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**Date: 21st October 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, 29th October, 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

## A G E N D A

	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) held on 17th July 2015 (Minute nos. 1 - 14).	1 - 6

To receive and consider the following reports and recommendations: -

A greener place Man gwyrddach



4	Review Workshop - Feedback Report.	7 - 22
To receive the following information items: -		
5	Fire Safety Measures for Council Owned Flats.	23 - 42
6	Housing Land Asset Review.	43 - 48
7	Tenant Participation in the Housing Service.	49 - 54
8	To receive any requests for an item to be included in the next available agenda.	

**Circulation:**

Task Group Members: L. Ackerman, Mrs G. Atkins, Mr C. Davies (Vice Chair), Miss E. Forehead, Ms J. Gale, K. James, Mrs B. A. Jones, Ms S. Jones, Miss A. Lewis, C.P. Mann, Mr M. McDermott, Mrs D. Moore, Mr J. Moore and D.V. Poole,

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, 17TH SEPTEMBER 2015 AT 5.00 P.M.

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PRESENT:

C. Davies- Chair  
E. Forehead – Vice Chair

### Task Group Members:

Ms L. Ackerman, Ms J. Gale, K. James, Mrs B. Jones, Mrs S. Jones, M. McDermott, Mrs D. Moore, J. Moore and D.V. Poole.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), P. Smythe (Housing Repair Operation Manager), M. Betts (Community Participation Officer), J. Green (Housing Manager - Older Persons Services), J. Carter (Senior Housing Officer), S. Isaacs (Senior Rents Officer), M. Jennings (Housing Strategy Officer), C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

### 1. TO APPOINT A CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR.

It was moved and seconded that C. Davies be appointed as Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that C. Davies be appointed Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year.

It was moved and seconded that E. Forehead be appointed as Vice Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that E. Forehead be appointed as Vice Chair of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group for the ensuing year.

### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs G. Atkins, Miss A. Lewis and C. Mann.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

#### **4. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

At a meeting earlier in the week the Tenant Representatives of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group had met and discussed the Terms of Reference. It was noted that some minor revisions to the Terms of Reference were required and an updated Terms of Reference would be considered at the next meeting of the Task Group.

#### **5. MINUTES – 2ND JULY 2015**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd July 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **6. PROPOSED INSPECTION PROGRAMME FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES**

The report, which was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2015 (when representatives of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group were invited to give their views), proposed the introduction of regular property and tenancy inspections for Caerphilly Homes and sought the views of the Task Group prior to its consideration by Cabinet.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group highlighted concerns for the privacy of tenants and raised concerns about the inspection programme and standards. Officer's clarified that the inspections would be conducted by a variety of existing officers including Tenancy Enforcement Officers and Estate Management Officers, as part of their normal role and are intended to ensure that properties are being maintained to an acceptable standard, and identify any tenancy related issues, such as Health and Safety, Mental Health and Child Protection and signpost for support where required.

Having fully considered the report and the recommendations contained therein, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group recommended that Cabinet adopt the Proposed Inspection Programme for Council Properties.

By a show of hands, and in noting there was 1 against and 1 abstention, the recommendations were supported by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that: -

- (i) Members note the views of the CHTG as detailed in the covering report.
- (ii) Consideration be given to pursue the introduction of regular property inspections, for all Caerphilly Homes tenants, as per the proposed procedure outlined in section 4.4 of the Officer's report;
- (iii) Implementation of the proposal be reviewed, and further annual reports be submitted to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group, in order to monitor progress and evaluate the success of the procedure.

#### **7. REMODELLING OF SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES**

The report was considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) on the 17th September 2015. It sought views on proposals for an in-principle agreement for feasibility studies to be undertaken for six sheltered housing schemes (Castle Court, Waunfawr House, TY Melin, Ynyswen, Britannia Court and St. Mary's Court) for remodelling, prior to its consideration at Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, and thereafter Cabinet.

The report also sought the views on proposals for the six schemes to be omitted from WHQS works programme, unless funding is available within the business plan to undertake work to one or two schemes depending on the detailed costs being within this budget.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group highlighted concerns for tenants within these schemes and the postponement of WHQS works. Officers highlighted that many of the bedsits are not fit for purpose and there are a higher number of voids within the Schemes. Officers also highlighted the fact that beyond the bedsits and flats, the schemes themselves lacked adequate facilities for our vulnerable tenants as circulation space and access throughout the schemes was limited, particularly for those with mobility or health issues. Therefore, it was proposed that the works take place following 2020 until 2025, remodelling the schemes to meet WHQS standards and become fit for purpose.

Having fully considered the report and the recommendations contained therein, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group recommended that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee support the Remodelling of the Sheltered Housing Schemes and recommend its adoption at Cabinet.

By a show of hands, and in noting there were 3 against, the recommendations were supported by the majority present.

RECOMMENDED to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet for a decision : -

- (i) Members note the views of the CHTG as detailed in the covering report.
- (ii) A full and comprehensive feasibility study is commissioned for the six sheltered housing schemes identified in the report.
- (iii) Following a positive outcome of the feasibility study, the schemes be removed from the WHQS programme with the intent of remodelling them post 2020, (with one or two before this time, if financially viable), with completion of all properties by the end of 2025.

## **8. COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND**

The report provided details of an application made for funding from the Community Improvement Fund by TARRAGON Educational Gardens. The TARRAGON project aims to encourage people living in Greater Bargoed to get involved in conservation and gardening by using the green space site that they currently have for outdoor recreation. TARRAGON Community Gardens have applied for £3,854.11 from the Community Improvement Fund, to help finance the expansion and redevelopment of the site.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be a total of £20,770.56, and two quotes for the entire project have been included, along with a copy of their constitution with the application. The remaining £16,916.45 has been secured from other sources including the Community Regeneration Fund, Bargoed Town Council and Communities First.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group support the application made by TARRAGON Educational Gardens. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group support the application which will have a positive impact on the health and well being of tenants living within the adjacent housing area and subject to the following condition:

- Copies of relevant permissions including planning and change of use are submitted before any claims are made.

## **9. COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS – CAERPHILLY HOMES**

J. Carter (Senior Housing Officer) and M. Betts (Community Participation Officer) provided an overview of the report, which highlighted the contacts in relation to complaints and representations received by the Authority's Housing Customer Services Section, from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.

The monitoring of complaints and representations is carried out to provide information on the level of satisfaction with the service provided by Caerphilly Homes. The results enable Managers to focus on areas of concern to improve services and monitor performance and ensure that similar problems are avoided in the future. Last year saw a corporate change in the complaints procedure with more emphasis on learning from complaints. There have been examples of complaints which have led to changes in policies and procedure, which were outlined within the report.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued. Financial implications were discussed as a result of compensation payments and staff time. A Member suggested that Complaints be resolved sooner and lessons learnt from recent cases where possible, in order to avoid further costs.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the detailed report and noted its contents.

## **10. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE TENANCY REVIEW PANEL**

S. Isaacs presented the report which highlighted the outcomes of cases presented to the Tenancy Review Panel.

The Tenancy Review Panel was set up in June 2014. It was noted that during the period of June 2014 to May 2015, 51 cases were considered by the Panel and a recommendation was made to the Chief Housing Officer that an eviction warrant should be applied for in all cases.

The Task Group noted further information on the cases, reasons for the applications and outcomes of the warrants, as outlined within the report.

A Task Group Member sought further information on the Homelessness and Housing application process for previously evicted tenants. It was noted that a process is in place which would allow a previous Council tenant to be housed within the Authority, following an eviction from Private Rented accommodation, however, the arrears would be incorporated within the new tenancy agreement and support processes would be put in place, if deemed necessary.

The Task Group discussed the report and data within and sought clarification on the amount of arrears that would be successfully retrieved by the Authority. It was noted that there were 32 cases for eviction, which totalled £76,000 in arrears and it was unlikely that the Authority would recover this amount. The Task Group were asked to note that the eviction process is a long process and is used as a last resort and a variety of support services are offered to the tenant before eviction notice is served.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

## **11. A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMON HOUSING REGISTER AND COMMON ALLOCATION POLICY**

M. Jennings (Housing Strategy Officer) provided the Task Group with an update on the progress being made in the development of the Common Housing Register and Common Allocation Policy, and builds upon a previous update report to CHTG in May 2014.

Task Group Members noted that a number of working groups have been established to progress key elements of the project, a 12-week public consultation exercise had been undertaken on the draft allocation policy and that, Abris was awarded the contract to provide a new IT system to manage the Common Housing Register.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on the tender and award process for the IT System. It was noted that a number of IT systems were considered through various partners and organisations and following considerable research, the contract was awarded via the G Cloud framework to Abris, area market leader in common housing register IT systems.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and noted the contents.

## **12. HANDLING OF DAMP AND CONDENSATION COMPLAINTS – UPDATE REPORT**

The report, which was presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2015 is an update report and was originally presented to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in September 2014.

The original report provided data from the last six years in relation to incidence of damp and condensation in the Council's Housing stock. The update report provided details of incidence following the winter period of October 2014 to March 2015.

The Task Group noted that, as a result of the previous report, an area for improvement was highlighted in the difficulty identifying the common causes of dampness within properties. As a result, a simple coding has been devised and implemented at the point the repair and provides a breakdown of the total number and type of works order related to dampness which has been received during the period and compares it with the same period last year.

