



## CABINET – 1ST JUNE 2016

**SUBJECT: PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL SUPPORTED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION - LLYS TABERNACLE, RHYMNEY**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - COMMUNITIES**

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to enter into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association in respect of the use of their premises at Llys Tabernacle, Rhymney for the purposes of supported accommodation for single homeless persons.

### 2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide emergency accommodation for persons identified as being homeless and in priority need. Due to a lack of supported accommodation a number of single homeless persons have to date had to be placed into Bed and Breakfast (B&B) accommodation both within and outside the County Borough.
- 2.2 Since November 2014 the Authority has made a conscious effort to reduce its reliance on B&B accommodation for emergency housing. This has been done, in the main, by the creation and use of additional supported accommodation at Ty Croeso, Newbridge and Maes y Derwen, Tredomen which together have provided 28 rooms for use as emergency accommodation for single persons. Such provision provides greater support for homeless persons whilst at the same time affording the communities within which such accommodation is located a degree of reassurance in respect of any safety concerns they may have.
- 2.3 Currently the Authority has the use of 55 rooms within 4 units of accommodation which provide 24hr support. One of these units, the Countryman, Bedwellty which caters for 16 – 24 year olds, was recently the subject of a joint inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, Ofsted (Social Care) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CCSIW) Unfortunately their findings suggest the premises is no longer suitable for the placing of younger persons. There are also concerns about the physical condition of the property which, it is felt, will require substantial investment from its private owners for the property to have any realistic medium to long term use as emergency accommodation which is compliant with relevant statute. For these reasons officers feel that an alternative, better located, facility should be considered.
- 2.4 To this end a block of 13 self contained flats located at Llys Tabernacle, Church St., Rhymney, owned by Wales and West Housing Association, has been identified as being suitable for adaptation to a 12 room, 24hr supported housing scheme. The owners have already secured Planning permission for such a project which will be managed by the voluntary sector housing support organisation Solas. Solas currently manage the Countryman and Maes y Derwen and have a proven record locally of delivering high quality housing support.

- 2.5 This report seeks approval for the Authority to enter into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association in respect of the use of their premises at Llys Tabernacle, Rhymney for the purposes of supported accommodation for single homeless persons. This project will act as a replacement for the Countryman.

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

- 3.1 10 Year Homelessness Action Plan For Wales – 2009-2019, which sets out some guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services.
- 3.2 Caerphilly Delivers: The Single Integrated Plan (2013-17); linking to the Prosperous, Safer Caerphilly and Healthier Caerphilly themes.
- 3.3 *People, Property & Places: A Housing Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough*, linking to aims 1 and 4.
- 3.4 Caerphilly Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2015-2018.

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 For many years this Authority, along with many other Local Authorities, has used B&B accommodation as its main source of emergency accommodation for single persons. Until 2013 our only source of supported accommodation was the then family unit at Ty Croeso, Newbridge which at that time could accommodate up to 7 homeless families. In early 2013 Ty Croeso was closed following the completion of a brand new, 13 room family facility at Ty'r Fesen, Caerphilly. Ty'r Fesen is owned by United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) and support is provided by the Authority's own staff that relocated from Ty Croeso.
- 4.2 Ty Croeso was then fully refurbished to a standard which complied with the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation (Wales) Order 2006 and when reopened in September 2014 it provided an additional 10 units of supported accommodation for use by single homeless persons. Supporting People tendered for an appropriate support provider to manage the scheme and The Wallich, a support provider active across Wales were successful in securing the contract and have managed Ty Croeso since it reopened. The Wallach also provide floating support to persons either in B&B or other temporary accommodation.
- 4.3 Alongside these facilities the Authority also had use of the Countryman, Bedwellty, a privately owned premises which has Planning consent specifically for use by homeless persons between the ages of 16-24. The Countryman has 14 rooms and support within this facility is provided by Solas. Solas were originally founded in 1983 to provide housing and support in Newport and now offer services across Wales. Solas is a member of the Pobl Group which comprises seven organisations, all of whose core mission is to provide housing and support, prevent social exclusion and develop the capabilities of the people it supports.
- 4.4 Despite having this level of supported accommodation, in late 2014 there were still between 30 – 35 single homeless persons in B&B accommodation and so officers were in discussion with United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA) with a view to creating another supported housing facility at an empty, former secure unit at Maes y Derwen Tredomen. This building had the potential to provide substantial additional accommodation and so UWHA purchased the building and thereafter converted it so as it now provides 18 units of single persons accommodation.
- 4.5 It is fair to say that the opening of Maes y Derwen has been of great assistance in the strive to reduce our reliance on B&B. Also, since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, our Housing Advice team have been extremely pro-active in delivering the Authority's Homelessness Prevention agenda. This activity, together with the additional accommodation

provided by Maes y Derwen has now brought about a situation whereby at the end of the last quarter of 2015/16 we had 5 persons in B&B.

