/Grant Written-off In Period" shows the write-offs expressed as a percentage of the "Total Budgeted Income/Grant 2017/18", i.e. monies due to the Council. For comparison purposes the Full-Year percentages for 2016/17 are also included in the table.

4.4 In addition to the table in paragraph 4.2, £21,249.65 has also been written-off in the period 01.04.17 to 30.09.17 in relation to the invoices raised for overpayments of Housing Benefits (total invoices raised during the period £746,588.34).

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

5.1 Effective financial management is a key element in ensuring that the Well-being Goals in the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 are met. The process of writing-off unrecoverable debts ensures that financial liabilities are recognised as they occur and are not deferred as potential future liabilities.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process does not need to be applied.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 As detailed in the report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 There are no consultations that have not been included in the report

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 To ensure that Members are informed of sums written-off during the 2017/18 financial year.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Government Act 1972 and 2000.

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