It was noted that there are varying types of damp issues which include a high incidence of condensation related to tenants' lifestyles; dampness related to building defects often highlighted by energy improvement works and damp related leaks from the plumbing in the property or other types of leaks.

Additional training has been provided to relevant Officers in order to assist in effective diagnosis of causes of damp related problems and revisions have been made to the damp and condensation leaflet and the Task Group received a demonstration of the updated video, which is available on Social Media, YouTube and disk for tenants.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and video and sought information on the costs of producing the video. The Officer highlighted that considerable improvements have been made to in-house technologies in order to bring communications into the 21st Century and promoting awareness via Community Groups, Tenant Groups and through relevant Officers. The Task Group noted that production costs were inexpensive and aims to remedy a number of issues.

**13. END OF YEAR REPORT ON THE HOUSING DIVISION'S 2014/15 SERVICE PLAN**

The report provided the Task Group with an end of year update on progress made against the key outcomes contained within the 2014/15 divisional service plan.

The 2014/15 service plan was produced in accordance with corporate guidance issued by the performance management unit and allows the housing management team to focus the efforts of the division on increasing efficiency and maximising the effectiveness of the range of services that are provided.

The Task Group noted those key priority areas that had either been fully or partially successful.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and noted the contents.

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

The following requests were received:-

1. Councillor E. Forehead requested advice on the progress of a previous request for a report on the number of Council House properties within the WHQS Programme which are 7.5 Meters in height or above (3-storey).

The meeting closed at 6.25 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 29th October 2015.

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CHAIR





## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 29TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: REVIEW WORKSHOP – FEEDBACK REPORT**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To report on the outcome of the Review Workshop held on 8 September 2015 and to consider follow up actions.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The purpose behind the workshop was to further develop the working relationships between councillors and tenants and to review and refocus the activities of the CHTG.

### **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 A summary of the workshop sessions is attached at Appendix 1.

The key outcomes were:-

- The opportunity to discuss and clarify the roles of tenants, councillors and officers.
- The recognition that mutual respect and trust between all partners is essential.
- Reaffirmation of the commitment to work together based on shared goals where there is common ownership of problems and solutions.
- The primary objective remains to achieve WHQS by 2020 which requires speed of delivery but without compromising quality.

- The sharing of views in an informal setting.

4.2 The suggested actions that came from the workshop were:-

- Refine the Terms of Reference to better reflect priorities.
- Explore ways of engaging and involving the wider tenant population.
- Organise regular informal review sessions.
- Improve communications especially where changes to plans occur.
- Learn from mistakes and continually improve.
- Continue to find ways of minimising disruption to tenants during the work within their homes.

4.3 The Terms of Reference were last reviewed in April 2014. The fundamental purpose of the CHTG is to act as a consultative group on all public sector housing matters and to include monitoring of the WHQS Programme.

4.4 There was general agreement that the most important aspects of the Terms of Reference were:-

- (1) Reviewing the strategic direction of the WHQS Programme.
- (2) Monitoring progress with promises made to tenants at the time of the ballot.
- (3) Ensuring tenant engagement is embedded in Council decision making.

4.5 It was also felt that other aspects of the Terms of Reference could be brought up to date by, for example, making a link to the anti poverty agenda and the Welsh Housing policy context. An updated Terms of Reference is attached at Appendix 2.

4.6 Procedurally comments have been made about the number of information reports on the CHTG agenda. It is suggested that in line with conventions adopted by Council committees that information reports will not be presented or discussed unless an advance request has been made to Committee Services. This will place the emphasis on those reports that require recommendations to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee/Cabinet.

4.7 Recognising there is a desire to have the opportunity for more informal discussion it is proposed that there should be an annual review workshop added to the CHTG calendar.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 No comments have been received from the consultees.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) To confirm agreement to the minor changes to the Terms of Reference.
- (2) To accept the procedural amendments in respect of information items.
- (3) To support the proposal for an annual review workshop.
- (4) To incorporate other actions arising from the workshop within day to day business as appropriate.

## **10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 To support the continued development of the CHTG.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Local Government Act 2000.

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Consultees:

Cllr D V Poole	-	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Housing
C Burns	-	Interim Chief Executive
C Harrhy	-	Corporate Director Communities
N Scammell	-	Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer
S Couzens	-	Chief Housing Officer

Appendix1: Workshop Notes.

Appendix 2: Updated Terms of Reference.

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# CHTG Review Workshop 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015

[KeithEdwardsCIHCM@gmail.com](mailto:KeithEdwardsCIHCM@gmail.com)

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## Introduction

This a brief report of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) review workshop held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2015 involving elected members, tenants and council officers.

It is a summary of the main points discussed rather than a comprehensive record. It has been drawn up by workshop facilitator Keith Edwards with support from Elizabeth Cooper and input from Phil Davy, both of whom have helped to fully capture the important points discussed and agreed upon.

## Purpose of the session

The original session aims as expressed in the brief from the CHTG were added to by participants on the day. These were:

- To further develop relationships **Councillors** and **Tenants** through:
  - Improving communication all round;
  - Ensuring CHTG plays a positive and supportive role;
  - Building a culture of working as a team and;
  - Keep tenants at the heart.
- To forward plan the business of **CHTG**.
- To review the **WHQS** programme and ensure goals are met by:
  - Learning both from what works well and where there are problems;

- Taking positive actions to put thing right;
- Improving the quality of some of the work;
- Setting targets and monitoring progress;
- Catching up where there had been delays and getting back on track and:
- Delivering a successful programme by 2020;
- Identify the aspects of the **Housing Service** to review recognising this role is a core / priority function.

## **Key issues and context**

The workshop discussed the key internal and external factors within which CHTG operated including:

- WHQS – this was a Welsh Government (WG) requirement originally set in 2003 for achievement by 2012 but with and agreed extension to 2020.
- Welfare reductions which were impacting on Caerphilly tenants with the prospect more cuts to come.
- Potential changes to WG rents policy including the possibility for freezes and reductions that, whilst benefitting working tenants, would impact negatively on the business plan.
- The continued uncertainty around Local Government Reorganisation and public service reform.
- The Welsh Assembly Elections in 2016.
- The impact of Welsh legislation such as the Housing Act and the Renting Homes Bill.
- Socio-Economic factors that continue to have a negative and disproportionate impact on tenants and disadvantaged communities.

## **Reviewing Terms of Reference**

A starting point was to review the current terms of reference to both prioritise the most important ones, amend them as appropriate and identify any gaps.

Participants agree that some areas are essential aspects of the work of CHTG:

- Reviewing WHQS strategic direction and the allocation of resources;
- Monitoring progress on the WHQS Addendum and;

- Contributing at the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee when public sector housing matters are under consideration.

There was support from some participants for attaching a high priority also to:

- Receiving Regular WHQS reports;
- Making recommendations to Scrutiny Committee / Cabinet and;
- Ensuring consistency with the Regeneration Strategy.

Generally, although not unimportant, the following were thought to be a lower priority given the scope of CHTG activities and the need to put time and resources into other priority areas:

- Acting as a consultative group on the Public Housing Service;
- Acting as consultative group on Welsh Government legislation & policy.
- Having information on annual review, service changes & performance and;
- Exploring collaboration with other councils and RSLs.

In addition the CHTG should consider what role it wants in other areas including:

- The wider anti-poverty agenda and;
- Dialogue with Welsh Government collectively.

## **The CHTG Story so far**

The workshop briefly considered the 'back story' of WHQS in Caerphilly. Key milestones included:

- the ballot on transfer in 2012 which cemented the councils commitments to tenant and set the course for achievement by 2020
- The WHQS programme that commenced in the 2013/14 financial year and from then to date around 2000 homes have benefitted from the internal improvements. The capital programme for the current financial year 2015/16 at £36m is the largest in the history of Caerphilly.

A number of challenges remained however including:

- The need to ensure there was sufficient capacity to deliver work to the highest quality;
- The complexity of managing such a massive and intricate programme and;
- Completing delivery of WHQS by 2020.

## **Developing Relationships**

Whilst acknowledging that CHTG had fundamentally changed the way the council and tenants work together, workshop participants recognised whilst many things were working well other clearly had room for improvement:

Things that were seen as positive were:

- There was now a clear mechanism for tenant engagement and tenants felt that CHTG was genuinely valued;
- Councillors valued the direct contact with tenants and their 'expertise';
- There was the commitment by all to genuine joint working;
- Parity of representation (7 tenants, 7 councillors) and sharing chairing responsibilities;
- The channels in to the heart of Council decision making via councillors and;
- The open invitation for tenants to attend as observers at council committees;

In other areas there was clearly room for improvement including:

- Adopting a more structured approach, e.g. developing a forward work plan;
- Improving attendance of some councillors at meetings; was viewed negatively by tenants;
- Ensuring there were less information items and more decision items at meeting;
- Taking more time out to review progress and strategy through away days, visits to other landlords, training and briefing sessions on legislation and other important changes for example;



- Giving tenants the opportunity to lead on items by drawing up reports and having time on the agenda to discuss these;
- Being clear that, whilst CHTG was not the place to discuss individual cases, that there were mechanisms in place to deal with them and that these were followed;
- Ensuring more timely actions and feedback on issues raised.

