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Date: 25th March 2015

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Caerphilly Homes Task Group** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room, Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Thursday, 2nd April, 2015** at **5.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Chris Burns'.

Chris Burns
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of interest.	
Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.	
To approve and sign the following minutes: -	
3 Caerphilly Homes Task Group (WHQS) Minutes held on 19th February 2015 (min nos. 1 - 11).	1 - 6

To receive and consider the following reports and make recommendations to Policy and Resources

A greener place Man gwyrddach



Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet: -

4 WHQS and Sheltered Housing Complexes. 7 - 14

To receive and note reports subject of Officer delegated decision but referred to CHTG for consultation:
-

5 Local Employment Fund - Supporting LIFT. 15 - 20

To receive and consider the following report(s) and make recommendations/comments to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee: -

6 HRA Garages Update. 21 - 24

To receive and note the following information items: -

7 Pontllanfraith House. 25 - 42

8 Impact of Caerphilly Homes Task Group. 43 - 46

9 To receive any requests for an item to be included on the next available agenda.

Circulation:

Task Group Members: Mrs D. Moore, Ms G. Green, Mr M. McDermott, L. Ackerman, Mr C. Davies (Vice Chair), R.T. Davies, K. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, G. Jones, Ms S. Jones, Miss A. Lewis, C.P. Mann, Mr J. Moore and Mrs D. Price (Chair),

And Appropriate Officers



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY 2015 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

C. Davies- Vice Chair (Presiding)

Task Group Members:

Ms L. Ackerman, R.T. Davies, Mrs G. Green, K. James, Mrs S. Jones, Miss A. Lewis, C. Mann, M. McDermott, Mrs D. Moore, J. Moore.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), E. Lucas (Head of Procurement), R. Thornett (Tenancy Enforcement Manager) and C. Evans (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs B.A. Jones and Mrs D. Price.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Miss A. Lewis, Mr C. Davies, Ms G. Green, Mrs S. Jones, Mr M. McDermott, Mrs D. Moore and Mr J. Moore as Council Tenants declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items.

Councillor L. Ackerman and G. Jones declared an interest in item 5, relating to the Community Safety Fund. Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES – 11TH DECEMBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 11th December 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Councillor L. Ackerman and C. Mann requested it be noted that both had conflicting commitments at the time of the previous Task Group Meeting and had tendered their apologies.

4. LOCAL EMPLOYMENT FUND – SUPPORTING LIFT.

The report, which was presented by P. Davy (Head of Programmes – WHQS), sought the views of the CHTG on the virement of the allocation of the 2014/15 Local Employment Fund budget to Communities First in order to add value and enhance the Welsh Government's LIFT programme, which is aimed at supporting people in workless households into employment within the Upper Rhymney Valley and Caerphilly Basin Communities First Clusters.

The programme is aimed at supporting people who have spent more than 6 months out of work and who face the greatest barriers to becoming employable.

Originally, the Welsh Government advised that in Caerphilly county borough the LIFT programme would only be piloted in the Caerphilly Basin Cluster (including Lansbury Park) however, they have recently approved an expansion of the project to the Upper Rhymney Valley Cluster area (including the Twyn Carno ward) hence the proposal to allocate the fund for 2014/15 to enhance and support the delivery of the recently announced wider programme.

The geographical focus of the project was discussed and concerns raised that the Eastern Valleys Area of the county borough was not included in the project. Officers highlighted that LIFT is a targeted programme, specifically aimed at workless households and assisting to mitigate deprivation.

The Task Group sought further information on the support staff that would be allocated to the project, cost of the scheme and the outcomes and qualifications expected from the project. Officers highlighted that a LIFT Support Officer would be allocated to the project and progress and outcomes would be reported to the Task Group.

The Task Group, having fully discussed and considered the report, recommended that the item be deferred to the next available agenda, in order that the Author could be in attendance to answer detailed questions. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the report be deferred to the next available agenda for consideration.

5. COMMUNITY SAFETY FUND – TARGET HARDENING AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

Councillor G. Jones declared an interest as member of the Care and Repair Board and Councillor L. Ackerman declared an interest in this item as a Co-opted Member of the Care and Repair Committee and Director of the Arms Length Company of Care and Repair (non-profit) and both left the meeting during its consideration.

The report advised Members of proposals to utilise £20,000 of the Council's WHQS Community Safety budget, to enhance the target hardening provision available to support victims of anti social behaviour and domestic violence.

The Community Safety Fund was created to support projects that aim to address community safety issues and help create a safer community environment.

During 2014/15 a number of discussions have taken place with representatives from the Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership, Gwent Police, Llamau, Communities First, Flying Start and Tenancy Enforcement regarding how the Fund could be best utilised. The discussions were assisted by the findings highlighted in the Safer Caerphilly Strategic Assessment, which suggested that whilst the overall crime rate in Caerphilly had reduced, the incidents of some types of crime had increased, notably violent crime, criminal damage and theft. Anti social behaviour had increased in a number of areas including Penyrheol, Risca and St James.

The Task Group noted the proposal to utilise £20,000 of the Council's WHQS Community Safety Fund 2014/15 to add value to existing work underway by the members of the Caerphilly Community Safety Partnership to help address the key community safety concerns highlighted in the Safer Caerphilly Strategic Assessment.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on the consultation undertaken with tenants during the process. Officer advised that indirect consultation was conducted with tenants, through feedback from organisations operating in the key areas.

Members queried where the work would be undertaken and whether any had been implemented to date. Officers confirmed that the support would be targeted at communities with local authority housing estates but the specific areas would be dependent on the feedback from Police and Community Safety Partnership. The additional funding would enable existing initiatives to be extended.

Having fully considered the report, the Task Group unanimously supported proposal prior to a decision by the Head of Programmes, under delegated powers.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR TENANT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP

P. Davy (Head of Programmes – WHQS) provided an overview of the report, which outlined the Code of Conduct for the tenant representatives on the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG).

It was noted that as the Caerphilly Homes Task Group was not defined in the Council's Constitution as a committee of the Council, and Tenant Representatives were neither members of the Council or co opted members and the Members Code of Conduct did not apply. However, it was considered to be good practice for the tenant representatives to sign and abide by a Code of Conduct, which was specifically drafted for the tenant representatives on the CHTG as a consultative body.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and Code of Conduct and discussion ensued. Members raised concerns that their views and comments, voiced during the consultation process, had not been considered or incorporated and sought further information. Officers explained that there are limits to the number of Scrutiny Committees and following a review of the Constitution the role of the CHTG had been confirmed as a consultative body with the public housing scrutiny function being the responsibility of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

A Task Group Member highlighted that a Code of Conduct has been implemented at each of the groups and meetings they take part in and can be intimidating. Members have reservations about expressing their views, for fear of breaching the Code. Officers assured the Task Group that the Code of Conduct is intended to protect tenants and provide guidance and a mechanism to deal with complaints or misconduct.

The Task Group discussed the Complaints and Appeals process and expressed concerns for transparency within the process. Discussions ensued and it was felt that appeals should be conducted by an officer independent from the housing service. Officers agreed to consider that any final appeal should be dealt with by the Head of Legal Services.

7. DECISION FOR THE AUTHORITY TO BUY OUT OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) SUBSIDY ARRANGEMENTS

The report, which was considered and approved by Special Council on the 17th December 2014, provided the financial business case and background for Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) to borrow funds from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), to buy itself out of the HRA Subsidy arrangements.

The Task Group noted that after lengthy negotiations, the Welsh Government and HM Treasury have reached an agreement that would allow the eleven Authorities in Wales with Council housing stock to exit from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system and become self-financing from April 2015. The negotiations have been undertaken on the basis of the completion of individual voluntary agreements with the 11 landlord Authorities rather than waiting for the primary legislation to be enacted.

Local Authorities would be required to buy their way out of the current HRA subsidy system with payment of a one off settlement figure to HM Treasury, and would be subject to a cap on HRA borrowing.

