

CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 4TH SEPTEMBER 2018

SUBJECT: REMODELLING & RECLASSIFICATION OF OLDER PERSONS ACCOMMODATION

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT -

1.1 The report requests that prior to its presentation to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet, Members consider recommendations relating to:

- initial feasibility studies for the remodelling of 6 sheltered housing schemes and proposed options
- re-classification of Hafod Y Bryn, Risca to older persons accommodation and Tredegar Court, Crosskeys to a standard sheltered housing scheme
- complete decommissioning of 4 partly decommissioned schemes in the Caerphilly Basin
- re-classification of specified units of older persons housing stock in the County Borough
- granting of delegated powers to Officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places to re-classify older persons accommodation to general needs using the principles specified within this report

2. SUMMARY

2.1 In the Risca/Crosskeys areas alone there are 6 Council owned sheltered housing schemes in addition to Housing Association provision. There are also a significant number of designated older persons units within these communities. A review of these schemes with consideration for remodelling was required due to the high number of schemes and the lack of demand in the locality for the type of accommodation on offer, not all of which was considered fit for purpose. A decision taken in relation to any of the schemes mentioned in this report could impact on the other schemes in the area hence the combined recommendations in this report.

2.2 A report was presented to and approved by Caerphilly Homes Task Group and the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee in September 2015 to undertake feasibility studies for the potential remodelling of 6 sheltered housing schemes in the Eastern Valley. These initial studies have been completed and this report provides the detail and estimated financial implications for the remodelling options. It also includes options other than remodelling for consideration by Members.

2.3 Since the report was presented in September 2015, further issues have arisen and investigations have identified the need for a wider review of certain older person services which are also included in this report.

2.4 The scheme located at Hafod Y Bryn is not operating well as a sheltered housing scheme and would suit reclassification. A feasibility study has been undertaken and details are provided in this report.

- 2.5 This report also considers the removal of the extra care classification for Tredegar Court as it no longer provides an extra care service. The proposal would assist in stabilising future allocations providing a fairer service charge for tenants and remove the need for HRA subsidy to the service.
- 2.6 The proposal for full decommissioning of the 4 partly decommissioned older persons schemes in the Caerphilly Basin to replace the hard wire alarm service with a dispersed alarm service is also given consideration in this report.
- 2.7 There is a significant unmet need for general needs accommodation for single people throughout most of the County Borough. In order to assist in meeting this significant unmet demand this report proposes that all 1 bed houses currently designated for older persons be re-designated for general needs use. In addition, it recommends that certain low demand older person flats be re-classified for general needs use. It also recommends approval for delegated officer decisions in future, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places for the re-classification of older persons stock, where it is evidenced that demand for such older persons' accommodation is low and there is significant unmet need for general needs accommodation within that community.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan 2018-2023 Well-being Objective 3 addresses the supply, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the County Borough and the provision of advice, assistance or support to help improve people's health and well-being.
- 3.2 The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 ensures that older people in Wales have the resources they need to deal with the challenges and opportunities they face for the future.
- 3.3 Improving Lives & Communities – Homes in Wales 2010 Welsh Government Report. This sets out the national context on meeting housing need, homelessness and housing related support services.
- 3.4 The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 sets out the following wellbeing goals which link with the aims of this report:-
- A resilient Wales
 - A prosperous Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A globally responsible Wales
- 3.5 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all social housing is improved and maintained to achieve specific standards. The Council is committed to ensuring that the WHQS investment transforms not only homes but also lives and communities.
- 3.6 Caerphilly Well-Being Plan (2018-2023): *Positive Places - Enabling our communities to be resilient and sustainable.*

4. THE REPORT

REMODELLING

- 4.1 There are 34 sheltered housing schemes comprising of 988 units of sheltered housing in the Caerphilly County Borough, 15 of these schemes are under one roof. One scheme is classified as an extra care scheme.