## Setting Future Priorities

Participants considered the current and emerging challenges to CHTG. These included:

- The lack of control over any changes implemented by the UK or Welsh Governments and how to respond effectively;
- Social & Economic Challenges including poverty and financial exclusion;
- Securing the financial resources to deliver in challenging times;
- Ensuring there were sufficient and high performing staff and contractor personnel to deliver;
- Ensuring the quality of the work was to a high standard;
- Adhering to the *Charter for Trust*;
- Improving tenant satisfaction;
- Delivering the potential *WHQS plus* benefits – jobs, training and community regeneration for example;
- Dealing with the many social issues - for example tenants with a wide range of problems and;
- Maintaining the spirit of working together and mutual respect and recognising all parties wanted to achieve the same objective.

Potential responses to challenges included:

- Ensuring there was training on new legislation and welfare reform;

- Sharpening up the way CHTG worked by focussing on effective meetings, monitoring progress and reporting outcomes;
- Improving communication all round;
- integrating the work of CHTG into wider council strategies including for example mitigate the impact on tenants of welfare reform via financial inclusion, advice, promoting credit unions etc.;
- Maximising the opportunities for tenant involvement in the WHQS Environmental Programme with an estimated £10.6m available;
- Exploring innovative ways to broaden tenant engagement.

## A CHTG Action Plan

Participants were asked in constituent groups (tenant and councillors) what they wanted from their partners to make things work – their ‘asks’; and what they were prepared to commit in return – their ‘offers’.

The following asks and offers were identified by tenants:

<b>asks</b>	<b>offers</b>
<p>The opportunity to have views heard.</p> <p>Respect between all stakeholders.</p> <p>Respect from contractors and compliance with <i>Charter for Trust</i>.</p> <p>Continued commitment to deliver the programme and meet promises.</p> <p>Learn from mistakes. And make improvements.</p> <p>Questioned the role of the Task Group – as ambassadors for the WHQS Programme.</p>	<p>Act as Ambassadors for the programme.</p> <p>Ensure that tenants understood difficulties and challenges.</p> <p>Ensure mutual respect.</p> <p>Understanding constraints and that sometimes things don't go to plan.</p> <p>Monitor progress in a fair and equitable manner.</p> <p>Make sure that positive progress was feedback to other tenants.</p> <p>Find ways of increasing involvement and reaching under-represents groups.</p>

The following asks and offers were identified by councillors:

<b>asks</b>	<b>offers</b>
<p>Capturing wider tenant perspectives.</p> <p>Increase tenants returning Customer Satisfaction Surveys.</p> <p>Ensuring clarity about role of tenant representatives on the CHTG; recognising the differences between the councillors, tenants and officers</p> <p>Where tenants carry out face to face surveys ensure continuity of the process and a focus on the general experience – this is not a snagging exercise.</p>	<p>Recognising where satisfaction surveys raise issues tenants should receive a timely response.</p> <p>Offer an incentive, such as a monthly prize, to return satisfaction forms.</p> <p>Support tenants by feeding through surveys in a more timely fashion.</p> <p>Ensuring Project Managers respond to issues identified in to satisfaction surveys.</p> <p>Provide more training including explaining the contract management process.</p>

## Outcome of Workshop

Participants were asked what the **most important outcome** from the workshop had been and this included:

- Greater clarity on roles of tenants, councillors and members;
- Reinforcing Mutual respect and trust between partners;
- Reaffirmation of a commitment to work together based on shared goals where everyone 'owns' problems and solutions;
- A feeling of 'One Team' with everyone heading in same direction and 'on the same side'
- A commitment to achieve WHQS by 2020 with speed and ensuring quality work;
- Speed and quality together

- The positive opportunity to meet and have an honest and open discussion and share views in an informal setting.

Immediate priorities were to:

- Revise the Terms of reference to reflect current and future priorities;
- Explore ways of broadening tenant involvement;
- Organise other regular review sessions to take stock of progress and review priorities;
- Improve communication especially where changes to plans occur;
- Improve the way mistakes are learnt from and improvements made and ensure these are not repeated and;
- Continue to find ways of minimising disruption to tenants during works.

### **In Your Own Words!**

Participants were very positive about the workshop and the CHTG itself. The table below includes specific comments that reinforce this:

'The partnership between Councillors and tenants is working well'

'The end goal is in sight; it has been clear today that we all want success and are working as one team to succeed'

'The CHTG is working'

'We all have the same commitment'

'We own the programme and we are headed in the same direction'

'We all recognise we are committed to delivering the programme'

'Relationships within the CHTG have matured'

'The most important outcome is that we have taken time to share views'

'Recognise the progress in development and maturity since the last event'

'An open and honest discussions, working together, speaking up and listening.

'We should all work together to achieve positive outcomes'

'It has been great to listen to councillors'

'Hopeful that councillors, officers and tenants continue to work together to ensure delivery of the Programme by 2020'

'Tenant representatives are doing an excellent job and we should respond promptly to their feedback'

'The CHTG brings additional benefits to the programme in a supportive way'

## **Conclusions**

The review workshop seems to have achieved most of its aimed based on participants' comments. The next task is for CHTG to agree specific actions to keep the momentum going and ensure the right priorities are set at a critical time in WHQS programme delivery:

- In addition to the points below CHTG should review this report and decide what actions need to prioritise;
- There is a general feeling that the partnership between councillors and tenants is working well but the terms of reference for the CHTG could be refined to further develop the relationship;
- There needs to be a mutual trust between tenants, councillors and officers and shared responsibility for tackling the challenges; CHTG will function best where there is openness and transparency and respect shown for the views of all members of the group;
- The focus needs to be on joint ownership of 'problems and solutions' and further work to build the CHTG team should be considered;
- CHTG needs to feel ownership and commitment for the housing service and the WHQS Programme. The common aims of all sides to deliver the programme to time and to high standards with tenants at the heart of the process should be reinforced and communicated widely within the authority and to all tenants;

- There is a common recognition that the aim is to deliver all the housing improvements by 2020 but where problems arise these should be jointly shared and resolved to mitigate the impact on the programme;
- The CHTG terms of reference should immediately be reviewed based on the specific comments that emerged from the workshops;
- CHTG should consider developing a strategy to engage with the wider body of tenants including groups that currently don't participate;
- CHTG should clarify the process for dealing with individual property/tenant issues outside of meetings;
- There is room for improvement with communications and more timely feedback on issues raised enabling tenants to better understand the rationale behind decisions;
- There should be a process of learning from mistakes and;
- CHTG needs to maintain a focus on the wider regeneration opportunities of the WHQS programme (social and economic) and more needs to be done to capture the impact of the programme in changing lives.

## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### **PURPOSE**

The primary purpose of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group is to act as a consultative group on public sector housing matters with a particular focus on the WHQS Programme, and to make recommendations to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee/Cabinet as appropriate and be represented at the Scrutiny Committee when reports relating to public sector housing are under consideration.

#### **KEY OBJECTIVES**

1. Reviewing the strategic direction of the WHQS Programme and to be advised on the funding implications.
2. Monitoring progress with promises made to tenants at the time of the ballot as set out in the Addendum Document.
3. Ensuring tenant engagement is embedded in Council decision making.

#### **ADDITIONAL OBJECTIVES**

4. To seek opportunities to maximise the WHQS investment to transform lives and communities and support the Council's anti poverty agenda.
5. To keep under review Welsh Government housing policy changes and assess the impact on Caerphilly Homes.
6. To be advised of the annual service plan, the implementation of service and organisation changes and performance management.
7. To explore collaborative arrangements with other local authorities and/or RSLs and learn from best practice.

#### **POWERS**

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group (CHTG) has recommendatory powers only and will be a consultative group on all public housing and related matters. The WHQS investment programme will be developed and managed in a manner that will bring wider regeneration benefits to communities and support the creation of job opportunities.

#### **CONSTITUTION**

The CHTG will have an ongoing role related to the housing services, the delivery of WHQS and its maintenance thereafter.

The CHTG will have seven Councillors with cross party representation. Three places will be taken by Cabinet Members. The relevant Cabinet Members will be the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing; the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate

Resources; and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning and Sustainable Development or their equivalents when the Council/Cabinet is reconstituted at any AGM. Four places will be allocated to be taken by back bench Members drawn from all parties in as far as practical to represent political balance.

The CHTG will have seven tenant representatives. Three tenants will represent the Eastern Valleys, two tenants will represent Lower Rhymney Valley and two tenants will represent the Upper Rhymney Valley. The Council will facilitate the appointment of tenant representatives. Representatives will serve for a period that will be co terminus with the Council administration following which there will be a new election. Tenant representatives will be eligible to stand for re-election. The timing of new elections will be determined by officers in conjunction with the tenant representatives. Training will be provided for tenant representatives to support their role on the CHTG. The tenant representatives will be required to sign an undertaking to abide by a Code of Conduct specific to tenants.

The CHTG will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair. The Chair and Vice Chair should alternate between Councillors and tenants on an annual basis.

Pre-decision scrutiny of public housing matters will be within the remit of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee. Decisions will be the responsibility of Cabinet, other than matters reserved to the Council.