The new self-financing arrangements are planned to be in place from April 2015 and would increase revenue year on year for the eleven landlord Authorities.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the detailed report and consideration and discussion ensued.

Members sought details on the direct benefits the HRA Buy Out would have for the Authority and tenants. Officers highlighted that the sale of any land and income from rentals would be retained by the Local Authority. However, Members were asked to note that the buy out would have an impact on the overall borrowing cap.

Members noted that, at the time of Cabinet approval, all 11 Local Authorities had committed to the plan, however, due to movement in interest rates, the level of borrowing may change. Officers advised that an update would be provided to the Task Group in due course.

8. PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT.

E. Lucas (Head of Procurement) updated the Task Group on the current position and delivery of Procurements in relation to the WHQS Programme.

There is an extensive range of procurement activity associated with the WHQS Programme. The major contract arrangements are in place in accordance with the contract structure agreed in September 2012 and there is on going activity associated with mini competitions and the small lots. Circumstances on the ground have also led to many ad hoc additional requirements and it is anticipated that these will continue to be a feature as the programme is progressed to 2020.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued around the capacity to manage the contracts. Officers highlighted that additional staff have been assigned to WHQS in order to manage the procurement process.

Questions were raised about the legality of limiting some contracts to contractors with a base in the Caerphilly county borough. It was noted that the legal advice had been fully considered when stipulating the specifications and it was confirmed that it was lawful to award on this basis.

The Task Group expressed their gratitude to the Procurement Team undertaking the extensive work for WHQS and were pleased to note the progress report.

9. HRA STAFF TURNOVER REPORT 2013/14.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), presented the Task Group with the report, which was requested by Cllr L. Ackerman at the CHTG meeting of the 18th September 2014. The report provided a breakdown of the salary savings that was reported in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn Report 2013/14.

Members noted that the Housing Revenue Account Outturn Report had provided details of the final outturn for the HRA for the 2013/14 financial year. As part of the overall underspends it was noted from the report that £597k represented salary savings. The report also noted that 'There are a variety of reasons for this given the volume of staff, but the main causes are staff turnover £400k, and other savings such as long term sickness, opted out pension savings and vacant posts. There was also a reduction in expenditure on agency workers which was off-set by increased overtime costs. A detailed breakdown of the salary underspend achieved in 2013/14 was provided.

The Task Group considered the report and queried the overtime paid to staff. Officers highlighted that there was an overspend on the Overtime budget as a result of addressing service delivery with the current staff resources. It was noted that Overtime working is used in order to address increases in demand and the winter months of 2013/14 were the wettest recorded for many years which resulted in an increased number of repairs reported.

10. PAN GWENT DOMESTIC ABUSE PROJECT

R. Thornett (Tenancy Enforcement Manager), provided an overview of the report which detailed a proposed pan Gwent social landlord's domestic abuse project and the financial cost of the project.

A group of social housing providers in Gwent have joined together to tackle the issue of domestic abuse. The group members are: Bron Afon Community Housing, Caerphilly County Borough Council, Charter Housing including Derwen, Melin Homes, Monmouthshire Housing, Newport City Homes and Tai Calon. Charter Housing is the lead organisation.

The pan Gwent group have agreed that in order to better tackle domestic abuse, a study needs to be undertaken to identify how social landlords can respond more effectively.

An 8 month project was proposed to undertake the necessary research and analysis and to develop a toolkit for use by social landlords. A project officer would be recruited to undertake the work as prescribed by the pan Gwent social landlord's domestic abuse group.

The Task Group noted that a bid was submitted to Welsh Government, which was not successful, however, the group members have agreed to use their own funding (£3.5k per member) to support the project.

Members expressed their support for the project and discussed the report. A Member proposed that research also be conducted from the perspective of the victim, which could be included in the policies. Officers thanked the Task Group Member and agreed to feedback the suggestion to the group.

11. CYD CYMRU COLLECTIVE ENERGY SWITCHING SCHEME

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer) presented the information report, which was considered and approved by Cabinet on the 21st January 2015.

Fuel poverty is high on the council's agenda. Domestic energy prices have been dramatically rising over recent years. The Energy Saving Trust highlights that energy prices have risen by 28% between 2008 and 2013.

Cyd Cymru is a collective energy-switching scheme developed to offer people in Wales an opportunity to save money by coming together to buy fuel "in bulk".

The scheme has been developed by Cardiff Council and the Vale of Glamorgan Council, with support from the Welsh Governments "Regional Collaboration Fund.

The Task Group noted that two switches have taken place between January and March 2014. A total of 6800 households across Wales have registered for the scheme and over 1500 households switched saving an average of £185 per household.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and sought further details of customer support during and after the switch process. Officers highlighted that Energy Advice would be provided to customers at the beginning of the process but were not aware of any further support provided.

In noting that there was no financial support required from Local Authorities, a Member sought details on the running of the scheme. Officers confirmed that the scheme is in receipt of funding from the Energy Savings Trust.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

TO RECEIVE ANY REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

The following requests were received:-

1. Councillor L. Ackerman requested a follow up report on the changes made in Sheltered Housing Service and user satisfaction.
2. A. Lewis requested a further report on the Code of Conduct and whether complaints could be referred to the Standards Committee.
3. A. Lewis requested a report on the outcomes from use of the LEF to support the Passport Programme and the White rose project.
4. A Lewis requested a report on the impact and effectiveness of CHTG on P&R and Cabinet decisions.

Task Group Members sought an update on mobile phones for the new Task Group Members. Officers confirmed that this matter is being progressed.

The meeting closed at 6.47 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April 2015.

CHAIRMAN



CAERPHELLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2015

SUBJECT: WHQS AND SHELTERED HOUSING COMPLEXES

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider a WHQS programme delivery change relating to the sheltered housing complexes. The report is seeking the views of the CHTG prior to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and presentation to Cabinet for decision.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Arising from a number of setbacks the WHQS Programme is under severe pressure to complete by 2020. Additional measures are under active investigation to expand the capacity to cope with the volume of work. The report advocates an alternative approach to implement the WHQS programme in relation to the sheltered complexes. In summary the management and delivery of the WHQS works on the sheltered schemes could be out sourced to a suitable multi disciplinary consultancy leaving just the client role in house.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 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 The report presented to CHTG on 11th December on the Review of WHQS Investment Strategy and HRA Capital Programme 2015/16 outlined that major slippage had arisen during the 2014/15 financial year and that this would cause additional pressure due to the increase in the volume of properties that will need to be completed over a shorter timescale. The report presented a revised investment strategy and the implications were explained in terms of the numbers of properties that would need to be completed on a weekly basis and the rate of expenditure that would have to be achieved based on the budget estimates.