- 4.2 Following a Sheltered Housing review in 2013, six sheltered housing schemes in the Eastern Valleys area were identified as unfit for purpose. This was mainly due to the bedsits and small flats within the schemes as well as accessibility issues. In 2015 Cabinet approved the completion of preliminary studies to consider the feasibility of remodelling these schemes to meet future needs and demands, committing to consider implementation of viable options post 2020.
- 4.3 Five of these schemes, namely Castle Court, Ynyswen, Waunfawr House, St Marys Court and Ty Melin have been inspected by the CCBC Building Consultancy team to establish their initial potential for remodelling. All five have been considered potentially suitable for remodelling and the associated draft plans and estimated costings have been provided. Remodelling would significantly reduce the number of units at each of the schemes with a consequential loss of rental income. Service charges would also be apportioned to a lesser number of tenants within the schemes resulting in higher charges to the remaining tenants.
- 4.4 Whilst initial consideration was given to the potential remodelling of Britannia Court, this has not progressed to formal detailed inspection to determine feasibility due to the observations incorporated into this report.
- 4.5 There are significant cost and risk implications attached to the remodelling options for the schemes, which are set out in this report and this contributes to a number of concerns for the future viability of these schemes. Future demand for any remodelled scheme is not guaranteed. Despite the significant investment required the impact on service charge costs per scheme and per household is uncertain. In addition, the potential impact of possible further changes to housing benefits and Supporting People funding is currently unable to be determined. Also local development proposals may shift demand from existing local authority housing to new build properties if they are perceived to be more desirable and it can not be guaranteed that the remodelling proposals would sufficiently satisfy current and future needs, demands and legislative requirements.
- 4.6 Whilst the current Common Housing Register evidences some demand for older persons and sheltered housing, waiting lists for Castle Court, Ynyswen, Waunfawr House, St Marys Court and Ty Melin continue to be regularly exhausted as the smaller properties and bedsit accommodation are considered to be undesirable and impractical. This was a key factor in deciding which schemes should be considered for remodelling.
- 4.7 There are currently 34 voids within the schemes identified for remodelling 31 of which are bedsits, reflecting the current lack of demand for this type of property. Since the earlier report in 2015, in total 48 properties have become void across these schemes.

New voids from 01/04/2016 to 16/02/2018:

Scheme	Number of units	New Voids 2016/17	New Voids 2017/18	Total New Voids 2016-18	Current Voids
BRITANNIA COURT/CLOSE, RISCA	30		1	1	0
CASTLE COURT (UNDER ONE ROOF ONLY), CROSSKEYS	41	6	5	11	17
ST MARYS COURT, RISCA	33	1	5	6	0
TY MELIN, CROESPENMAEN	33	7	6	13	3
WAUNFAWR HOUSE, CROSSKEYS	22	5	5	10	10
YNYSWEN, PONTLLANFRAITH	19	3	4	7	4
Total	178	22	26	48	34

Average void duration of the 48 properties that have become void since 01/04/2016:

Scheme	Average void duration (days)
BRITANNIA COURT/CLOSE, RISCA	34
CASTLE COURT, CROSSKEYS	234
ST MARYS COURT, RISCA	76
TY MELIN, CROESPENMAEN	131
WAUNFAWR HOUSE, CROSSKEYS	283
YNSWEN, PONTLLANFRAITH	154
Overall average	181

- 4.8 The rent loss for all voids excluding the support/service charges for each scheme from 2015/16 to date equates to:

Scheme	Rent Loss
BRITANNIA COURT/CLOSE, RISCA	£6,063.84
CASTLE COURT, CROSSKEYS	£72,224.72
ST MARYS COURT, RISCA	£7,726.02
TY MELIN, CROESPENMAEN	£37,450.35
WAUNFAWR HOUSE, CROSSKEYS	£43,106.04
YNSWEN, PONTLLANFRAITH	£36,391.64