## **FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS**

The CHTG will meet every six weeks to reflect the Council's cycle of meetings. Meetings will take place in the week before the Policy and Resources Committee. Ad hoc meetings maybe convened with the agreement of the Chair and Vice Chair and in consultation with officers.

Meetings will normally be held at Penallta House.

The CHTG will follow the conventions established for Council meetings.

## **SUPPORT MECHANISM**

The CHTG will be supported by the officer WHQS Project Board. Agendas will normally be agreed by the Head of Programmes in consultation with the Project Board. Any member of the CHTG can request a report on any relevant matter within the Terms of Reference. This will be a standing item on agendas.

Officers from the WHQS Delivery Team and Housing Landlord Service will attend the CHTG to advise on specific matters as required. Officers from other Directorates will attend dependent on agenda items. Information items will not be presented. If any member of the Task Group would like to discuss an information item 3 working days notice must be given to Committee Services.

The CHTG will be serviced by staff from Committee Services.

Arrangements will be made to learn from best practice in other organisations, both local authorities and RSLs, either by visits or from visiting speakers.

(Terms of Reference updated October 2015)





## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 29TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: FIRE SAFETY MEASURES FOR COUNCIL OWNED FLATS**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide members of Caerphilly Homes Task Group with information on fire safety measures in relation to Council owned three storey blocks of flats.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Following a Members request, this report provides details on fire safety measures already provided and planned to be undertaken to all three storey Council owned flats to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard is intended to ensure that all local authority housing is maintained and improved to achieve specified standards.
- 3.2 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 meets their needs and aspirations"*.
- 3.3 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.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 The Council's housing stock currently stands at 10,865 properties which comprises 184 three storey Council owned flats and a further 72 leasehold flats.
- 4.2 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 applies in relation to fire safety within blocks of flats. Although this order primarily covers all non-domestic buildings, it also applies to shared communal areas within a domestic setting in certain circumstances.
- 4.3 All the authority's three storey flats are required to comply with these regulations, as the individual entrance doors to the flats open onto an enclosed communal landing and stairway.
- 4.4 In order to improve the safety for our tenants and comply with the Regulatory Reform Order, all our blocks of flats have been risk assessed by our Fire Officer from the Corporate Health and Safety Team. The risk assessments identified the following works and the progress against each has been provided:-

- Enclosed communal areas must be ventilated –This work has been completed by either providing openable windows on landing areas or by providing permanently open louvre vents.
  - Communal areas must be free of any obstructions, combustible materials or items – Letters and detailed guidance notes were sent to all tenants advising them of the need to remove any such items from the Communal areas (Appendix 1). This includes floor coverings, rugs, furniture, curtains or any appliances. If tenants failed to remove the required items, a further letter was sent advising that if they were not removed, then arrangements would be made for Council operatives to clear the area. In order to ensure that the communal areas are maintained as clear areas, weekly inspections are undertaken by our Community Environmental Wardens and records of these inspections are retained.
  - The communal areas are fitted with emergency lighting to ensure that the walkways and access routes are lit in the event of a power failure. These are checked and maintained on a regular basis to ensure they operate satisfactorily.
  - All doors opening onto an enclosed communal area are required to provide a half hour fire resistance (FD30S). This includes entrance doors to flats, as well as any cupboard/store doors that open directly onto the landing area. – Due to the scale and cost associated with bringing all doors up to this standard, the Fire Service accepted that this could be progressed on a planned basis, and work is ongoing to complete this exercise.
- 4.5 An added complication in this area relates to flats that have been purchased on a leasehold basis. This has delayed the works in some areas as we are required to follow a legal consultation process with the leaseholders prior to replacing the existing doors. We have also faced legal challenges from some leaseholders, who have claimed that they have sole responsibility for their entrance doors.
- 4.6 Although not a requirement of the Regulatory Reform Order, all Council owned properties have been fitted with mains operated smoke detectors, to provide an early warning of a potential fire to our tenants.
- 4.7 Following an incident at Claude Road, Caerphilly, it was identified that whilst the flat where a fire occurred was fitted with a compliant fire door, at some stage after the installation, the door closure had been removed. This resulted in the door being left open when the tenant exited the flat. As a consequence a tenant in a second floor flat had to be evacuated from their flat by the fire service.
- 4.8 As a consequence of this incident, all our flats are being surveyed to check if door closures fitted to fire doors have been removed. Arrangements will then be made for new door closures to be fitted where they have been removed and a letter will be sent to all our tenants concerned to re-inforce fire safety procedures within the communal areas and for them to advise us if there are any problems with the doors including the self closing mechanism. See Appendix 2.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no equality implications associated with this report.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The costs associated with undertaking fire safety measures to our housing stock will be covered by the WHQS Capital Investment Programme with regards to new installations and for improvement works.

6.2 Any associated repairs e.g. replacing door closures, will be addressed through our Response Repairs Team with costs being covered from existing budgets within the Housing Revenue Account.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 There are no consultation responses that have not been reflected within the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That this report is noted for information.

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

10.1 To make members aware of the fire safety measures required to Council owned three storey blocks of flats.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 To comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Author: Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer  
Consultees: Cllr Dave Poole, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing  
Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive  
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes  
Nicole Scammel, Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer  
Fiona Wilkins, Public Sector Housing Manager  
Paul Smythe, Housing Repair Operations Manager  
Kenyon Williams, Private Sector Housing Manager  
Donna Jones, Health and Safety Manager  
Kelvin Hughes, Fire Safety Officer  
Julie Reynolds, Area Housing Manager  
Debbie Bishop, Area Housing Manager  
Karen James, Neighbourhood Housing Manager  
Angela Hiscox, Neighbourhood Housing Manager

Background Papers:

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Letter to residents – Fire Safety in Communal Flats – 11th February 2013  
Appendix 2 Fire Safety Advice for Tenants in Flats (Tenants' Handbook)  
Appendix 3 Fire Safety Management of Communal Areas in Blocks of Flats  
Appendix 4 Draft Letter to Tenants of Three Storey Flats– October 2015

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Your Ref/Eich Cyf:  
Our Ref/Ein Cyf: Letter1/fire risk  
Contact/Cysylltwch â:  
Telephone/Ffon:  
E Mail/E Bost:

Date/Dyddiad: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013

Dear Resident,

**Re: FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS WITH COMMUNAL AREAS**

South Wales Fire & Rescue Service have advised that our communal areas within blocks of flats must be in compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. They have advised the Council of the measures necessary to comply with this legislation. The advice includes the requirement to undertake regular inspections of the communal area serving your home to check it is as safe as it can be and to ensure that unsafe items are removed. It is intended that these inspections will be undertaken on a weekly basis.

We do appreciate that in many communal areas some residents have made them look cosy and welcoming. However, the safety of all residents and visitors must take priority.

Following a recent inspection it was noted that there are certain items being used and stored in the area, which are considered to be a fire risk.

To meet the fire regulations and to prevent putting your life, your family members, visitors and your neighbours lives at risk, these communal areas must be a sterile area, clear of any obstruction or combustible materials. This will include rubbish, furniture, wheelie bins, carpets, curtains and any other items on landings or shared stairs which could obstruct the exit route, or promote fire spread within common escape routes.

A single door mat will be acceptable outside each flat entrance door provided it is specifically intended to be a door mat and is placed directly in front of your door. It must have a non-slip backing material, be in good condition and free from curling edges. A maximum size of width of the door x 18 inches deep is permitted and it must not be located at the top of stairs or cause a tripping hazard. Rugs, runners, carpet off cuts and carpet tiles are not acceptable.

Photographic evidence has been obtained of your communal area and I would politely request if any of the items referred to belong to you, that you remove them safely from the area within 10 days from the date of this letter, after which a further inspection will take place.

**Deputy Chief Executive / Dirprwy Brif Weithredwr:  
Nigel Barnett ICSA, CIPD, MBA**

If none of the items belong to you then I would thank you for taking the time to read this letter and request that you note the advice given.

If you have to arrange a bulky items collection, please ensure the items are placed out for collection by 6am on the morning of the advised collection date and not before. The items must be kept dry and should be placed safely outside your home only on the day of collection to avoid any tripping hazards, blocked entrances and risks to others where there are steps.

Please also inform your housing office if you are using medical oxygen cylinders in the home. As with other services in the home, for example, domestic gas and electricity, you need to observe a few simple precautions. There are a number of hazards associated with oxygen and due care should be given to these during use and storage.

- Make sure your oxygen equipment is stored safely out of direct sunlight, well ventilated, always dry and away from heat sources.
- Don't use oxygen near naked flames, including gas and electric cookers – 3 metres is a safe distance.
- Never smoke or use electrical equipment, such as hairdryers, whilst using oxygen.

May I also remind you that in the interest of residents' safety, smoking is strictly prohibited in the communal areas and under no circumstances should any communal doors be wedged open. These doors must be kept closed at all times.

Should you require any advice regarding the contents of this letter and the removal of items that belong to you, please contact me at the above office.