- 4.2 Since that report was prepared and agreed by Cabinet further significant slippage has been identified within the in house programme of work and with the small lots programme.
- 4.3 The programme for 2014/15 originally envisaged that either internal or external works would be completed to 3,713 properties. It is estimated that the completions by March 2015 will now be around 1000 properties i.e. around 27% of what was originally planned.
- 4.4 The WHQS Project Board has reviewed the position and concluded that unless measures are put in place to increase capacity and to expedite the implementation of such measures there is a serious threat that the WHQS will not be achieved by 2020.
- 4.5 The Council has 33 sheltered housing schemes (see appendix 1) categorised as:
- All flats and communal facilities are under one roof
 - Bungalows or flats grouped around a separate communal block
 - Blocks of flats and communal facilities under one roof plus external blocks of flats
- 4.6 In addition there are 12 units at Tredegar Street which are managed as part of the Tredegar Court Extra Care Scheme.
- 4.7 As a result of the sheltered housing review during 2013 it was resolved to reclassify four schemes without communal facilities at Denscombe, Grange Close, Nantddu, and Waunfach and these schemes will be dealt as part of the main WHQS Programme (these schemes are not included in appendix 1). Internal works at Grange Close are being undertaken in the 14 /15 financial year by the in house work force.
- 4.8 Communal facilities include lounge, kitchen, laundry, guest room, staff office. In respect of these areas it will be necessary to consider heating, electrics, emergency lighting, fire panels, kitchen, toilet facilities, DDA compliance, carpets, furnishings, decoration. The communal areas are classed as public buildings and the landlord has statutory maintenance responsibilities. In carrying out improvement works the opportunity should be taken to remove redundant plant to reduce ongoing responsibilities.
- 4.9 It was the original intention that improvement works to the sheltered complexes would be integrated within the main programme and internal and external works would be undertaken separately in accordance with the community sequence. The communal areas were to be dealt with as part of the external works programme. However around a third of the complexes have central boiler plant and some of these are in urgent need of replacement. This may also involve replacing pipe work and radiators in individual flats. In these circumstances it is not practical to split the communal work (external) from the individual units (internal work), at least as it relates to heating. The central boiler plants are commercial installations which have not been included in the scope of the work of any of the contract arrangements. The contract arrangements for external works are different in each of the three areas and were not specifically designed with the sheltered complexes in mind.
- 4.10 For those complexes which include communal facilities and flats under one roof serviced by central boiler plant it will be better to package the internal and external work together. However in view of the wider pressures on the programme there is the possibility of bundling the sheltered complexes (around 1000 accommodation units representing 10% of the stock, but note possible exclusions below) into a completely separate programme of work to be managed and delivered independently of the main programme. This potentially could speed up part of the programme but there are resource implications as to how this might be achieved. Neither the WHQS nor Procurement teams have the capacity to fast track the sheltered schemes alongside other current commitments. It is therefore advocated that consideration be given to out sourcing the management and delivery of the WHQS for the sheltered schemes to a suitable multidisciplinary consultancy with only the client role retained in house. The scope of the brief might also extend to include the tenant liaison role.

- 4.11 The WHQS business plan included provision for the conversion of bedsits to flats at two schemes, Castle Court and Waunfawr House. The remodelling is not a WHQS requirement but clearly expenditure on WHQS works on the existing schemes could be abortive if it is the intention to remodel the schemes at a future date. Conversion of 2 bedsits to one flat will have implications in terms of the total stock and rental income.
- 4.12 Three further schemes were identified for possible remodelling, St Mary's Court, Ty Melin, and Ynyswen, as part of the sheltered housing service review. The feasibility of conversion / remodelling has yet to be undertaken and no capital funding has been identified. The location of some schemes raises further questions about suitability and in some instances it may be better to completely demolish and redevelop. In response to the report the Chief Housing Officer has also raised concern about the long term future of Britannia Close. Given lack of funding and uncertainty about remodelling / conversion or redevelopment it is suggested that the six schemes affected be removed from the WHQS Programme and addressed after 2020, other than essential (health and safety) / emergency works.
- 4.13 The remaining 27 schemes would comprise the sheltered complex programme to 2020 (approximately 770 units).

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA 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 have been identified, therefore a full EqIA has not been carried out.
- 5.2 The implementation of the WHQS Programme will ensure compliance where appropriate with current Building Regulations and DDA requirements. The Council's procurement processes include equalities requirements and compliance by third party contractors undertaking WHQS work.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Based on the Savills stock condition survey for the 27 schemes there is a budget provision of £10.1m (£3.1m external works, £7.0m internal works) in the business plan, which takes account that the internal works at Ysgwyddgwyn have been completed. However the full extent of the work can only be determined by survey of the individual complexes. If this programme of work is outsourced to a multi disciplinary consultancy there would be fees incurred which have not been budgeted. An indicative percentage cost would be 10-12% of capital expenditure but negotiable dependent on how the commission is structured. It may be necessary to deal with essential health and safety works through ad hoc contract arrangements where these cannot be delayed.
- 6.2 It will also be necessary for the Council to maintain ongoing statutory responsibilities alongside the WHQS improvement works. There is an ongoing review to ensure there are compliant contract arrangements in place for all statutory maintenance on the sheltered complexes including those where remodelling/improvements may be deferred.
- 6.3 Even if early decisions are made on the six schemes identified for remodelling it would not be prudent to commit further major unbudgeted expenditure in the period to 2020. The buy out of the HRA will impose a borrowing cap which will result in limited headroom to cope with additional costs. There is already evidence to suggest the WHQS budget may be under pressure as a result of increased costs, for example in Rowan Place, Rhymney, and the tender costs for the small lots programme in the Eastern Valleys. In addition ongoing surveys are indicating extensive damp related problems on a number of the housing estates.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Action is being taken to increase the resources within the WHQS team. There has been limited success to date in filling a number of technical vacancies but even with these additional posts the capacity to manage the volume of work against the timescale pressure remains a major risk. Outsourcing part of the programme increases capacity and spreads the risk and will improve the confidence of delivery by 2020. The client role will be undertaken within the WHQS team.
- 7.2 A procurement process will be required to appoint a multi disciplinary consultancy. There is the possibility of using the professional services framework established by the National Procurement Service which will shorten the timescale.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Comments received have been incorporated within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 In view of the pressures on the WHQS programme the CHTG recommend to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet that the sheltered complexes are packaged into a separate programme and the management and delivery is outsourced to a suitable multi disciplinary consultancy, including the option of tenant liaison.
- 9.2 The 6 complexes identified in the report where future remodelling or redevelopment is under consideration be taken out for the WHQS Programme in the period to 2020 and dealt with once decisions have been made about the long term future of these properties.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To increase the resource capacity to be able to manage and deliver WHQS by 2020 and to avoid abortive costs on those complexes which may be subject to alternative proposals for remodelling or redevelopment.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004. This is a Cabinet function.

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Tel: 01443 864208

Consultees: Cllr Gerald Jones - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr Barbara Jones - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Chris Burns - Interim Chief Executive
Nicole Scammell - Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Liz Lucas - Head of Procurement
Marcus Lloyd - Deputy Head of Programmes
Steve Greedy - Project Manager
Colin Roden - Project Manager
Alan Edmunds - Project Manager

- Jane Roberts-Waite - Strategic Co-ordination Manager
- Lesley Allen - Principal Accountant
- Rhys Lewis - System & Performance Manager
- Joanne Green, - Housing Manager, Older Persons Services
- Gail Williams - Monitoring Officer/Principal Solicitor

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Sheltered Housing Schemes

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Appendix1

Sheltered Housing Schemes

1. All flats and communal facilities e.g. communal lounge, kitchen, laundry, guest room, etc are under one roof:-

Alexandra Court
Highfield Court
St Marys' Court
Ty Bedwellty
Ty Isaf
Ty Melin
Ty Mynyddislwyn
Waunfawr House
Ynyswen

2. Bungalows or flats grouped around a separate communal block housing the warden's office and communal facilities:-

Bryn Road
Glynderw
Glynsifi
Greenacres
Grove 1
Grove 2
Hafod y Bryn
Heol Islwyn
Horeb Court
Maesteg
Oaklands
Pleasant Place
Prospect Place
St Clares
St Peters Close
The Willows
Waunrhydd
Woodland View
Y Glyn

3. Blocks of flats and communal facilities under one roof plus external blocks of flats. Tenants in external blocks of flats share communal facilities housed in the main building:-

Britannia Close
Castle Court
Gwyddon Court
St Gwladys Court
Ysgwyddgwyn

Plus 12 units at Tredegar Street managed alongside the Tredegar Court Extra Care Scheme.

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2015

SUBJECT: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT FUND – SUPPORTING LIFT

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- 1.1 The attached report was deferred at the meeting held on 19th February 2015 and is referred back for further consideration.