- 4.9 There is a high concentration of sheltered housing and older persons stock in parts of the Eastern Valleys area, with 70% of stock being designated for older persons or sheltered compared in the communities of Risca and Crosskeys in comparison to 30% across the stock as a whole. This contributes to the issues of low demand for sheltered accommodation. There are no applicants on the waiting list for sheltered housing bedsit accommodation in these areas and only a limited demand for 1 and 2 bed sheltered housing accommodation.
- 4.10 Discussions have been held and continue with partner agencies, including Social Services, to consider potential opportunities for alternative uses of the schemes, however this is proving difficult due to the size, location, access and make up of the schemes under review.
- 4.11 Consultation is ongoing with Charter/Pobl regarding their potential future plans to develop additional older persons housing in the Risca area, which would be tailor made, up to date and specialist, mixed tenure housing if it were to progress. This could further impact on the future demand for existing local authority stock as it would offer a credible modern alternative.
- 4.12 Demolition of some of the schemes identified for remodelling, and the subsequent sale of the land is an option due to the high cost implications associated with remodelling, the close proximity of competing schemes and the uncertainty of future demand. Initial discussions have indicated there would be demand for redevelopment of one or more of the sites for housing use.
- 4.13 If any remodelling is approved, it is anticipated the work would be undertaken between 2020 and 2025 and could potentially be carried out by the in-house workforce to provide continuity for those employees post achievement of WHQS in 2020. Due to the extent of works associated with remodelling consideration will need to be given to decanting of tenants, on a temporary basis (or permanently if this were their preference) to enable works to proceed.
- 4.14 The following remodelling proposals and estimated costs have been provided for the aforementioned schemes, they vary in content and detail with regard to the specification of work but give an indication of the spend required to bring these schemes up to the required

minimum standard. It is anticipated that further work would be required as the projects evolve as the studies have not been invasive and unforeseen work should be expected.

4.15 **Britannia Court, Risca**

4.15.1 Britannia Court has been given initial consideration for remodelling however due to:

- the increase in demand evidenced over the past two years
- the scheme not having bedsit accommodation
- no current void properties
- well used communal facilities and good tenant engagement
- its general good property condition, lift provision
- recent improvements completed to main access for those with restricted mobility.

It is now proposed that this scheme be incorporated into the current WHQS programme of work for sheltered housing for completion by 2020.

4.15.2 There are 22 units in the under one roof part of the scheme and 8 outside flats in two blocks at Britannia Close set across the main road, which are also part of the scheme. Recent consultation responses from the tenants of these outside flat blocks in relation to the service charges review have indicated that the current tenants do not regard themselves as part of the scheme, as their location does not lend itself to easy use of the under one roof facilities. Subject to a feasibility study of the drainage system and tenant consultation, there is an option to fully decommission the 8 outside flats and separate them from the sheltered housing scheme by reclassifying them as designated older persons, non sheltered housing stock or an alternative housing use. In considering this option we recognise the requirement to consult to obtain the views of the current tenants in both the outside flats and the main scheme. Should these flats be reclassified the tenants in the flats would see a saving on service charges as they would no longer be service charged for the communal facilities in the scheme, however this would mean they would no longer have access to those facilities. Any approved change would be subject to a variation of tenancy for the tenants in the flat blocks.

4.15.3 If after consultation there was a decision to proceed with reclassification, any tenant in the flats who objected could register for a transfer to the under one roof scheme. If the flats were reclassified the tenants would retain the link to the Careline facility. They would not receive the service of the Sheltered Housing Officer, support planning or housing related support, however they could request assistance from the Floating Support service if any housing related support was required at any time. As they would not be able to use the laundry facilities at the sheltered housing scheme any WHQS work to their kitchens would need to ensure there is space for a washing machine and adequate drainage. The flats already have washing line facilities. The flats also have their grass cut under the grounds maintenance arrangements for the scheme and this would also need to be reviewed. If the tenants wish to retain this service if reclassification goes ahead then this element of the service charges would continue to apply.

4.15.4 Reclassification of outside flat blocks would impact on the tenants of the under one roof block as the service charges would be spread across fewer tenants however, the scheme is currently subject to the service charges cap.