Yours sincerely



# **FIRE SAFETY ADVICE FOR TENANTS IN FLATS (NON-SHELTERED)**

# Fire Safety Advice for Tenants in Flats (Non-Sheltered)

**If you are living in a sheltered housing scheme please seek advice from your Sheltered Housing Officer.**

**Fire kills!  
Get out & stay out!  
Call 999!**

Your home has been fitted with hard wired electric smoke alarms. However, as a tenant there are a number of important measures you can take to prevent the risk of fire.

Make sure you don't leave any objects or combustible items (including furniture, wheelie bins, carpets and curtains) or any other items on landings or shared stairs which could obstruct the exit route, or promote fire spread within common escape routes; putting your life, your family members and your neighbours life at risk.

A single door mat will be acceptable outside each flat entrance door provided it is specifically intended to be a door mat and is placed directly in front of your door. It must have a non-slip backing material, be in good condition and free from curling edges. A maximum size of width of the door x 18in is permitted and it must not be located at the top of stairs or cause a tripping hazard. Rugs, runners, carpet off cuts and carpet tiles will NOT be acceptable.

**Please inform your Housing Office if you are using Medical Oxygen cylinders in the home. As with other services in the home, for example, domestic gas and electricity, you need to observe a few simple precautions.** There are a number of hazards associated with oxygen and due caution should be given to these during use and storage.

- Make sure your oxygen equipment is stored safely out of direct sunlight, well ventilated, always dry and away from heat sources.
- Don't use oxygen near naked flames, including gas and electric cookers – 3 metres is a safe distance.
- Never smoke or use electrical equipment, such as hairdryers, whilst using oxygen.

Your local Community Environmental Warden will carry out regular checks of communal areas. Please don't be offended if you are asked to move any items – any request will be for your own safety and for those sharing the communal areas.

If your flat block has a security door, make sure you close it behind you at all times. Don't open the door to anyone you have not invited and report any anti social activities in your block to your local Housing Office and the Police.

It is important to plan an escape route and be prepared in the event of a fire.

## **STEPS TO SAFETY – PLANNING AN ESCAPE ROUTE**

- 1 Make sure you and your household members are familiar with the fire escape plan, what to do in a fire & all the escape routes. The best escape is down the shared stairs and out of the back or front entrance doors. NEVER use lifts or balconies in the event of any fire.



- 2 Put details of what to do in a fire somewhere prominent in your home to remind your household members of what to do in the event of a fire. Make sure everyone knows where the fire exits are situated.
- 3 Keep all exits & communal areas clear at all times.
- 4 Keep fire doors closed to help prevent the spread of fire and to give you more time to get out.
- 5 Find a room in your home where you can safely go to in the event of a fire, if possible where there is a window and a telephone.
- 6 Keep your property address near your telephone as this will help your children and relatives call for help and provide emergency services with accurate information.
- 7 Keep a good quality torch in your home and within easy reach. Make sure all your household members know where to find it. This will help you leave the building safely during the night if the electricity or lighting fails.
- 8 If any member of your household has a disability which prevents them moving around easily (e.g. sight or hearing problem), make sure you keep any aids that they rely on in a place where they can easily get to them (e.g. walking aids). When you call the emergency services make sure you tell them if anyone has a disability which may affect them moving around easily.
- 9 Count how many doors you need to go through when taking your escape route – it is easy to get confused in smoke or in the dark.

#### 10 KEEP CALM AND ACT QUICKLY

##### 11 If the fire is **in your flat** and you cannot control it:

- Before opening any door use the back of your hand to touch it. Don't open it if it feels warm as the fire could be on the other side. If it is not safe for you to leave follow the advice in point 12 below
- If it is safe to do so, leave immediately and, if possible, close all internal and external doors
- Do not waste time collecting any valuable items or possessions
- If possible warn your neighbours
- Telephone the emergency services
- Leave the building using the safest escape route
- If safe to do so, remain on site, outside and a safe distance from the fire and wait for the emergency services to advise them if possible of what caused the fire and where it is located. This will save valuable time, help to save lives and limit the damage.

##### 12 If the fire is **in a shared area**:

- If you know your exit is clear, leave quickly and where possible alert your neighbours
- Do not waste time collecting any valuable items or possessions
- If it is not safe for you to leave, take everyone to the safest room in your home
- Close all external and internal doors where possible
- Block the bottom of the doors in your safe room with wet clothing to stop smoke getting in
- If there is a lot of smoke crawl along the floor where the air will be cleaner
- Open the window and call for help – if you cannot open the window break it as safely as possible
- Phone the emergency services and tell them what is happening as clearly as possible

13 If your clothes catch fire, lie down and roll around or smother the flames with a heavy material. REMEMBER, STOP, DROP AND ROLL!

14 If you are on ground floor then it will be easier to get out. If you need to break a window, do so safely and cover any sharp broken glass edges to enable you to climb out safely.





15 If you need to get out of a flat that is higher than ground floor, then throw some bedding or soft items onto the ground to break your fall. Only attempt this if it is practical to do so and you are within a reasonable height. Never jump from a window! Lower yourself down and then drop at arms length.

16 When the emergency services arrive, they will tell you what to do next.


17 DO NOT GO BACK INTO THE BUILDING!

The following table lists the most common causes of fire and how you can help to prevent a fire in your home:

The most common causes of fire	What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home
<p><b>Electrical sockets &amp; appliances</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't overload sockets</li><li>• Try to only have one plug in each socket</li><li>• Use extension leads safely</li><li>• Switch off and unplug electrical items when not in use &amp; before you go to bed (unless they are designed to be left on e.g. your freezer)</li><li>• Don't try and fix faulty electrics yourself</li><li>• Report any required repairs as soon as possible</li></ul>
<p><b>Cigarette</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stub out cigarettes properly and throw them away carefully</li><li>• Put them out! Right out!</li><li>• If possible, wet them and dispose of them in a bin outside your home</li><li>• NEVER smoke in bed</li><li>• Keep matches &amp; lighters away from children</li></ul>
<p><b>Candles</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make sure they are fully extinguished after use</li><li>• Don't leave them unattended</li><li>• Make sure they are put on a safe surface</li><li>• Put them in a fireproof holder</li><li>• Keep them away from curtains, fabrics, pets &amp; children</li></ul>

The most common causes of fire	What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home
<p><b>Kitchens</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn off cookers &amp; ovens when not in use</li> <li>• Don't leave children alone in the kitchen when cooking</li> <li>• Make sure saucepan handles are out of reach from children and free from any interference</li> <li>• Take care when cooking with hot oil</li> <li>• Keep tea towels, cloths &amp; kitchen roll away from the cooking area</li> <li>• Take care if you are wearing loose clothing, they can easily catch fire</li> <li>• Keep the cooking appliances clean and in good working order as a build up of fat and grease can ignite a fire</li> <li>• Don't put anything metal in a microwave</li> </ul>
<p><b>Smoke Alarms</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure you test your smoke alarms regularly and tell us above any problems</li> <li>• NEVER cover up your smoke alarms</li> <li>• Report any damage immediately</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gas Appliances</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure you give us access to carry out the yearly checks on your gas central heating system &amp; appliance</li> <li>• Always use a Gas Safe registered engineer if you install your own appliances</li> <li>• Keep clothing, furniture and other inflammable items away from heating appliances</li> <li>• Don't use heaters to dry clothing</li> <li>• Ensure heaters are turned off properly when not in use</li> <li>• Use a guard if necessary to ensure the safety of children, pets, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Litter, cardboard, bulky furniture, rubbish, etc.</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always dispose of any items in the appropriate bins provided</li> <li>• Store any bulky items in a safe location until they are removed for disposal</li> <li>• When a bulky items collection is booked, the items need to be placed out for collection by 6am on the morning of the advised collection date. They must be kept dry and should be placed safely outside your home to avoid any tripping hazards, entrances and steps.</li> </ul>

The most common causes of fire	What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home
<p><b>Alcohol/Medication</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink safely – take special care when you have been drinking</li> <li>• Don't attempt to cook if you are under the influence of alcohol</li> <li>• Be extra careful if you are taking medication which can make you drowsy</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fireworks</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be safe</li> <li>• Never play with fireworks</li> <li>• If possible go to an organised display</li> <li>• Set off any fireworks in a safe location and a safe distance from your home</li> <li>• Wear gloves when using sparklers</li> <li>• Keep children well away from harm or injury</li> <li>• Keep pets indoors</li> <li>• Dispose of used fireworks safely</li> <li>• If possible, wet them and dispose of them in a bin outside your home</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bonfires</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise your neighbours if you have to light a bonfire</li> <li>• Only burn dry materials</li> <li>• Never burn household rubbish, rubber, or anything containing plastic, foam or paint</li> <li>• Never use petrol, oil or any other similar fuel to ignite a fire</li> <li>• Avoid lighting fires in unsuitable weather conditions e.g. a windy climate can change the direction of the fire and smoke</li> <li>• Keep pets and children safely away from any risk of danger</li> </ul>
<p><b>Household items</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always ensure your furniture has the fire-resistant label</li> <li>• Don't leave electric blankets folded as this damages the internal wiring – roll them up</li> <li>• Unplug electric blankets before going to bed</li> <li>• Secure portable heaters up against a wall to prevent them falling over</li> <li>• Keep portable heaters away from curtains &amp; furniture and safely away from children &amp; pets</li> <li>• Keep door and window keys in easy reach and where everyone can find them</li> <li>• Close inside doors at night to stop fire spreading</li> </ul>

