



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 14TH DECEMBER 2017 AT 5.30 P.M.**

PRESENT:

C. Davies - Chair

Task Group Members:

Mrs Y. Bryant, M. Davies, Ms M. James, L. Harding, A. Hussey, Mrs S. Jones, Mrs D. Moore and L. Whittle.

Officers:

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), F. Wilkins (Public Sector Housing Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from E. Forehead, Ms R. Thompson, Ms L. Pewtner, Mrs L. Phipps and Mrs D. Price.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tenant Representatives Y. Bryant, C. Davies, Ms M. James, Mrs S. Jones, Mrs D. Moore declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items as Council Tenants.

3. MINUTES – 2ND NOVEMBER 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. REVIEW OF LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY – ROWAN PLACE

The report provided the Task Group with details of the outcome of the 12 month review of the Local Lettings Policy (LLP), which was introduced in 2016 for the allocation of two bed flats at Rowan Place, Rhymney.

The Task Group noted that the procedure required to be followed by Caerphilly Homes in relation to the adoption or review of a Local Lettings Policy is defined in the Common Allocation Policy which was entered into with Housing Association partners in December 2016.

The Task Group noted that in previous years, the area of Rowan Place was plagued with high levels of antisocial behaviour, crime and substance abuse. It was regarded locally as a 'no go zone' and was largely home to transient single people and families with particular challenges, including drug and alcohol issues, criminal and antisocial behaviour issues. The stigma attached to the area led to potential tenants refusing the offer of accommodation in Rowan Place despite the accommodation lending itself to small families, couples and single people who may have been affected by welfare reform. A comprehensive regeneration programme was recently undertaken in Rowan Place and, in order to create a sustainable cohesive community and improve its reputation, a decision was taken in 2016 to implement a Local Lettings Policy for the void flats on the estate.

A strict set of criteria was devised and any applicant that met any of the criteria would not be offered a tenancy for the flats for a period of at least 2 years. In addition, prospective tenants were required to satisfy an income/ expenditure assessment of their affordability of the tenancy and where two or more applicants had equal priority, preference would be given to applicants who were in employment or training. The policy was subject to a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment.

The LLP for Rowan Place became operational in August 2016. At the time of the first review 12 of the flats in Rowan Place were void, compared with 10 in 2013 and 22 in 2016. The Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office have been operating the LLP for approximately 12 months and makes clear to existing and prospective tenants, the circumstances in which a new tenancy within Rowan Place will be granted. All applicants for Rowan Place are required to complete a supplementary application form in order that their eligibility under the LLP can be considered. In total 12 allocations have been made to the flats since August 2016 with a number of applicants refused as they have been unable to satisfy the LLP criteria. Applicant households who are not offered an allocation of a flat in Rowan Place have been considered for an allocation elsewhere in the County Borough in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy.

In addition, it was confirmed that, in accordance with the Common Allocation Policy, a Local Lettings Policy Panel has considered the proposal submitted to Caerphilly Homes and approved the extension of a revised Rowan Place Local Lettings Policy for a further 12 months.

The Task Group thanked Officers for the report and extended their gratitude for the work undertaken at Rowan Place and the change in the Community.

A Member sought information on the advertising campaign that has been undertaken for Rowan Place and the criteria for lettings. Officers explained that there has been extensive advertising undertaken within Social Media, Newsline, NHS Publications, flyers and adverts on Right Move through a local Estate Agent. It was agreed that a strict criteria has been implemented for lettings, however, in order to ensure sustainability an interview process has been implemented and a review will also be undertaken of the process in the next 12 months.

A Task Group Member, in support of the Policy queried whether End of Tenancy Interviews have been completed and if so, what the reasons are for people leaving. Officers explained that, where possible this is undertaken and there are varying reasons for leaving, some are looking to move into a house, which is especially desirable for families, some single persons are unable to maintain a tenancy.

In addition, it was noted that since the implementation of the Policy, there has been 1 complaint in respect of drugs on the estate, which has been resolved. However the stigma for Rowan Place has reduced, voids are decreasing and there is a clear commitment to provide a more positive environment and image for Rowan Place.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group thanked the Officers for the report and noted its content.

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

The Task Group requested that the following reports be presented to the next meeting:

1. Acceptable Fails;
2. Community Fund;
3. Partial/ Full works Completed;
4. Training on the Well Being and Future Generations Act;
5. Information on the work and remit of the Valleys Task Group.

Officers noted the report requests and highlighted that training on the Well Being and Future Generations Act will be provided prior to the next meeting, further correspondence will be sent out in the New Year.

The meeting closed at 5:25 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2018.

CHAIR