4.15.5 The weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £27.89 (30 units), but are currently capped at £27.35 for most tenants. Reclassification of the outside blocks of flats would reduce the units at the scheme by 8 and the service charges (uncapped amount) would have the potential to increase to £38.03 (22 units).

4.15.6 If a decision is taken to separate the flats from the scheme, every effort would be made to work with the tenants in reducing the service charges for the scheme where possible and practical.

4.16 **Ty Melin, Croespenmaen**

4.16.1 Comprises 33 under one roof extremely small 1 bed units, 3 of which are currently void. The remodelling proposals are to redesign all units, combining the units to provide partial compliance with the WHQS standard, with 20 fully compliant and 3 non compliant units. Proposals include:

- Electrical upgrade
- Heating upgrade
- Provision of new passenger lift
- Additional car parking facilities
- Redecoration
- Window and door alterations/renewal

4.16.2 Estimated cost of remodelling is £1,720,000, equating to £74,783 per unit (23). The weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £26.76 (33 units), with installation of a lift and a reduction in units this would have the potential to increase to £40.52 (23 units).

4.16.3 This is the only sheltered housing scheme in this area but it is in a poor location with few local facilities. The nature of the 3 storey design does not lend itself well to the installation of a standard passenger lift, although this can be provided at a cost. Remodelling would result in less rental income and higher service charges for the tenants. The site itself would be desirable for re-development due to its location.

4.17 **Ynyswen, Pontllanfraith**

4.17.1 This is a single storey under one roof scheme with 19 units, comprising 12 bedsits, 6 one bed flats and 1 two bed flat. 4 bedsits are currently void. Remodelling would reduce the units at the scheme to 13 units and the fully compliant WHQS option is:

- Reconfigure existing bedsits to provide 8 fully WHQS compliant units and retain 5 existing 1 bed flats, including energy metering, at an estimated cost of £820,000 which equates to £63,076 per new unit (13)

4.17.2 The estimated costings include:

- replacement heating system
- improved drainage work
- window renewal/alterations
- redecoration
- electrical upgrade.

4.17.3 The uncapped weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £35.75 (19 units), currently capped at £27.35 for most tenants. With a reduction in units this would have the potential to increase to £52.25 (13 units).

4.17.4 This is the only sheltered housing scheme in this locality which is generally a high demand area for general needs accommodation. It is not located close to community facilities. There are older persons bungalows close by. Remodelling would reduce the number of units significantly and increase the service charges to the remaining units. If we were to proceed with remodelling there would be scope in the future to reclassify the scheme for alternative purposes if demand for the sheltered housing is not sustained.

4.18 **Castle Court, Pontywaun**

4.18.1 Comprises of 56 units in total. There are 41 under one roof units which include 28 bedsits. There are also 15 outside properties in four separate blocks (14 one bed flats, 1 two bed house) which have not been considered as part of this remodelling exercise. There are currently 17 voids in the under one roof building, of which 16 are bedsits. The option presented for remodelling the under one roof units to a fully WHQS compliant scheme is:

- £2,445,000, equating to £84,310 per new unit in the main building (29)
- additional £40,000 for a new accessible lift
- Estimates for the full remodelling include renewal of electrics, replacement of heating system, decoration, windows, doors, provision of new scooter store, car park improvements, new bin store, drainage work
- Carpet costs are not included

4.18.2 This option would reduce the number of units to 29 flats within the under one roof scheme, totalling 44 units for the scheme when including the 15 outside flats. Weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £25.88 (56 units), with a reduction in units this would have the potential to increase to £32.93 (44 units).

4.18.3 The budget for a comparable new build alternative on the site has been estimated at £4,513,375.

4.18.4 The scheme is low demand due to the bedsit accommodation. It is in a location where there are other Council and Housing Association sheltered housing schemes in close proximity which are more desirable. This scheme would require a high level of investment and the remodelling would result in less rental income and higher service charges for the tenants. The site is large and would lend itself to development.