The most common causes of fire	What you can do to help prevent the risk of fire in your home
<p><b>Action Plan &amp; Escape Route</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make an action plan so that everyone in your home knows how to escape safely in the event of a fire</li> <li>• Make sure everyone is clear about what to do</li> <li>• Have a clear escape route</li> <li>• Practice the plan and escape route regularly</li> </ul>

### CHECK LIST

- ✓ Close inside doors at night to stop a fire from spreading
- ✓ Turn off and unplug electrical appliances unless they are designed to be left on
- ✓ Check your cooker is turned off
- ✓ Don't leave the washing machine on
- ✓ Turn heaters off and put up fireguards
- ✓ Put candles & cigarettes out properly
- ✓ Make sure exits are kept clear
- ✓ Keep doors & window keys where everyone can find them

**If you have any questions relating to your safety, please contact your local fire service for free advice.**

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## Fire Safety Management of Communal Areas in blocks of flats

### Guidance Note For Tenants

1. Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) takes its responsibility with regard to fire safety for residents very seriously. CCBC minimises the risk of fire as much as possible by conducting Fire Risk Assessments and this includes all communal areas being sterile areas free from any objects or combustible materials. This will include rubbish, furniture, wheelie bins, carpets, curtains and any other items on landings or shared stairs which could obstruct the exit route, or promote fire spread within common escape routes but not inside each resident's flat. These risk assessments identify key actions to reduce risk to residents in each individual block, however in relation to the communal areas – halls, stairs, stairwells and landings, and these guidance notes aim to minimise the risk of fire.
2. In striking the balance between fire safety and personalisation of communal areas, CCBC has sought the advice of the Fire Officer. The result is a common sense approach, which we hope resident's feel is fair.
  - 2.1 Doormats will be acceptable so long as they are:
    - Specifically intended to be a door mat,
    - With a non-slip backing material,
    - In good condition and free from curling edges,
    - Placed directly in front of the resident's door,
    - Not oversized (max width of door x 18in),
    - Not located at the top of stairs, (tripping hazard)
    - Rugs, runners, carpet off cuts and carpet tiles will **NOT** be acceptable.
  - 2.2 Resident's furniture will **NOT** be acceptable under any circumstances, including chairs, tables, cupboards, and screens.
  - 2.3 Plants, pots, plastic flowers, containers, shelving racks or other storage containers, resident's footwear will **NOT** be permitted.
  - 2.4 Pictures and other wall ornaments will **NOT** be allowed.



## APPENDIX 3

- 2.5 Net Curtains and other window shades, blinds or curtains will **NOT** be acceptable in communal areas.
- 2.6 Mobility Scooters - If you wish to use or store a mobility scooter you will need to contact your local Housing Office for appropriate consent and advice. Contact details for the Housing Offices are listed at the end of this advice leaflet. Consent will not be unreasonably withheld but would have to be in compliance with Health & Safety and other Policies or Procedures covering the communal area.
- 2.7 Charging of mobility scooters, batteries or other electrical equipment in common areas will **NOT** be allowed.
- 2.8 Bicycles, prams, pushchairs, wheelchairs and similar items will **NOT** be permitted to be stored or located within the internal communal parts of the scheme.
- 2.9 Recycling receptacles and rubbish bins are **NOT** permitted to be stored or located within the internal communal parts of the scheme.
- 2.10 No items are to be stored in any communal cupboard area or under stairs area.
- 2.11 Any other object or item that obstructs or creates trip hazards in any walkway, stair or corridor is **NOT** acceptable.
- 2.12 Any other object or item that presents a significant fire hazard or additional fire loading is **NOT** acceptable.
3. Where items have been identified which cause a hazard to people using or living within the block then CCBC will take action to remove these items. The Council's tenancy agreement puts responsibility onto tenants:

*"To keep the common part of flats in a clean and tidy condition and free from obstruction"*

- 3.1 Tenants therefore have a responsibility to keep their areas clear. Any inspections, for whatever reason, which reveal the guidance has been contravened, must result in the appropriate enforcement action being taken.

Whilst notice can be served under the terms of the tenancy agreement, this may not always be appropriate. If a tenant has failed to remove items as requested, we may choose to arrange removal and recharge the tenant.

- 3.2 During a Fire Risk Assessment, any items found in the communal areas will be reported and catalogued. It will be the responsibility of the



## APPENDIX 3

Area or Neighbourhood Housing Office to take appropriate action to remove the risk.

4. Any tenant who uses Medical Oxygen cylinders in their home must ensure this is reported to their Housing Office. As with other services, for example, gas and electricity, precautions have to be taken. There are a number of hazards associated with oxygen and due caution should be given to these during use and storage:
  - Make sure your oxygen equipment is stored safely out of direct sunlight, well ventilated, always dry and away from heat sources.
  - Don't use oxygen near naked flames, including gas and electric cookers – 3 metres is a safe distance.
  - Never smoke or used electrical equipment, such as hairdryers, whilst using oxygen.
5. Tenants are also reminded that if a bulky items collection is arranged they must ensure the items are placed out for collection by 6am on the morning of the advised collection date and not before. The items must be kept dry and should be placed safely outside only on the day of collection to avoid any tripping hazards, blocked entrances and any risks to others where there are steps.
- 6.0 If there is any uncertainty regarding the above information, please contact your local housing office for further advice or guidance.

### **Housing Office Contact Details:**

Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office,  
Gilfach House,  
William Street,  
Gilfach,  
Bargoed, CF81 8ND  
Tel: 01443 873535  
[Urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:Urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Eastern Valleys Area Housing Office,  
Pontllanfraith House,  
Pontllanfraith,  
Blackwood, NP12 2YW  
Tel: (01495) 235229  
[eastvalleyaho@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:eastvalleyaho@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Office,  
45 Atlee Court,  
Lansbury Park,  
Caerphilly, CF83 1QU  
Tel: (029) 2086 0917  
[Lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:Lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk)

## APPENDIX 3

Graig-y-Rhacca Neighbourhood Housing Office,  
Grays Gardens,  
Graig-y-Rhacca,  
Machen, CF83 8TW  
Tel: (029) 2085 3050  
[Graigyrhaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:Graigyrhaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk)

## Fire Safety in Flats With Communal Areas

I am writing to remind you of the requirements placed on residents to maintain all fire precautions that have been provided for their safety and for the safety of others in their building.

If there is a fire in a flat it is vital that everyone is able to leave the building as quickly and safely as possible, if necessary. The escape route from your flat is designed to remain free from smoke and fire for sufficient time to allow residents to pass safely along it to a place of safety.

It is essential that stairways and exits to the property are not obstructed at any time. Please consider that a fire could cause lighting to fail and people to trip on obstructions even if they know the escape route very well.

The Council's tenancy agreement puts responsibility onto tenants:

*"To keep the common parts of flats in a clean and tidy condition and free from obstruction".*

Communal areas must be kept clear of any obstruction or combustible materials. This includes rubbish, furniture, wheelie bins, carpets, curtains and any other items which could obstruct the escape route, or promote fire spread.

A single doormat is acceptable outside each flat entrance door provided it is specifically intended to be a doormat and is placed directly in front of your door.

To improve safety, the Council has an ongoing front door replacement programme to provide flats such as yours with a fire door with a self closing mechanism. The purpose of the fire door is to keep a fire contained should it break out behind the door. Please note that fire doors must not be propped open. Propping the door open may damage the self closing mechanism, compromise your safety and, should a fire occur in your flat, it would allow the fire to spread on to the escape route and endanger other occupiers of the building.

You are required to make sure that your fire door is working properly. If it is not, or if the self closing mechanism is missing from your door, you should report it as an urgent repair as soon as possible.

May I also remind you that in the interest of residents' safety, smoking is strictly prohibited in the communal areas and under no circumstances should any communal doors be propped open.

Further fire safety advice is available in your Tenants' Handbook. However, should you require any advice regarding the contents of this letter or further fire safety advice, please contact your local Housing office.



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 29TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: HOUSING LAND ASSET REVIEW**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report has been prepared in response to a member of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group having made a request for information in respect of the progress of the Authority's Housing land asset review.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Significant land and property assets sit within the Housing Revenue Account, distributed throughout the County Borough. A review is being undertaken to provide base information about these assets to ensure that land and property meet objectives allied to the achievement of WHQS or longer term aims of developing new social housing. The review will also inform the delivery of the WHQS environmental programme, and provide a basis for the potential rationalisation of land holdings.
- 2.2 To date, 1008 individual sites across seven estates have been surveyed, investigated and have received a recommendation under one of nine agreed categories, however, no final decisions have yet been taken in relation to the future of these sites, pending consultation with local residents and Members.
- 2.3 An interactive database with online functionality has been developed to support the review which is used to store and display the individual reports produced for each site.
- 2.4 Surveys are on going in two further estates, however, nine large estates remain to be surveyed, together with smaller estates with significantly less land ownership.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The contents of this report link to the following key strategic objectives:-
- "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." (*Aim 6: Housing Management - Local Housing Strategy*).
  - "To promote sustainable and mixed communities that are located in safe and attractive environments." (*Aim 11: Community Regeneration - Local Housing Strategy*).
  - "To improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough." (*Priority - Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017*).

