



CABINET – 3RD FEBRUARY 2016

SUBJECT: RE-PROFILING OF WHQS PROGRAMME AND HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016-17

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

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- 1.1 The attached report was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016, having previously been considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on 10th December 2015. The report highlighted the changes to the Welsh Quality Housing Standard (WHQS) programme and set out the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme, and sought the views of Members on the proposed adoption of these programmes, prior to its presentation to Cabinet.
 - 1.2 Members were reminded of the major slippage to the WHQS programme during 2014/15 which necessitated a review of the investment strategy, and which was approved by Cabinet in February 2015, together with the Capital Programme for the 2015/16 financial year. The new programme was front-loaded in an attempt to catch up on the slippage but has led to resourcing issues (particularly in the Eastern Valleys) and has caused problems for the WHQS team due to the number of properties being worked on across the county borough. The number of the properties in the internal works programme reduces in the later years of the programme and a further re-profiling is advocated to have a more consistent number of properties each year. This is a benefit to some community areas that will be pulled forward, although others will slip back. Some of the changes are also to avoid gaps arising on the larger estates and enable continuity of phasing of works.
 - 1.3 Officers explained that it will not be possible to catch up on the external works programme within 2015/16, with most of the current financial year planned programme expected to run into 2016/17. A number of sequence changes to external works take account of the change in approach in the Lower Rhymney Valley and will minimise (as far as practical) conflicts between internal and external works, with overlaps being managed as they arise. The HRA Capital Programme budget allocates the necessary resources based on the Savills cost plan to deliver the programme during 2016/17. Experience has shown that significant variances will arise once the properties are surveyed and contract packages are specified. A large contingency has therefore been included within the budget proposal. Appended to the report were details of community sequence changes in respect of internal and external works to Council homes, a re-profiled investment strategy and the HRA Capital Programme for 2016/17.
 - 1.4 Discussion took place regarding the community sequence changes and Members referred to some communities where external works have been significantly postponed as a result of the re-profiling. Officers explained that a sensible approach needed to be undertaken in respect of these works and that by staggering these over a number of years, this would spread the investment needed, reduce pressure on available resources and ensure there is a manageable amount of work taking place at any one time.

- 1.5 In response to a Member's query, Officers confirmed that details of the re-profiling arrangements would be communicated to tenants via the Council's website, tenant newsletters and Tenant Liaison Officers. Concerns were expressed regarding the significant re-profiling of external works in some communities (in that this delay could have an impact on tenants) and Officers explained that such delays were mainly restricted to external works only as they have a lesser impact to tenants than internal works. Discussion took place regarding tenant expectations in respect of the programme of works and Officers explained that although the initial programme of works had been published through to 2020, it had been made clear that this could be subject to change. Members were also advised that there had been little feedback received from tenants regarding changes to the programme of works to date.
- 1.6 Following consideration of the report, the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein:-
- (i) the re-profiling of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard Programme and the Capital Programme for 2016/17 that flows from the re-profiling be adopted;
 - (ii) a further report be presented when sufficient information is available to update the Savills cost plan based on an analysis of actual costs being incurred for internal and external works.
- 1.7 Members are asked to consider the recommendations.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016 – Agenda Item 12