4.18.5 If remodelling proposals go ahead or a decision is taken to close the scheme there is an option to consider reclassification of the 15 outside flats from the under one roof element of the sheltered housing scheme and reclassifying them to designated older persons accommodation or an alternative use e.g. single persons accommodation, similar to the Britannia Court sheltered housing scheme as detailed above.

4.19 **St Marys Court, Risca**

4.19.1 Comprises of 33 under one roof units in total. There are 16 one bed flats, 16 bedsits and 1 three bed house (ex Wardens property), across two wings and two storeys, jointed by a single storey block housing communal facilities. There are currently no void properties at the scheme.

4.19.2 The remodelling proposal to a fully WHQS compliant scheme consists of:

- Bedsits in each 'block' combined to produce one bed, two person flats, reducing the number of units to 25
- The kitchen and adjacent store in the one bedroom flats be combined to open the living room and the boiler be repositioned to improve the space available
- Providing a lift for each of the two wings (£65,000 per lift)
- Entrance reconfigured to increase foyer space and provide 2 accessible WCs
- Redecoration
- Estimated cost: £2,746,250, equating to £109,850 per new unit (25)

Associated external scheme improvement work has not been included. There is an option to reduce costs by providing only one part of the scheme with a lift.

4.19.3 The uncapped weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £30.98 (33 units), currently capped at £27.35 for most tenants. With a reduction in units this would have the potential to increase to £43.85 (25 units with service charges for 2 lifts in situ).

4.19.4 This scheme is in a good level location close to local facilities however the bedsit units are difficult to let. The scheme is across two floors with two separate wings and it does not have a lift. Remodelling would result in less rental income and higher service charges for the tenants. The site itself would be desirable for re-development due to its location.

4.20 **Waunfawr House, Crosskeys**

4.20.1 This is a 3 storey under one roof scheme with 22 units comprising 16 bedsits, 5 one bed flats and 1 three bed flat. There are currently 10 void properties at this scheme. Remodelling to replace bedsits with 1 bed flats would reduce the number of units to 16 and leave 3 non WHQS compliant bedsits due to there being limited options for improvement.

4.20.2 The remodelling proposals include:

- Relocation of laundry room
- New heating, water, gas and electricity services internally
- Window renewal/alterations

The estimated cost does not include any external work to the communal areas, paths or gardens.

4.20.3 Estimated cost of remodelling: £1,174,000 equating to £73,375 per new unit (16).

4.20.4 The uncapped weekly service charges for the scheme currently equate to £31.65 (22 units), with a reduction in units this would have the potential to increase to £43.51 (16 units).

4.20.5 This scheme is located on a level site within reasonable distance to local facilities at the end of a cul-de-sac which is an area of predominantly older persons' accommodation and borders the Crosskeys Coleg Gwent Campus. Parking and garden space is limited. The bedsits are small and undesirable. Remodelling would result in less rental income and higher service charges for the tenants.

4.21 **Alternative Proposal**

From the above information it is considered that the cost of remodelling each of the schemes is exceptionally high. It is likely that future charges in some schemes would not be affordable for most tenants who are not benefit dependant. In addition, future demand is not guaranteed. Due to the cost and location of 3 of the schemes Officers are of the opinion that it would be prudent to consider the closure of Castle Court (41 units, 24 tenants displaced, excluding the outside blocks of flats), St Marys Court (33 units, 33 tenants displaced) and Waunfawr House (22 units, 12 tenants displaced) and consideration could be given to developing a new build replacement sheltered housing scheme on an alternative identified site in the same locality e.g. Ty Darran. Such a scheme is considered to be a good long term investment as it would provide a modern facility meeting the aspirations of current and future tenants. It would incorporate appropriate accommodation and accessibility standards with up to date technology. Such a scheme would also be designed to provide flexibility to adapt to changing needs and demands. It is anticipated this could be a joint venture with Health and Social Services to provide a community hub approach. This would necessitate detailed negotiations with stakeholders and partners. A commitment could be given to rehousing the displaced tenants to the new scheme giving them the opportunity to remain in their existing community. The number of households to be displaced is currently 69, however this could be managed to reduce this figure if future voids are not relet. Consideration to future use including sale or re-development of the sites of the 3 former sheltered housing scheme sites could then be progressed.