Author: Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Coordination Manager
Email: roberj2@caerphilly.gov.uk
Tel: 01443 864340

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 19TH FEBRUARY 2015

SUBJECT: LOCAL EMPLOYMENT FUND – SUPPORTING LIFT

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks approval to allocate the 2014/15 Local Employment Fund budget to Communities First in order to add value and enhance the Welsh Government's LIFT programme aimed at supporting people in workless households into employment within the Upper Rhymney Valley and Caerphilly Basin Communities First Clusters.
- 1.2 Subject to the views of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group the virement of the Local Employment Fund will be made by the Head of Programmes under delegated powers.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the Council's commitment to tenants outlined in the Offer Document the Council allocated £50,000 per annum for the first 5 years of the programme to create a suite of funds designed to engage and support the local community in helping to transform homes, lives and communities. The funds created include, the Local Employment Fund, a Community Improvement Fund and an Anti Social Behaviour Fund.
- 2.2 The Local Employment Fund was created to support initiatives to help unemployed / inactive tenants into work. £50,000 is allocated annually by the Council to the Fund. In previous years the Fund has supported the partial refurbishment of Hafod Deg, Rhymney as a community 'Hub', the employment of a Passport Support Officer to support young people participating in the Council's Passport Programme and working on the WHQS programme and the delivery of a pre Passport scheme delivered by White Rose Resource Centre for young people in New Tredegar.
- 2.3 The Council cannot deliver the transforming lives and communities agenda in isolation hence opportunities are sought to add value to existing Council or Welsh Government programmes in order to facilitate greater transformation opportunities and greater impact especially in the more deprived areas of the County Borough.
- 2.4 During summer 2014 the Welsh Government announced the introduction of the LIFT programme designed to support its Tackling Poverty agenda through providing training and employment opportunities for people in workless households. The programme is aimed at supporting people who have spent more than 6 months out of work and who face the greatest barriers to becoming employable. For example:
 - Young single parent households
 - Households in which adults have few or no formal qualifications
 - People with weak employment records
 - Individuals with disabilities

- 2.5 Research shows that households with these characteristics are much less likely to gain employment than others.
- 2.6 Originally the Welsh Government advised that in Caerphilly county borough the LIFT programme would only be piloted in the Caerphilly Basin Cluster (including Lansbury Park) however, they have recently approved an expansion of the project to the Upper Rhymney Valley Cluster area (including the Twyn Carno ward) hence the request to allocate the funds for 2014/15 to enhance and support the delivery of the recently announced wider programme.

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 WHQS Programme is coterminous with the Caerphilly Single Plan priority of creating 'Prosperous Communities' (P2).
- 3.3 The Council is committed to ensuring that the WHQS investment transforms not only homes but also lives and communities.
- 3.4 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."
- 3.5 The proposal is coterminous with the Welsh Government's Tackling Poverty Action Plan and attempts to address some of the issues highlighted in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 St James 3 (comprising a large part of Lansbury Park) is the most deprived area in Wales in the recently published 2014 WIMD (previously ranking as the second most deprived area in WIMD 2011) and forms part of the Caerphilly Basin Cluster.
- 4.2 St James 3 is the most deprived Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in the Education domain. It falls within the ten most deprived LSOAs for the Income, Employment Health and Education domains, which have a combined weight of 75% in the overall index. It also falls within the 10% most deprived LSOAs for the Community Safety domain. The LSOA has changed little in overall rank since WIMD 2011, but its relative deprivation has increased substantially in the Housing and Access to Services domains, and Education domain moving from 24 in WIMD 2011 to 1 in WIMD 2014 (see page 11 WIMD 2014).
- 4.3 The Van Community Partnership Audit (2009) showed there were concerns in the area with what people termed as a 'benefit culture' and a general level of apathy associated with looking for work. There were also concerns about a perceived lack of employment opportunities in the area. The Van Community Audit also found lack of awareness of local training opportunities, a need for childcare, as well as interest in a range of training opportunities for the future.
- 4.4 The WIMD 2014 calculates that St James 3 is 3rd (out of 1909) most deprived LSOA in Wales in relation to Employment despite being adjacent to some of the borough's key employment sites.
- 4.5 The URV has the highest concentration of poverty in the County Borough. As such both the Council and the Local Service Board have identified it as a priority area for investment. It is also the targeted area for the Anti Poverty Steering Group. The Council have embarked upon a focused regeneration programme within Rowan Place in an attempt to address social,

economic and housing issues that have stigmatised the area for a number of years.

- 4.6 Twyn Carno 1 is the 2nd most deprived area within Caerphilly according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 and lies within the top 10% of the most deprived LSOA's in Wales in relation to Income, Employment, Health, Education and Community Safety. It ranks as 6 within the overall index of multiple deprivation. There are a high proportion of households within the URV where none of the adults aged 16-64 are in employment.
- 4.7 The Welsh Government has introduced the LIFT programme as part of its commitment to tackling poverty in Wales' most deprived areas. The programme will target 5000 households across Wales through the provision of bespoke support and mentoring. Every adult (16-64) within a household who is currently out of work will be provided with individual support to move towards obtaining employment through participating in training, overcoming barriers and undertaking work experience opportunities.
- 4.8 WHQS tenant liaison officers will be working closely with the Communities First cluster teams in both the Upper Rhymney Valley and Caerphilly basin to identify and engage with households in receipt of WHQS works who would benefit from and be interested in participating in the scheme.
- 4.9 The LIFT Programme targets households where no-one has worked for a minimum of six months and whose characteristics that make them less likely to gain employment. Opportunities provided through the LIFT Programme include: -
- (a) Training courses linked specifically to a participant's employability
 - (b) Work experience or placements, which enhance a participant's employability.
 - (c) Actual employment and volunteering which leads to a recognised qualification appropriate for work.
- 4.10 LIFT provision will tackle worklessness through personalised, intensive support aimed at addressing the holistic needs of the whole household. This caseload approach is innovative, challenging and ambitious as it deals with some of the people who are furthest from the labour market and largely fall outside education and training and other forms of support.
- 4.11 The current WG LIFT programme employs two Employment Mentors, one to work in each cluster area.
- 4.12 It is proposed to utilise the WHQS Local Employment Fund to add value to the LIFT programme through enhancing the delivery budget available to each area. The allocation of £50,000 from the 2014/15 Local Employment Fund will also enhance the support that workless households are able to access through the programme and the resources available to coordinate the programme in each area.
- 4.13 The Community Regeneration Manager will provide a six monthly report to the WHQS Project Board and the CHTG on the outcomes delivered during 2015/16 as a result of the WHQS investment and an additional report at the 12 month stage. The reports will highlight the number of tenants who have been engaged via the scheme as a whole.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no equalities implications arising from the report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council allocates £50,000 per annum to the Local Employment Fund to support and add value to programmes and projects that support people currently unemployed towards opportunities designed to increase their employability.
- 6.2 No other initiatives have been identified for the 2014/15 Local Employment Fund budget hence the full £50,000 remains unspent.
- 6.3 It is proposed to allocate the 2014/15 underspend to add value and support the delivery of the LIFT programme throughout the Caerphilly Basin and Upper Rhymer Valley Clusters during 2015/16.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications arising from the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Comments received as a result of consultation with appropriate officers are reflected in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members are invited to comment on the proposal outlined in the report in respect of the Local Employment Fund. Subject to views at Caerphilly Homes Task Group, the decision to vire the budget will be taken by the Head of Programmes under delegated powers.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To deliver and enhance the impact of the LIFT programme and the WHQS transforming lives and communities agenda.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Housing Acts and Local Government Acts 2000.