- The National Housing Strategy for Wales – ‘*Improving Lives and Communities*’ (Welsh Government, 2010).

#### 4. THE REPORT

##### **Purpose of the Land Asset Review**

- 4.1 Significant land and property assets sit within the Housing Revenue Account. In addition to the Authority’s 10865 residential properties, comprising of both general needs and sheltered accommodation and 417 leasehold flats, the Authority also owns 34 shops and 976 garages. In addition, located within housing estates there are also areas of open space, together with various community buildings, play facilities, footpaths, highways, rights of way, sub stations, potential development sites, and residual pockets of land of limited value. These assets generate both income and liabilities and are distributed across the County Borough.
- 4.2 During the pre ballot period work commenced on the preparation of an asset inventory, based on a series of asset categories that would have been used for negotiations in the event of transfer. However this exercise was not fully completed at the time.
- 4.3 Following the ballot it was determined that the land asset review should continue with the purposes of ensuring maximum benefit to the HRA and that land and property be utilised to meet specific objectives allied to the achievement of WHQS or a longer term aim of developing new social housing.
- 4.4 As part of the WHQS programme there is a commitment to spend circa £10m on environmental improvements. The land asset review is intended to provide base information about the land holdings to inform the delivery of the WHQS environmental programme. It will be utilised during the consultation process with residents to determine those assets which are valued by them and where resources can be targeted to improve the quality of estates and communities, and also provide the basis for rationalisation of the land holdings.
- 4.5 The following aims were established:
- To identify land and property that is of long term benefit to the HRA, including sites with development potential.
  - To identify land and property that could be sold to generate a capital receipt.
  - To identify land and property where there are ongoing maintenance liabilities but where there is a benefit to the estate’s environmental quality.
  - Ensure value for money in respect of recharges to the HRA for land and property maintenance (excluding repairs and improvements to the Council’s housing stock).
  - To identify residual land with limited or no value where maintenance liabilities need to be minimised. Some of these sites may have potential to be sold or gifted.
- 4.6 The specific tasks were:
- GIS mapping of asset categories to be completed, including cleansing of historical data.
  - All land and property records related to the HRA to be incorporated within the GIS including current paper based systems such as grounds maintenance.
  - A rolling programme of estate reviews comprising both desk based research and on site surveys.

- Design a review methodology to ensure those staff assigned to the task apply a consistent approach.
- Review HRA costs for land and property maintenance excluding housing improvements and repairs.
- Preparation of report that would be a combination of estate specific and asset category recommendations, supported by GIS mapping and referencing system.

### **Progress to Date**

- 4.7 When the land asset review was first initiated it was accepted that a dedicated temporary staff resource would be required to review all land assets in more than 40 communities and it was anticipated that the whole exercise would be completed within a 12 to 24 month timeframe. Unfortunately it proved difficult to recruit experienced land surveyors with suitable skills related to GIS and the exercise has now been ongoing for approximately three years with just one individual surveyor.
- 4.8 The exercise of review involves the surveyor undertaking detailed site surveys and researching property information available within the Authority in respect of each individual site. As an indication of the scale of the review 241 parcels of land were identified in the Lansbury Park area alone.
- 4.9 Information from relevant Housing staff, in addition to those in Parks Services, Legal and Property Services is collated in respect of site history, current use, maintenance costs, lease arrangements and encroachments. Any discrepancies identified between the Capita Housing database, HM Land registry and CCBC Terrier bases are investigated as they are identified and anomalies rectified through a data cleansing exercise.
- 4.10 Following consideration of all available information each separate parcel of land is allocated a recommendation by the surveyor under one of the following nine categories:
- Develop – Land that has the potential for development for social housing. Joint ventures and disposal are also options.
  - Dispose – For smaller parcels of land that are generally not suitable for development but may be desirable for adjoining owner occupiers to extend the curtilage of their property.
  - Resurface – Recommended for a small number of grassed areas that do not contribute to the area and may be better converted to hard landscaping.
  - Retain – Recommended where land is being utilised for best purpose and consideration of an alternative use is not required.
  - Transfer – Land that would be better suited to control by another Council department.
  - WHQS – For parcels of land that are not suitable for transfer to another department but have potential for WHQS improvement works.
  - WHQS (Community) – For areas of land that are large enough for development but are not considered suitable for residential development, an alternative community friendly use may be acceptable, for example, a community facility or additional parking provision.
  - WHQS (Parking) – Predominantly small areas of land adjoining small car parks that can easily be extended to increase the parking provision.

- WHQS (Transfer) – This option is recommended where, in the short term, the community may benefit from the land being improved or enhanced under a WHQS scheme, but as part of a longer term strategy an alternative Council department would be better suited to take ownership.

4.11 To date 1008 individual sites have been surveyed, investigated and have received a recommendation, across the areas of Lansbury Park, Gilfach, Rhymney North, Risca, Crosskeys, Abercarn and Panside, with work on sites in Blackwood and Cefn Fforest well advanced.

4.12 Across these estates the proportion of initial recommendations that have been made are as follows:

- Develop - 61
- Dispose – 112
- Resurface – 71
- Retain – 493
- Transfer – 40
- WHQS – 160
- WHQS (Community) – 14
- WHQS (Parking) – 51
- WHQS (Transfer) – 6

However, no final decisions have yet been taken in relation to the future of these sites. It is not envisaged that any decisions will be taken on the rationalisation of these land assets until there has been consultation with residents on the respective estates. It is anticipated that much of this consultation will be linked to the ongoing development of the WHQS environmental programme.

4.13 A significant amount of time has been spent in building an interactive database and maps to support the review. This technology is being continuously updated and developed and there is now online functionality for the latest maps. It is intended that all earlier land asset review maps will be incorporated into this latest system of web maps. This system will be used to store and display the individual reports produced for each site. The reports include the site plans, photographs and site specific details, such as topography, site access, calculated area, flood risk, condition, maintenance and encroachments. This will be an excellent tool when it comes to engagement with residents to discuss proposals for the WHQS environmental programme.

### **Future Progress**

4.14 The following large estates also have significant land ownership and are yet to be surveyed: Rhymney South, Pontllynn, Fochriw, Graig Y Rhacca, Springfield, Penyrheol, Penllwyn, Bedwas and Trethomas. In future, consideration will also need to be given to whether smaller housing estates, with significantly less land ownership, should also be surveyed following completion of the larger estates.

4.15 The individual site reports that have been completed will continue to be transferred on to the interactive database and mapping system to provide a comprehensive and readily accessible record of the land asset review, that is capable of being updated.

4.16 All land asset review data and reports will be made available to the WHQS Team. This will ensure accurate up to date information on Housing land and property assets is used to inform the engagement process with residents. This process will establish the assets that are most valued by residents in order to better inform where resources should be targeted to improve the quality of estates and to assist in transforming communities.

4.17 The land asset review will also be available to be used as an evaluation tool when officers and Members consider future rationalisation of land holdings.



## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report is for information purposes, so the Council's Eqla process does not need to be applied.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no current financial implications. There will, however, be financial implications in relation to the implementation of the WHQS environmental programme and any land and property asset rationalisation which will be the subject of future reports, if required.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no personnel issues. This report is for information purposes only.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The views of the consultees listed below have been incorporated into the report.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That Members note the contents of the report.

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

- 10.1 To keep members of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group updated on the progress of the Housing land asset review.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 There are no statutory powers associated with this report.

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Consultees: Cllr Dave Poole, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing  
Chris Burns, Interim Chief Executive  
Shaun Couzens, Chief Housing Officer  
Phil Davy, Head of Programmes  
Nicole Scammel, Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer  
Marcus Lloyd, Deputy Head of Programmes  
Jane Roberts-Waite, Strategic Co Ordination Manager  
Paul Smythe, Housing Repair Operations Manager  
Kenyon Williams, Private Sector Housing Manager  
Chris Richards, Asset Surveyor  
Phil Mountain, GIS Project Manager  
Julie Reynolds, Area Housing Manager  
Debbie Bishop, Area housing Manager  
Karen James, Neighbourhood Housing Manager  
Angela Hiscox, Neighbourhood Housing Manager

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## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 29TH OCTOBER 2015

**SUBJECT: TENANT PARTICIPATION IN THE HOUSING SERVICE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This is an information report to update Caerphilly Homes Task Group Members on tenant participation activities and also responds to a request for an update on the pilot review undertaken by the Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP).

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 This report covers activity and progress under the four main objectives of local tenant participation with additional information on the tenant participation budget.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 Tenant involvement most closely links with the current Local Housing Strategy aim of
- 3.2 “providing 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 National Housing Strategy ‘Improving Lives and Communities’ emphasises the need to
- 3.4 ‘Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them’ and that
- 3.5 ‘Services should reflect the needs of those who use them, not the needs of the organisations that deliver them’
- 3.6 The Single Integrated Plan 2013-17 has a priority to ‘improve standards of housing and communities giving appropriate access to services across the county borough’.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 At a local level there are four key objectives for tenant participation. These are outlined below with details of progress and activity.

#### **1. To develop tenant review**

At a strategic level the Caerphilly Homes Task Group remains the main mechanism to review housing services. In August 2014 an election was held for tenant representatives who will serve until 2017. Three new representatives were elected.