HAFOD Y BRYN, RISCA

4.22 This sheltered housing scheme consists of 28 flats across 7 two storey blocks. There is a separate block housing the communal facilities on the ground floor and the former 'Warden' 2 bed flat on the first floor. This flat is now utilised as a sheltered housing unit within the scheme.

4.23 The scheme has not always been designated for sheltered housing. It is located on a hill, situated away from general local facilities. Several of the blocks are located away from the highway with stepped access. There is a possibility that there will be a requirement for the current road through the scheme to be widened in the future to provide access to facilitate the

development of a proposed new build site, which would further compromise the success of a sheltered housing scheme.

- 4.24 The communal facilities consist of a communal lounge, kitchen, office, laundry and toilet facilities. The laundry is used regularly but the rest of the communal facilities are not well used and the scheme does not work well as a sheltered housing scheme. Removal of the communal laundry facility could be addressed by WHQS kitchen improvement works to enable tenants to have laundry facilities in their own homes if there is adequate drainage capacity for the site, which is yet to be determined.
- 4.25 There are no current void properties at this scheme, however demand is routinely low and the current waiting list is exhausted.
- 4.26 This scheme would suit reclassification from sheltered housing to designated older persons' accommodation but could also accommodate general needs households. Full consultation and information sharing would be required for tenants to advise them of a review of their services, such as access to housing support from floating support services when required rather than a Sheltered Housing Officer, impact on service charges and changing to a dispersed alarm service. Service charges would be significantly reduced for tenants if reclassification is approved.
- 4.27 Reclassification could result in increased demand for other sheltered housing schemes in the locality.
- 4.28 Building Consultancy has undertaken a feasibility study and confirms that the ground floor of the communal building could be converted into another flat with 2 possible options provided at the following estimated cost:
- Option 1: 2 bed 4 person flat with shower room and bathroom - £93,000
 - Option 2: 3 bed 6 person flat with bathroom - £90,000
- 4.29 Due to their size and their location facing the main road on the edge of the scheme, if the reclassification of the scheme and the conversion work to the communal area is approved, these two properties would be suitable for general needs family accommodation.

TREDEGAR COURT, CROSSKEYS – EXTRA CARE

- 4.30 Tredegar Court is currently classified as an extra care scheme with 25 under one roof flats however it no longer provides a full extra care service having had the on site 24 hour carer assistance removed by Social Services from the scheme in 2010. It was a sheltered housing scheme before being refurbished as an extra care scheme in 2004. There are also 12 outside flats in Tredegar Street which were decommissioned from the extra care scheme in 2010 and are now regarded as sheltered housing stock but are still subject to the full service charges of the extra care scheme as they have full access to the services.
- 4.31 Despite the full care service being withdrawn, the scheme still has additional services over and above those provided in a traditional sheltered housing scheme. The facility provides 1 meal a day to the tenants in Tredegar Court as a mandatory requirement of the tenancy arrangements, although not all tenants routinely take their meals. The tenants in the Tredegar Street flats still have the option to purchase a meal but on a daily basis by paying up front separately when ordered but there is only a limited take up of this service. There is also a full time Sheltered Housing Officer on site Monday to Friday serving both the scheme and the outside flats, whereas sheltered schemes have part time Sheltered Housing Officer cover.
- 4.32 The scheme has a large commercial kitchen facility which is managed by Catering Services with Housing recharged in full for the provision of the facility. This cost is service charged to the tenants, however, the meal service is currently heavily subsidised by Housing and this is not cost effective for the future. For 2017/18, the meal service expenditure totalled £59,544.32 and income totalled £35,821.19, equating to a deficit of £23,723.13.