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Phil Davy, Head of Programmes
Pauline Elliot, Head of Regeneration and Planning
Tina McMahon, Community Regeneration Manager
Nicole Scammell, Acting Director of Corporate Services
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer
Lesley Allen, Group Accountant



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2015

SUBJECT: HRA GARAGES UPDATE

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Policy and Resources Committee has requested a report on the letting of Council owned garages and is presented to the CHTG for consultation.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 A major review of the stock of HRA garages was considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and the Cabinet Sub Committee in December 2012. A strategy was agreed to rationalise the portfolio, reduce the size of the stock through selective demolition of poor condition garages on low demand sites, repair and improve the stock, and to manage and market the garages as part of the HRA assets. Specific proposals were made for every HRA garage block in the County Borough and all relevant ward Members were consulted. A budget of £1.5m was agreed as part of the WHQS Programme to implement the proposals. Since that time commitments have been made within the Eastern Valleys which was agreed as the priority area and contracts are at various stages. In due course the programme will extend to implement the approved strategy for the garages in the Upper Rhymney Valley and the Lower Rhymney Valley.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association home are improved and maintained to achieve specified standards.
- 3.2 The WHQS has a requirement that dwellings are located in attractive and safe environments, which includes parking and garaging requirements.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 At the time of the review in 2012 30% of the stock of garages were void. Although a small number have been demolished since the overall stock is largely unchanged (circa 1260) but the number of voids has increased to 40%. Of the garages which are occupied 72% are let to private individuals and only 28% to Council tenants. The garage sites exhibit a wide variety of conditions. Some of the garage sites are in poor condition with a complete lack of maintenance. Some sites attract anti social behaviour and empty garages may be broken into. Conversely there are some garages that are in very good condition and have been well maintained. More than 50% of the garages are located in the Eastern Valleys. The garage portfolio generates an income to the HRA of around £465,000 but the high level of voids show a loss of £184,000.

- 4.2 The review presented a comprehensive picture of all the garage sites and site specific proposals. The Caerphilly Homes Task Group and Cabinet Sub Committee accepted there was a need to rationalise the portfolio, reduce the size of the stock through selective demolition of poor condition garages on low demand sites, repair and improve the stock which is to be retained, consider the provision of some new garages built to a larger size more suited to a modern vehicle, and to effectively manage and market the garages.
- 4.3 The Area Housing Offices deal with the letting of the garages. The more popular sites may generate a limited waiting list but the number of voids far out weighs the number of potential tenants. All the housing offices have reported a very low demand with a limited number of re lets. The garages are advertised via the housing offices, the website and by site notices.
- 4.4 It is has been suggested that the rents are a deterrent to potential occupiers. The current weekly rent is £7.65 and the rent is due to increase to £7.80 per week from April 2015 (48 week). A comparative exercise with five other local housing authorities and two adjacent RSLs has been undertaken which shows Caerphilly as having one of the highest garage rents. The combined average rent would be £6.22 per week (over 52 weeks) compared with Caerphilly of £7-06 (52 week equivalent). The garage income is contributing to the WHQS Business Plan and any reduction in this income would need to be met from elsewhere in the HRA.
- 4.5 The impact of any reduction in the weekly rent is considered to be marginal in terms of demand. There are other factors that are a disincentive such as the remote location of some sites, poor lighting, anti social behaviour and disrepair. There is a preference to have cars parked on a drive or in front of the house rather than an insecure isolated garage compound. In addition most of the garages were constructed at a time when cars were smaller. Modern cars are wider and higher and some of the garages are very tight, not easy to get in and out. There are congestion issues on many of the Council's estates due to parked vehicles despite the existence of over 500 empty garages, but this has not led to an uptake on the empty garages.
- 4.6 The strategy for the HRA garages was approved just over 2 years ago and is in the process of implementation as part of the WHQS Programme. There is no significant change in the circumstances to those prevailing at the time of the review. Officers see no reason to depart form the agreed strategy that was subject to wide consultation prior to being agreed.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The report is for information and there is no requirement for an EqIA.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A budget of £1.5m has been agreed to implement the recommendations in the approved strategy. The garage rents are reviewed annually as part of the HRA charges. The HRA income supports the WHQS programme. The rent increase (2%) for 2015/16 has recently been approved by the Council. Higher percentage rent increases are proposed by the local housing authorities and RSLs which provided comparative costs. A general reduction in the rent may increase demand marginally given there are very few people on the waiting list but it may also have the effect of reducing overall income with an adverse effect on the WHQS business plan. A big percentage of the garages are privately rented.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications that arise from this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 No comments have been received from consultees.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The report is for information. (A rationalisation and repair strategy for the HRA garages was approved in December 2012 and is being implemented as part of the WHQS Programme).

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To meet a request from the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for a report on the HRA garages.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government and Housing Acts.

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Nicole Scammell - Acting Director of Corporate Services & S151 Officer
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Marcus Lloyd - Deputy Head of Programmes
Lesley Allen - Principal Accountant

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2015

SUBJECT: PONTLLANFRAITH HOUSE

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- 1.1 The attached reports were considered by the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 8th December 2014 and 20th January 2015.
- 1.2 The reports provide information on the closure of Ty Pontllanfraith, the associated financial implications, impact on Council services, employment issues and equality implications.
- 1.3 In relation to Housing Services, staff who are currently based at Ty Pontllanfraith, with the exception of the Eastern Valley Housing Office, are not classed as front facing. These include Private Sector Housing incorporating Grants, Area Renewal Team, Disabled Adaptations, Enforcement, Housing Strategy and Care & Repair. Also, Public Sector Housing including Tenancy Enforcement, Tenant & Community Involvement Team, Older Persons Housing, Complaints and Rents.
- 1.4 It is proposed that Housing Services, with the exception of the Eastern Valley Housing Office, be re-located to Tredomen Business Park, subject to confirmation of availability of sufficient office space. The accommodation being considered is fit for purposes, accessible for the public with good transport links, is DDA compliant and will provide an improved working environment for staff.
- 1.5 Alternative premises are currently being considered to accommodate the Eastern Valley Housing Office, with the intention to retain this service within the Blackwood town centre. This again would improve access and maintain a presence in the area for which the service is responsible.
- 1.6 Whilst the financial implications are highlighted within the reports, there is likely to be an additional cost for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), but this is affordable within the Business Plan. The HRA would have also been liable for a proportion of the costs for rectifying the defects at Ty Pontllanfraith House if approval had not been given for its closure.
- 1.7 Having fully considered the reports and the recommendations contained therein, the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee supported the proposals and these were subsequently approved by full Council on the 25th February 2015.
- 1.8 The Caerphilly Homes Task Group are asked to consider the reports and the above which are submitted for information.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 of 2 Special Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee Report – 8th December 2014
Appendix 2 of 2 Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee Report – 20th January 2015

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**SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
8TH DECEMBER 2014**

