



## CABINET – 3RD FEBRUARY 2016

**SUBJECT: ROWAN PLACE – PROGRESS REPORT AND SENSITIVE LETTINGS POLICY**

**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 provided an update on the progress made in relation to delivering a targeted regeneration programme in Rowan Place, Rhymney, and sought the views of Members on the adoption of a sensitive lettings policy and introductory tenancies specifically in relation to Rowan Place, prior to its presentation to Cabinet.
  - 1.2 Members were advised that following the identification of severe damp and external defects to the fabric of the properties in Rowan Place, Council approved a £4.2m budget to undertake a comprehensive refurbishment of the 72 Council properties on this estate. This regeneration programme has commenced and has been supplemented by funding from the Welsh Government which will facilitate environmental enhancements within Rowan Place. To date, internal works have been completed to 16 bungalows and 14 flats and the majority of external works to the bungalow have been completed. External wall insulation has been completed in 5 blocks of flats, groundworks are ongoing in 3 blocks, and roof work has commenced to 6 houses.
  - 1.3 In previous years, Rowan Place has been plagued by high levels of anti-social behaviour, crime and drug and alcohol abuse. Consequentially, it was proposed to introduce a Sensitive Lettings Policy (attached at Appendix 1) which will cover all 2-bedroom flats in Rowan Place. The Policy incorporates a strict set of criteria against which applicants will be assessed prior to the granting of a tenancy, and will include introductory tenancies for new allocations. This will facilitate a 12-month trial period before a secure tenancy is awarded and include a provision for the tenancy to be brought to an end during this time, should the tenant breach the tenancy requirements. It was noted that introductory tenancies would only apply to new tenants and that any current tenant of Caerphilly Homes who transfers into Rowan Place will continue on an existing tenancy.
  - 1.4 During the course of the ensuing debate, it was queried as to whether the Council's existing Sensitive Lettings Policy or Common Allocation Policy could be adapted to incorporate the proposed criteria instead, and concerns were raised as to whether the proposed Policy could be viewed as discriminatory to those residents of Rowan Place residing in the eligible properties. Officers highlighted the need for a separate Policy in order to address specific reputational problems associated with Rowan Place and improve demand for housing in the area. Members were also advised that an Equalities Impact Assessment of the Policy had been undertaken (attached at Appendix 2).
  - 1.5 A query was raised regarding the criteria timeframes listed within the draft Sensitive Lettings Policy (in that some made reference to the last 12 months and others to the last 2 years). Members also expressed the need for cases of historical chaotic behaviour to be considered

sensitively in that this could have arisen from underlying mental health issues. Officers confirmed that all listed criteria should refer to the last 2 years and that this amendment would be made to the draft Sensitive Lettings Policy prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

- 1.6 Following consideration of the report (and subject to the aforementioned amendment) the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein the adoption of the Sensitive Lettings Policy (including introductory tenancies for new tenants in Rowan Place) as set out in the Appendix to the report be approved.
- 1.7 Members are asked to consider the recommendation.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016 – Agenda Item 11