- 4.33 There are currently 7 void properties at this scheme, 6 in the main building and 1 outside flat. Demand is low and the assessment of suitable tenants for the under one roof element is confusing for applicants and Officers. Housing are frequently requested to accept applicants who have high level extra care needs but the scheme is now unable to provide this level of care. Applicants with a lesser need do not have care packages but the current allocations process requires that a new tenant has to have a care package in place. Therefore this is proving to be contradictory and difficult to assess.
- 4.34 The communal facilities, communal bathroom, and hairdressers have not been well used for some years. The shop facility closed after a short period of time of the extra care facilities being introduced due to lack of demand.
- 4.35 A recent meeting has taken place with the Assistant Manager of Adult Social Services and the Care Manager to discuss the future of the extra care classification. It was agreed that in essence the scheme is no longer an extra care facility and does not lend itself to provide the extra care option for the future. The building is now deemed to be unsuitable for extra care facilities and this was one of the reasons why the full carer service was withdrawn. Discussions with Adult Social Services have not resulted in proposals for alternative uses of the scheme.
- 4.36 If the extra care title assigned to this scheme is removed and it is returned to a standard sheltered housing facility with the same allocations approach as sheltered housing, this should help to alleviate the low demand issues at this scheme.
- 4.37 Removal of the extra care title would enable closure of the kitchen and facilitate reduced costs to the tenants and remove the need for the significant subsidy. Alternative meal provisions would be offered, i.e. Meals Direct (from £3.10 per two course meal), Wiltshire Farm (from £2.99 per meal), for those who would require it.
- 4.38 When the service charge review was undertaken in 2017, Tredegar Court was excluded from the review due pending this proposal. If a decision is made to retain the kitchen provision, a review of the service charges to the tenants would be required to cover the costs currently heavily subsidised by the Council and this is likely to make the scheme unaffordable for tenants in the future.
- 4.39 Should this scheme be reclassified to sheltered housing, the existing care arrangements which have been put in place would continue unchanged for each individual tenant. The provision would be the same as is offered to persons receiving care in the community or in other sheltered housing schemes. Any tenant requiring referral for assessment for relocation to an alternative true extra care scheme would receive assistance and support to instigate this.
- 4.40 It is proposed that the existing Sheltered Housing Officer would continue full time at the scheme to support tenants with the proposed transition of services for a maximum period of 12 months at which time the level of cover would come into line with other sheltered housing schemes which would be reflected in the revised service charges to the tenants of the scheme.

FULL DECOMMISSIONING OF PARTLY DECOMMISSIONED SCHEMES

- 4.41 As part of the previous sheltered housing review in 2013, four schemes in the Caerphilly Basin namely Nantddu, Waunfach, Claude Road (Denscombe), and Grange Close, were partly decommissioned, a total of 133 units. They continue to receive the hard wired alarm service and housing management support e.g. assistance with TV licencing for those in receipt of protected rights, at a weekly charge of £5.62. A floating support service is also provided at a set charge of £4.69 per week. It was agreed at the time that the floating support service is not time limited on demand housing related service, with regular pullcord checks.