SUBJECT: PONTLLANFRAITH HOUSE

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide further information in respect of the savings proposals prior to a formal decision to close the council's Corporate office, Pontllanfraith House, as part of the council's Land and Buildings asset rationalisation programme.
- 1.2 This report is a follow up report to that discussed at the Committee's meeting on the 17th June 2014. That report established the rationale behind the proposal for closure of Pontllanfraith House whilst this report details the potential impact on council services, access for the public to those services, financial implications, employment issues and equality implications.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In response to actual and forecasted budget settlement reductions the council has identified the development of a programme of Land and Building rationalisation to:
- Reduce the number and cost of buildings it has to run and maintain.
 - Be able to invest into a smaller number of properties to improve visitor and occupier experience.
 - Reduce Health & Safety risks to personnel.
 - Wherever possible aid regeneration.
- 2.2 Given the scale of the financial challenge facing the authority, with a need to reduce spending by around £40 million over the next three years, saving costs on our buildings and assets is crucial. The council will reduce in size over the coming period and we cannot sustain the current range of buildings. Removing unnecessary costs of buildings that are surplus to requirements is generally accepted as a better alternative than closing services.
- 2.3 Further to this, there is a significant and high cost repair liability relating to Pontllanfraith House (refer to paragraph 6.2) for which there is no provision in the capital programme.
- 2.4 Pontllanfraith House has therefore been identified as a prime 'candidate' building for closure as it represents a significant liability to the Council and the council services offered from Pontllanfraith House can be redistributed amongst other existing corporate offices.
- 2.5 The report is aimed at satisfying members that the proposed closure is not a "knee jerk" reaction to future budget pressures. It is a planned approach to rationalisation of the council's building portfolio by maximising the use of other council owned buildings and minimising the impact on the services currently operating from Pontllanfraith House and the residents who visit those services.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The council's Medium Term Financial Plan has identified the closure of Pontllanfraith House as a proposed part year saving for 2015/16.
- 3.2 The proposed closure of Pontllanfraith House under the MTFP and the asset rationalisation programme would also contribute to the Safer, Healthier and Prosperous themes of 'Caerphilly Delivers', the LSB single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Pontllanfraith House is a system built office built circa 1977 and currently houses some 400 employees. The main services operating from these offices are:
- Public Protection
 - Planning & Countryside
 - Public Services and Community Services
 - Housing (including Eastern Valley Area Housing Office)
 - Engineering & Transportation
- 4.2 While there may be concern among some residents in the area, services currently operating from the office do not receive high numbers of the general public visiting their offices. In addition, modern technology means there are many more other forms of communicating with council services than existed when the office was opened in 1977. For example the use of e.mail/twitter/facebook/website etc has opened a whole new way of the council communicating with its residents and vice versa. Moreover the council has Customer Contact Centres nearby in Blackwood and Risca.
- 4.3 The council also now has a wider presence in the former Islwyn area as it has expanded into offices at Penyfan (Cherry Tree – 83 work stations), Oakdale (Foxes Lane – 107 work stations) and Pontllanfraith (Woodfieldside – 127 workstations).
- 4.4 Some initial planning is being undertaken to ensure that the proposals are achievable by February 2016 although it must be stressed that officers are mindful that members have not formally made a decision to close. Currently the following options that affect the public are being considered:
- **Housing:** Comprising of 90 – 100 employees. Relocate on Tredomen Business Park. Housing Services are 'front facing' and the Business Park offers modern, well serviced, DDA compliant offices for employees and visiting residents.
 - **Community and Leisure:** Comprising of 45 - 50 employees. It is proposed that this service will move to Tir-y-berth depot. Bereavement Services is the most public facing (chiefly funeral directors) and a suitable office area has been identified that, with some improvement, can be made suitable and which provides adequate public parking. The offices at Tir-y-berth are not in a good state of repair and the office layouts do not lend themselves to maximising office space. Although not necessarily needed beforehand to accommodate the move of Public Services and Community Services employees the council should develop an investment strategy for these offices if it decides it has a long term future. In the short term improvements should be made to welfare facilities.
 - **Engineering Services:** Comprising of 80 employees. It is proposed that this service will move to Highways House, Penmaen. A lack of car parking is an issue but there is a solution to that problem. This service is not particularly front facing and the proposal will integrate the Engineering & Transportation services with their Highway Maintenance colleagues.

- **Planning & Countryside:** Comprising of 90 employees. It is proposed that this service will move to either Ty Penallta or Ty Dyffryn. This service is public facing and both offices are suitable for public access. Ty Penallta has excellent facilities whilst Ty Dyffryn has an adequate reception area that can be improved.
- **Public Protection:** Comprising of 111 employees. It is proposed that this service will move to either Ty Penallta or Ty Dyffryn and both offices are suitable for public access. The service is public facing, but other than Licensing does not receive high numbers of visitors to its offices. The Licensing Section does receive a constant flow of visitors as a result of enquiries or applications for Licences of various types. Many relate to the taxi trade, but also street trading, scrap metal, alcohol etc, and other licences. The Licensing Service therefore has a need for bespoke reception/interview facilities. Penallta House has excellent facilities, other than for the bespoke activities of Licensing, whilst Ty Dyffryn has an adequate reception area that can be improved.

- 4.5 While the specific location of these offices is still under development, it is clear that the services based at Pontllanfraith House can be accommodated elsewhere in the council's existing buildings, realising a significant cost saving and avoiding a very expensive project to deal with a range of defects at the Pontllanfraith House offices.
- 4.6 Consideration will need to be given to ensure that differing services that need to interact are able to do so in the interests of service efficiency and future office space/IT provision designed to accommodate such interaction.
- 4.7 Any proposals to fully utilise Ty Dyffryn described above will maximise the use of the front offices. It is likely there will be pressure on car parking spaces and this may be an issue the council will need to improve sooner rather than later. Adequate space is available to extend the current parking arrangements.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A full EIA will be undertaken if members agree to pursue the recommendations within this report and during the various consultations leading up to closure. However due to the age of the building and despite some adaptations, Pontllanfraith House is less DDA compliant than the Council's newer building stock, in particular Ty Penallta, Tredomen Business Park and Ty Dyffryn.
- 5.2 The impact on members of the public who need to use these offices, and the impact on employees who would be relocated as a result of the building's closure, will form a core part of consultation and final EIA to ensure that everyone affected is fully aware of the details and any alternative options or choices open to them.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A cleared site has the potential for sale as a highly desirable residential development site with a maximum value of circa £2.0m - £2.5m (Capital receipt).
Relocation of the Parks Service to Tir-y-berth will offer the opportunity to dispose of their current depot at Penallta. An estimated Capital receipt of £40k.
- 6.2 The previous report to scrutiny identified potential cost savings that in summary are:
- Annual running cost savings £0.6m (min) (Revenue)
 - Service redeployment savings £0.1m (Revenue)
 - Subsidy of the canteen at Pontllanfraith House - £36k (Revenue)
 - Office refurbishment £5.0m (Capital - cost avoidance)

- 6.3 Against those savings and following the comments in paragraphs 4.4 the following one off costs are likely:

Tir-y-berth:

Improve Welfare Facilities and proposed modifications to proposed Bereavement Services Offices - £250k (capital estimate)

Highways House:

Provide additional car parking - £150k (capital estimate)

Ground floor modifications - £300k (capital estimate)

Ty Dyffryn:

Reception Improvements - £150k (capital estimate)

Provide additional car parking - £250k (capital estimate)

- 6.4 It is proposed that the one off Capital costs totalling £1.1m in paragraph 6.3 above are funded from General Fund balances. This will leave recurring revenue saving of £736k and a potential capital receipt of £2.0m - £2.5m.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There will be a need to redeploy employees in the following areas:

Facilities Management

Cleaning

Catering

Reception

This is due to the fact that the locations to which employees are relocating may already have sufficient coverage of these employee groups, but this will be the subject of further review. The Council's arrangements for redeployment and workforce flexibilities will apply to any displaced employees.

- 7.2 For employees required to relocate their base of employment, the authority's excess travel scheme will apply if appropriate.
- 7.3 Full consultation with employees and Trades Unions will take place once a decision is confirmed.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The results of consultations have been incorporated into this report

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Scrutiny are asked to consider the further information in this report and confirm their continued support for the proposal to close Pontllanfraith House

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To further discuss this proposal in accordance with the DRAFT Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

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Consultees: Corporate Management Team
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G. Williams: Acting Head of Legal Services
M.S. Williams: Head of Community & Leisure
R. Hartshorn; Head of Public Protection
P. Elliott: Head of Regeneration & Planning
T. Shaw: Head of Engineering Services
S. Couzens: Chief Housing Officer
G. Hardacre: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Cllr D. Hardacre: Cabinet Member for Performance, Property and Asset Management
Cllr D. Poole: Cabinet Member for Community & Leisure
Cllr K. James: Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning & Sustainable Development
Cllr T. Williams: Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation & Engineering
Cllr G. Jones: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing
L. Jones: Acting Head of ICT and Customer Services

Background Papers:
Report to Policy & Resources Scrutiny 17th June 2014

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**POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
20TH JANUARY 2015**