- 4.6. Whilst this situation is a great achievement, there are concerns regarding the ability of the Authority to continue its use of the Countryman. A recent inspection by HM Inspectorate of Probation, Ofsted (Social Care) and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) was critical of the location of the premises and also of the practice of accommodating homeless 16/17 year olds alongside older clients (the premises caters for 16 - 24 yr olds). There are also concerns over the building's physical condition and its ability to now provide homelessness accommodation of an acceptable standard.
- 4.7 The situation with the Countryman is further complicated as Solas, the current support provider, have given notice that they also have concerns about the premises and no longer wish to continue as support provider. Solas have, however, given an assurance that they will continue as support provider until such time as The Authority can source a suitable alternative provision.
- 4.8 In response to the above, Officers within both Housing and Social Services have been investigating options for developing further supported housing schemes that would allow for homeless clients to be adequately accommodated and supported on a 24-hour basis for a temporary period before being rehoused permanently.
- 4.9 To this end a block of 13 self contained flats located at Llys Tabernacle, Church St., Rhymney, owned by Wales and West Housing Association, has been identified as being suitable for adaptation to a 24hr supported housing scheme. The premises is empty and the owners have already secured Planning permission for its conversion to a 12 room facility. If Members are minded to accept the recommendations in this report the intention is that it will be managed by Solas. As mentioned earlier Solas currently manage the Countryman and Maes y Derwen and have a proven record of delivering high quality housing support throughout the Gwent region.
- 4.10 The facility itself, once converted, will provide temporary accommodation for single homeless people referred by CCBC via the Housing Advice Team. Referrals to the accommodation will only be from those accepted as eligible Homeless and in priority need, who may require support. The accommodation at Llys Tabernacle will provide the Authority with a modern facility that will deliver a combination of independent and communal facilities. The proposed self-contained units will comprise of a lounge, bedroom, kitchen area and bath/shower room.
- 4.11 Solas will provide a 24/7 service at Llys Tabernacle with on-site support staff. In doing so, this will ensure support is delivered to the individuals, as well as providing a housing management service. All residents will be required to adhere to the terms of a License Agreement governing acceptable behaviour both inside and outside of the accommodation. Staff will monitor behaviour, access to the building, including visitors, in order to ensure the License Agreement is adhered to. The premises will be fitted with CCTV provision to assist Solas with their monitoring role.
- 4.12 Should Members support this proposal, Wales and West have indicated that the necessary conversion works can be completed before the year-end. It is intended that until the facility is ready for occupation that the Authority will continue to use the Countryman for the placement of 18 – 24 year old single homeless persons. However, to comply with the recommendations of the CSSIW report, 16/17 year olds will now be accommodated within a dedicated area of Maes y Derwen which can be closed off from other areas of the building.
- 4.13 Once all works have been completed, an opportunity will be provided for local residents to meet with support staff and have a look around the building. It is hoped this will facilitate the building of links with the community and provide an opportunity to allay any concerns the community may have.

- 4.14 It is accepted that the substitution of the Countryman for Llys Tabernacle will result in a reduction of 2 rooms within our overall available provision. However, Officers are actively seeking an additional, smaller facility for use as similar supported accommodation which will raise available room numbers to a level which should combat the need for future B&B use (although this cannot be absolutely guaranteed). A smaller facility will also reduce the incidence of void costs.

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. This project is for the benefit of homeless persons whose individual needs are assessed and taken into account when dealing with their individual cases and placements are made in line with previously adopted allocations policies and procedures. No potential for unlawful discrimination has been identified, therefore a full EIA has not been carried out.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The costs of undertaking the conversion works to the premises are to be borne by Wales and West Housing Association who will recoup their costs via the annual leasing arrangement with Solas.
- 6.2 Housing Benefit will meet the rent and service charges for Solas' management of the scheme. The cost of the support will be met from Supporting People programme grant. However, the overall costs to the Supporting People programme will be offset by the Authority's withdrawal from the Countryman.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

- 8.1 The Ward Member, as a consultee, whilst fully supporting the Authority's efforts to reduce the use of B&B, sought clarification in respect of a number of issues regarding the proposed operation and management of the premises. The author responded accordingly and has satisfactorily addressed the matters raised by the Ward Member. No other consultees offered any comments.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Authority enters into a partnership arrangement with Wales and West Housing Association with a view to utilising Llys Tabernacle as an alternative supported Housing Project to the Countryman.

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

- 10.1 To ensure the Authority retains a similar level of supported accommodation to that which is currently available.
- 10.2 To ensure that both homeless single people and the community are afforded maximum protection and support.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

### **11.1 Housing Act 1996, Housing(Wales) Act 2014.**

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Consultees: Christina Harry – Corporate Director - Communities  
Cllr. Dave Poole – Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing  
Cllr. Carl Cuss – Ward Member Twyn Carno  
Shaun Couzens – Chief Housing Officer  
Suzanne Cousins – Principal Housing Officer (Housing Portfolio)  
Claire Davies – Principal Housing Officer (Strategy and Standards)  
Kevin Fortey – Housing Development Officer  
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Lesley Allen – Principal Accountant  
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