At an operational level there are a number of continuing activities and some new initiatives:-

- The Repairs and Improvements Group continues to monitor the progress of the WHQS programme and the response repairs service. Two new members were recruited to the Group in 2014. The Group meets fortnightly.
- The Caerphilly Service Improvement Monitors (CSIMS) have continued to carry out face to face surveys with tenants who have had WHQS works undertaken. Since August 2014 48 surveys have been carried out.
- A new activity under the CSIMS umbrella has been Mystery Shopping; a mystery shop of the centralised repairs line was carried on in June/July 2015 and the results and recommendations have been given to the Service Manager, Paul Smythe.
- Tenants have continued to be involved in procurement and their involvement helped to secure a recent Government Opportunities-UK Excellence in Public Service Award for the procurement section.
- The Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) was established in February. The purpose of the HIP is to understand real customer demand and to produce a staff handbook to help Caerphilly Homes to improve housing services. The HIP analyses real customer interactions from real service requests to identify what tenants want and value from a service. This evidence is provided by staff through copies of letters, emails or transcribes of face to face conversations or telephone calls. The HIP examines this evidence to identify the purpose of the service, what tenants value, what factors are important to tenants and how tenants expect to be treated.

Evidence was grouped into four stages, request, confirm, deliver and aftercare.

The HIP has recently participated in its first review of the Council's landlord consent procedure. The HIP produced a staff handbook which identifies, based on the evidence, the outcomes expected by tenants from the landlord consent service. Findings have been presented to senior managers in landlord services and managers responsible for delivering the service will use the handbook to review the landlord's consent procedures. A report will go back to the HIP in six months outlining changes made to the service as a result of this work.

The intention is for the HIP to carry out two reviews each year and the next review is due to start in late October. This review will focus on succession of tenancy.

Feedback from staff and HIP members has been positive and the support of an independent facilitator has been recommended and welcomed by the HIP. The use of the facilitator will be reviewed after the production of the next handbook. There are currently eight tenants on the HIP and they have suggested that new members be encouraged to join. A HIP members guide will be developed to assist with the recruitment of new members.

- In June/July 2015 five focus groups were held with tenants attending to discuss the Council's rent policy. Welsh Government required consultation with tenants about new factors that could be considered when setting rent including location of the property and energy efficiency. Fifty six tenants attended and the views gathered will be considered by the Rents Manager in formulating a report on next year's rent policy. There were also unexpected benefits from these events; some tenants attending were able to discuss issues directly with rents staff that resulted in additional income being secured for them and some tenants have been recruited for other participation activities.
- A Recharge Review Panel has recently been established which includes two tenant representatives.

## 2. Increased tenant engagement

The rent consultation focus groups were particularly successful in bringing in tenants who had not previously engaged with the housing service. The majority of HIP members were also new to any kind of tenant participation.

### Associations

Grant payments have supported the running costs of Associations and Participation Officers have given specific advice and support to the Association at Ysqwyddgwyn sheltered housing scheme and to Penyrheol Community Association to re-launch their groups. Assistance is also given to Pen y Dre and Graig Y Rhacca Associations to co-ordinate quarterly meetings between Association representatives, housing staff, police and community safety staff amongst others. During the year Fochriw Association's Officers decided they no longer wanted the Association to be recognised and funded by the Housing department and the Association in Nelson has also dissolved.

### Sensory Loss Group

The group has worked in partnership with Action on Hearing Loss/RNIB Cymru on a project to ensure housing services meet the needs of people with sensory loss. The project was funded by Welsh Government via Action on Hearing Loss and has involved 3 focus groups from 3 different landlords; Caerphilly was the only local authority.

Seven tenants worked with Andy Harris of Action on Hearing Loss. They recorded their experiences of finding and living in social housing as part of digital storytelling and used those experiences to present to Officers practical recommendations that can be taken up by landlords to improve services. Some are straightforward and can be achieved quite quickly, others are longer term such as training for all staff on sensory loss awareness.

Their contributions, along with the other participants in the project have been produced as a best practice guide for housing providers. This was launched by Lesley Griffiths, AM, Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty at the Welsh Government offices on 25<sup>th</sup> June and group members attended the launch. The guide is to be circulated to all social housing landlords.

The Group were runners up in their category at the Caerphilly Homes Transforming Lives and Communities Awards in September 2015.

### Estate Walkabouts

The first estate walkabout was held in Lansbury Park, While there was no initial response from tenants, tenant views were gathered by door knocking in the area.

The second walkabout was held in Graig Y Rhacca in June, While representatives of the local Tenants and Residents Group attended the general tenant response was again disappointing,

It is intended to try one more walkabout in an Area rather than Neighbourhood location and advertise by SMS messaging rather than printed flyers (see section 3).

### Training/Conference Attendance

Tenants have been supported to attend various training and conference events during the year including :-

Monitoring and Evaluation Training (GAVO)

CSIMS training (in-house)

Mystery Shopping Training (TPAS Cymru)

Equality and Diversity Training x 2 (1 Corporate, 1 External trainer)

TPAS Cymru Annual Conference

Welsh Tenants Annual Conference x 2

CIH Annual Conference

TPAS Disability Network

## TPAS Tenant Partnership Network

Some involved tenants have also participated in one to one sessions with Participation Officers to identify future training needs.

### **3. Improve Information Flow to the Wider Tenant Body**

The tenant involvement team has supported the production of:-

-the 'happy 'video in summer of 2014 starring many of our involved tenants and community members from Trinant. -community digital story telling project for Penyrheol Community Association in August 2015 -digital story for the Tenancy Support Officers in the Rents Section in September 2015

In conjunction with the Rents Manager we have also utilised text messaging to advertise involvement opportunities. This was very successful for the rent consultation where we had a very poor response to printed flyers and recruited all but two of the participants via text message.

In March 2015 tenant participation officers and area housing staff supported the Trevelyan Court Group to undertake a two week community consultation on proposals for environmental improvements in Trevelyan and adjacent courts in Lansbury Park.

Participation Officers have also attended community events in Rhymney, Penllwyn, Lansbury Park and Blackwood to give information about involvement opportunities

The Armchair Reviewers Group continues to receive the tenant newsletter and other housing publications for review and comment before publication.

Several tenant representatives were involved in a joint working group with staff, facilitated by the Communications and Tenant Engagement Officer, to review the Caerphilly Homes Communications Strategy.

Tenant Information Exchange (TIE) meetings have been held in September 2014, January and June 2015 and another is scheduled for November 2015. The Exchange is an informal meeting that gives involved tenants an opportunity to network and to discuss different housing issues. Since January staff involved in delivering the housing service have shared information at the TIE covering the Floating Support service, the work of the Tenancy Support Officers Anti-Social Behaviour, Common Housing Register, and the work of the Sensory Loss Group

### **4. Mainstreaming of Tenant Participation**

Interaction with tenants is part of day to day business for housing officers. Encouraging tenant involvement and seeking tenant views on services should also be part of that day to day business especially when planning and reviewing services.

During the past year the Tenant and Community Involvement Team has participated in a project run by the Chartered Institute of Housing. The project called 'Working Together to Challenge the Future of Tenant Involvement' involved various organisations (local authorities and housing associations) looking at the future of tenant involvement.

As well as discussing national trends and local initiatives organisations have been encouraged to review their own tenant involvement structures and activity and to look at how tenant involvement can be developed to achieve improvements in service delivery. An essential part of this process is to involve staff and tenants in discussions on how we develop in future.

A joint staff and tenant focus group was held on 5th/6th October and this included discussion on how tenant participation can be 'mainstreamed'. The outcome of these discussions will form part of future strategy development.

## 5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None. The report is for information only.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are two budget allocations for participation activities, a general budget for direct participation support and an additional resource of £150,000 identified in the Offer Document to support increased and improved participation arrangements. This additional allocation is itemised in the table below.

Budget Item	Budget Figure 2014/2015	Actual Expenditure 2014/2015
Projects	100,000	28,912
Contribution to Salary Costs	26,000	27,372
Training	10,000	5,292
Transport	14,000	12,391
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£150,000</b>	<b>£73,967</b>

6.2 Within the Projects budget expenditure included the election costs for the Task Group members and the establishment and running of the HIP.

6.3 There was additional expenditure of £10,469 from the general tenant participation budget including items such as £3,274 for the TPAS subscription, £2,788 grant funding to Associations, £1,807 room hire and £1,701 for meals and refreshments.

## 7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

## 8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The views of consultees listed have been incorporated within this report.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Members are asked to note the information provided.

## 10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To keep members of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group updated on tenant participation progress and activities.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Housing and Local Government Acts.

Author Mandy Betts, Tenant and Community Involvement Manager  
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Liz Lucas, Head of Procurement  
Fiona Wilkins, Public Sector Housing Manager  
Lesley Allen, Group Accountant  
Sandra Isaacs, Rents Manager  
Elizabeth Bayliss, Tenant Participation Officer  
Gail Taylor, Tenant Participation Officer  
Kelsey Watkins, Communications and Tenant Engagement Officer

Background Papers:

Supporting People with Sensory Loss: Best practice Guide for housing providers  
HIP: Landlord's Consent Handbook