SUBJECT: PONTLLANFRAITH HOUSE

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

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide further information in respect of costs prior to a formal decision to close the council's Corporate office, Pontllanfraith House, as part of the council's Land and Buildings asset rationalisation programme.
- 1.2 This report is a follow up report to Committee meetings on the 17th June 2014 and the 8th December 2014. Reports presented at those meetings established the rationale behind the proposal for closure of Pontllanfraith House and the potential impact on council services, access for the public to those services, financial implications, employment issues and equality implications.
- 1.3 Policy and Resources Committee, whilst continuing to support the closure in principle, considered that further information was required to inform the scrutiny process.
- 1.4 This report details the anticipated costs against income associated with the various moves of staff to other corporate offices.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The magnitude of the savings identified in Section 6 are such that there is a high degree of certainty that the council will achieve significant revenue savings as a direct result of the closure of Pontllanfraith House, thus protecting front line services and jobs. There is also an expected Capital receipt that will give a surplus to planned Capital spend.
- 2.2 The council's useable office accommodation per employee is the highest in Wales and its office accommodation costs are the 17th from lowest in Wales. Closure of Pontllanfraith House, together with those closures already achieved at Hawtin Park and Enterprise House will improve these statistics.
- 2.3 There is sufficient space in other corporate offices to relocate staff and services with little or no impact on the public. The alternative offices are generally in much better condition than the Pontllanfraith offices and are asbestos free.
- 2.4 Members are naturally concerned over the impact of closure on the local economy and although this is inevitable in the short term it is anticipated that the site's future development will mitigate those short term losses and have a long term positive impact.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The council's Medium Term Financial Plan has identified the closure of Pontllanfraith House as a proposed part year saving for 2015/16.
- 3.2 The proposed closure of Pontllanfraith House under the MTFP and the asset rationalisation programme would also contribute to the Safer, Healthier and Prosperous themes of 'Caerphilly Delivers', the LSB single integrated plan.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council's MTFP proposals has identified property rationalisation as a key driver towards realising the savings required, £40m over the next three years, as a result of significant reduction in the council's Revenue Support Grant.
- 4.2 The closure of Pontllanfraith House forms part of the rationalisation programme primarily because of its poor condition allied to the fact that there is available space in other corporate offices that are in better condition.
- 4.3 At 16.1 sq meters the total useable office accommodation per employee in Caerphilly is the highest of Local Authorities in Wales. The Wales average is 10.5 sq metres per employee. Had it not been for the closure of Hawtin Park and Enterprise House and the relocation of staff from those offices primarily into Ty Penallta then the figure of 16.1 sq.m would have been much higher.
- 4.4 Office accommodation costs per FTE office based employee in Caerphilly are £1623, ranked 17th from lowest in Wales. The Wales average for Local Authority office accommodation is £1349.

*Source: Asset Management 2013-14: Local Government Data Unit – 3rd November 2014.

- 4.5 It is estimated that achieving the Wales average figure (10.5 sq m) for useable office accommodation per employee will save the authority around £1m/year and, although probably extreme, a figure closer to the lowest in Wales (Monmouthshire: 5.9 sq m) could save upwards of £3m/year.
- 4.6 The Report to Committee of 17th June 2014 detailed the condition of Pontllanfraith House and identified a required Capital investment of circa £5m, which included the high cost of Asbestos removal and the disruption that inevitably follows. Should council members agree to the closure of Pontllanfraith House services will primarily be relocated into:

Ty Dyffryn: The office area of this building is in good condition with only normal building maintenance requirements. The offices are DDA compliant. Car parking facilities will need to be extended but there is available room to do so.
Transport links are good by road. There is a bus service at the nearby Caerphilly Road.
There are no asbestos liabilities at Ty Dyffryn

Tir-y-Berth: The office area is not in good condition but is serviceable. Relatively minor modifications are required but more extensive office planning will be required over the longer term. DDA compliance is limited although improvements are planned for Bereavement Services to improve public access.
Transport links are good by road with a bus service nearby.
There are no restrictions to use of the buildings due to asbestos at Tir-y-Berth. Where present Asbestos is generally limited to Artex and floor tiles and is low risk.

Ty Penallta: This is a relatively new, modern building, in excellent condition and is fully DDA compliant. Other than normal building maintenance costs there are no outstanding capital works. The offices have excellent transport links (rail/bus & car) and are accessible to the

public.

There are no asbestos liabilities at Ty Penallta.

Tredomen Business Park: Modern Buildings in excellent condition and fully DDA compliant. The offices are operated and maintained via the council's Economic Regeneration service, the cost of which is recovered under rental agreements. It is proposed that Housing Services could, subject to confirmation of availability of sufficient office space, be relocated here. The HRA would provide the authority with a regular income stream.

The offices have excellent transport links (rail/bus & car) and are accessible to the public. There are no asbestos liabilities at Tredomen Business Park.

Although Highways House has been identified as a possible area for relocation of Engineering Services it is considered, at this early stage of planning, to be unlikely that its use will be necessary given what is available elsewhere. Consequently costs associated with this office have largely been included as Optional within Appendix 1 and are unlikely to be expended.

To facilitate the relocation of staff into Ty Penallta there will need to be a transfer of Social Services' staff (Adult Services) to Pontygwindy House, Caerphilly. This transfer is in line with recent service re-structuring and will maximise the occupancy of this leased in Property. The current lease is a long term one until 2021.

- 4.7 Some members have questioned the impact of the closure of the offices on local businesses and, in particular, the town of Blackwood. This is difficult to measure but the realisation must be that there will be some in the short term. The site will be sold for residential development and such a development will be a positive impact on the local economy. A report by Regeneris Consulting and Oxford Economics (2010) titled "The Role of Housing in the Economy" indicates that for every £1 of spending on housing construction it is estimated that £2.60 gross output will be generated across the economy as a whole. Adopting these figures for a development on the Pontllanfraith House site of, say, 30 houses with construction costs of £75k each house this would generate a total gross output of £5.85m. This is the equivalent of every officer at Pontllanfraith House spending circa £2000/yr locally every year for the next ten years and therefore it is suggested that a residential development in place of offices will more than mitigate any short term loss of trading locally.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A full EIA will be undertaken if members agree to pursue the recommendations within this and previous reports and during the various consultations leading up to closure. However due to the age of the building and despite some adaptations, Pontllanfraith House is less DDA compliant than the Council's newer building stock, in particular Ty Penallta, Tredomen Business Park and Ty Dyffryn.
- 5.2 The impact on members of the public who need to use these offices, and the impact on employees who would be relocated as a result of the building's closure, will form a core part of consultation and final EIA to ensure that everyone affected is fully aware of the details and any alternative options or choices open to them.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Appendix 1 details the estimated costs of moving out of Pontllanfraith House and relocating into other corporate offices. The costs have been split into "Required" and "Optional" and then further split into Capital or Revenue funding.
- 6.2 On a least cost basis the council will need to identify a Capital budget of £750k and a Revenue budget of £119.6k. This means to "break even" the site will need to be sold for a minimum of £750k and savings in future running costs be greater than £119.6k.

- 6.3 As described in the report to Scrutiny (8th December 2014) it is estimated that the site has a maximum value of £2.0m - £2.5m as a cleared site and this could be reduced by £0.5m if the site is sold with the office building still standing, as proposed. Therefore taking a cautious view, and subject to improving market conditions the estimated value of the site is a minimum of £1.5m which is well in excess of the £750k for required spend. The Council can take a view on whether any, or all, of the subsequent surplus should be invested in the optional capital costs at a later date.
- 6.4 Again as described in the report to Scrutiny (8th December 2014) it is estimated that potential revenue budget savings total £736k. The Revenue costs identified in Appendix 1 total £119.6k and therefore there is a gross revenue saving of £616.4k.
- 6.5 It is proposed that the one off Capital costs totalling £750k in paragraph 6.2 above are funded from General Fund balances. This will leave recurring revenue saving of £616.4k and a potential capital receipt of £1.5m.
- 6.6 The costs quoted in Appendix 1 are best estimates based upon current relocation plans. Any subsequent changes to those plans are likely to have an impact on estimated cost. Nevertheless the magnitude of the savings identified are such that there is a high degree of certainty that the council will achieve significant savings thus protecting front line services and jobs.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There will be a need to redeploy employees in the following areas:

Facilities Management
Cleaning
Catering
Reception

This is due to the fact that the locations to which employees are relocating may already have sufficient coverage of these employee groups, but this will be the subject of further review. The Council's arrangements for redeployment and workforce flexibilities will apply to any displaced employees.

- 7.2 For employees required to relocate their base of employment, the authority's excess travel scheme will apply if appropriate. Provisional relocation costs have been included in Appendix 1.
- 7.3 Full consultation with employees and Trades Unions will take place once a decision is confirmed.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 The results of consultations have been incorporated into this report

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Scrutiny are asked to consider the further information in this report and confirm their continued support for the proposal to close Pontllanfraith House

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To further discuss this proposal in accordance with the DRAFT Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000

Author: Colin Jones: Head of Performance & Property Services
Consultees: Corporate Management Team
S. Harris: Acting Head of Corporate Finance
G. Williams: Acting Head of Legal Services
G. Hardacre: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Cllr D. Hardacre: Cabinet Member for Performance, Property and Asset Management

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Estimated Costs – Pontllanfraith House

Background Papers:
Report to Policy & Resources Scrutiny 17th June 2014 & 8th December 2014

Author: Council
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G. Williams, Acting Head of Legal Services
G. Harwood, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development
Dr D. Hoggan, Deputy Director for Performance, Property and Asset Management

Approved by: Cabinet
Resolution: 1 - 10/12/2014

Responsible Officer: Strategic Planning
Date of Policy & Research Review: 17th June 2014 & 27th December 2014

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EXPENDITURE

(Appendix 1)

OFFICE	SERVICE	ACTIVITY	COSTS (£000)				COMMENTS
			Required		Optional		
			Cap	Rev	Cap	Rev	
Tredomen Business Park 90-100 workstations	Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Office re-configuration Office Lease New Furniture Removal Costs Additional running costs: heating/lighting etc. Staff relocation costs 	20	()			<p>Minor works and Electrical reconfiguration (estimated cost)</p> <p>Revenue income provided to service as lease charged to HRA</p> <p>Covered under lease costs</p> <p>Chargeable to HRA (?) Based on 20% of staff being eligible over an 18mth period.</p> <p>Public facing facility, access to be improved. Welfare facilities inadequate</p> <p>Budget adjustment necessary, costs thought to be low.</p> <p>Based on 20% of staff being eligible over an 18mth period.</p>
Page 29							
Tir-y-berth 47 workstations	Community & Leisure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Bereavement Services Offices Improving Welfare Facilities Additional Running costs heating/lighting etc., Removal Costs Staff Relocation Costs 	250	20	4	12.2	

Penallta House 90 workstations	Planning & Countryside OR Public Protection OR Engineering & Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional Running Costs: Heating, lighting etc. 2. Removal costs 3. New HoS Office 4. Staff Relocation Costs 	Nil 9 2.5 23.3		No additional energy demand Based on 20% of staff being eligible over an 18mth period Essential to segregate staff and visitors from Waste transfer site operations
Ty Dyffryn Circa 175 workstations	Planning & Countryside AND/OR Public Protection AND/OR Engineering & Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional car parking 2. Improved reception area 3. Ground floor modifications 4. Welfare Facilities 5. Additional Running Costs: Heating, Lighting etc 6. Additional workstations 7. Removal Costs 8. Staff Relocation Costs 9. Create additional storage 	250 150 50 Nil Nil 17.5 45.4 25	150 Nil Nil	Existing reception adequate but well below the quality at Pontllanfraith. Planning currently has a bespoke reception desk. Provide secure meeting rooms (2) Existing facilities adequate Although existing facilities have not been fully utilised it is likely that the existing energy budget will be sufficient to absorb relatively small increases in demand Smaller workstations required to maximise floor space Based on 20% of staff being eligible over an 18mth period. Additional secure storage area probably required on Mezanine area

Highway House 72 workstations	Engineering & Transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional Car Parking 2. Ground Floor Modifications 3. Improve Welfare Facilities 4. Additional Running Costs: Heating, Lighting etc 	230	Existing car park facilities limited Install windows and extend heating Basic facilities currently provided
Page 3 Pontygwindy House 90 – 98 workstations	Social Services – Adult Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Removal costs 6. Staff relocation costs 7. Additional workstations 	7.2	Based on 20% of staff being eligible over an 18mth period. Smaller workstations required to maximise floor space
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Office re-configuration 	Nil	Conversion costs (35k) covered by one off Corporate building budget to maximise use of available office space.
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Additional running costs: Heating, lighting etc 	Nil	Reconfiguration does not add to ex running costs
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Removal costs 	9.8	Any additional costs covered by social services budget
		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Staff relocation costs 	Nil	

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 2ND APRIL 2015

SUBJECT: IMPACT OF CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To meet a request for a report on the effectiveness and impact of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides background to the establishment of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and outlines activity undertaken.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 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 aims:
“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.”
- 3.4 The Caerphilly Homes Task Group is a formal mechanism to engage with tenant representatives and ensure their views are reflected in decisions relating to public sector housing.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Following the outcome of the ballot in February 2012 the Council considered the mechanisms required to oversee the management and delivery of the WHQS Programme and the housing service improvements that had been promised in the Offer Document/Addendum. In particular there was a commitment to engage more effectively with tenants in future decision making. To give effect to this the Council, at the meeting held on 29th February 2012, agreed to establish an all party Housing Task Group with tenant representatives, reporting to a Cabinet Sub Committee.
- 4.2 The Task Group, subsequently named the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) was established with seven Councillors and seven tenants and met for the first time on 12th September 2012. At the first meeting consideration was given to the terms of reference. The

purpose of the CHTG is to focus on the WHQS Programme and the public sector housing service and the overall objective is to be involved in the transformation of the Council's housing estates. Within the terms of the Council's Constitution it was recognised that the CHTG could not be a decision making body and originally recommendations were made to a Cabinet Sub Committee.

- 4.3 The intention was to establish a governance structure solely focused on public sector housing, to lift the profile of the social housing function as a responsibility within the Council following the ballot, and to fulfil a commitment to fully involve tenant representatives so they contributed to the decision making processes but within the limitations imposed by the Constitution.
- 4.4 A review of the terms of reference of the CHTG was undertaken in April 2014 following the Wales Audit Office Annual Governance Report. This clarified the role of the Policy and Resources Committee as having the formal public sector housing scrutiny function. As a consequence of the practice of pre decision scrutiny prior to executive decision the Cabinet Sub Committee was disbanded with reports requiring a decision being referred to full Cabinet after consideration by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The consultative role of the CHTG was reaffirmed and a further important change was introduced for tenant representatives from the CHTG to have the option to attend the Policy and Resources Committee to speak on any public sector housing report subject to no individual tenant having a conflict of interest.
- 4.5 Since the CHTG was formed in September 2012 it has met on 20 separate occasions. Consideration has been given to 69 information reports. The CHTG has debated 39 reports with recommendations where Cabinet decisions have been required and has been able to offer opinions and amendments to the recommendations. This has included some major issues such as the investment strategy for the WHQS Programme, the Sheltered Housing Service Review, the Tenant Participation Strategy, the Charter for Trust, the Repairs Policy, Rowan Place, and the HRA Garages. In addition there have been a number of presentations made at the CHTG.
- 4.6 From an officer point of view the CHTG has been a focus for public sector housing discussion and has been a primary means to obtain a tenant perspective on a wide range of matters. There has been much constructive debate and generally consensus. There has only been one occasion where opinions were divided when the possibility of partial demolition of properties at Rowan place was presented as an option. The CHTG is an important part of tenant engagement and fulfils a commitment made by the Council to ensure there is the opportunity for tenant representation on public housing matters.
- 4.7 There is no formal process for monitoring the impact of the Task Group itself. It is for the members of the Task Group themselves to determine whether they consider the CHTG is effective in the role.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA has not been undertaken as the report is for information.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Comments received have been incorporated within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The report is for information.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The report was requested by the Task Group.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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