- 4.42 The sheltered housing service continues to fund annual maintenance costs for Tunstall hard wired alarm equipment at these locations. The standard maintenance contracts for all schemes total £3,513.67 per annum with the Council also funding any additional costs for work not covered by the contract. In the past 18 months there have been significant external cabling issues which have not been covered by the contract. It is anticipated this will continue to be a service delivery problem in future years due to the age and condition of the cabling at the sites.
- 4.43 It is proposed that consideration now be given to fully decommissioning these partially decommissioned units. To allow for full decommissioning, tenants would receive a face to face visit as part of the consultation process. Each tenant would receive the option of a pendant dispersed alarm to replace the hard wired alarm system. Future support for the dispersed alarm service would be through the Caerphilly Careline service. Tenancy management issues would continue to be directed through their local housing office. Each tenant would continue to have the option of referral to the Floating Support Service for short term housing related support as currently offered to all other clients. The Floating Support Service would continue to assist with the TV Licencing for the remaining tenants on protected rights until there is a change in tenancy or the tenants attain the age of 75.
- 4.44 Initial full decommissioning of these schemes would incur costs to the Council associated with the installation of the dispersed alarm system and the provision of a pendant to each tenant requesting one. Access to a telephone line would also be required. Decommissioning would eliminate the maintenance and repair costs to the Council for the hard wired alarm system and the possibility of any future associated service charges to tenants. Pullcord checks would no longer be required and the pullcords would be removed as part of the full decommissioning work. A quarterly standard charge of £57.59 (discounted if on housing benefit to £38.09) would apply to tenants if they were to receive the dispersed alarm service, however they would be able to opt out of this service if they wished. Currently they are not able to opt out and have to pay an alarm charge.
- 4.45 When the service charge review was undertaken in 2017, these schemes were excluded from the review due to this pending proposal. If full decommissioning does not take place, there would have to be a review of the charges imposed for floating support, maintenance charges, and other associated services, which could result in the properties becoming unaffordable for tenants in the future.

RECLASSIFICATION OF EXISTING OLDER PERSONS HOUSING

- 4.46 Members will be aware that there is a significant unmet need for general needs accommodation for single people throughout most of the County Borough (LHMA, 2015). The Council's current stock of single person accommodation is limited in number and is largely concentrated in a small number of our communities, rather than dispersed across the County Borough. This means that there is very little choice and in order for single persons to be housed the majority are routinely required to leave their own communities and associated support networks.
- 4.47 These single people often find it extremely difficult to settle and become part of the community in which they find themselves, where there also tend to be significant numbers of other single people in a similar situation. With large numbers being placed in the same community, this can also lead to community concerns and allegations of anti-social behaviour, thereby affecting the reputation of the area and having a negative impact on future demand for properties. The individual's situation is often compounded by the enforced loss of local support networks, which may include family members and community members in addition to formal service provisions. This trend has a detrimental impact on community sustainability and cohesion in both the former and new communities. It may also impact on family cohesion including difficulties in individuals sustaining relationships with children, siblings etc. often leading to isolation and vulnerability, and in many cases failed tenancies and subsequent homelessness.

- 4.48 The current Housing register includes 1,383 single person households who want to be housed by Caerphilly Homes, whilst we have a stock of only 406 single person general needs properties, of which 86 are two bedroom properties. Lettings policies and affordability issues preclude single person households from receiving offers of larger accommodation. By contrast 784 applicants aged 60 or over want to be housed in Caerphilly Homes designated older persons' non sheltered 1 bed accommodation of which we have 872 properties. Many of these older applicants have also applied and are eligible for 2 bed older persons' properties of which we have 1,361.
- 4.49 It is recognised that there is a significant shortage of 1 bed general needs properties within the County Borough, The impact of welfare reform and Universal Credit are placing increasing pressure on the Council to provide additional smaller units of general needs accommodation that are affordable. A failure to do so will result in increased levels of homelessness and tenancies failing due to financial hardship.
- 4.50 The 2015 Local Housing Market Assessment has identified a significant shortage of general needs 1 bed accommodation (588 units) and a surplus of older persons and sheltered accommodation (61 units) across the County Borough. Initial findings from the draft 2017 LHMA indicate that this mismatch continues.
- 4.51 Some designated older persons housing within the county borough is low demand and undesirable by older persons. This may be due to location, property type or design. Prior to the introduction of the Common Allocation Policy applicants were able to receive unlimited offers of accommodation without penalty. This enabled Officers to offer such properties to eligible applicants in shortlist order until they reached an applicant who would accept the property. If, as was common, they exhausted the waiting list of older persons for the property they were able to continue to shortlist in 5 year age bands under 60 until they were successful in allocating the property. In practice, this resulted in many of these lower demand older person properties being allocated to applicants under 60. Those older persons that had refused offers of the accommodation were not disadvantaged in the application process by refusing this low demand accommodation.
- 4.52 The Common Allocations Policy has introduced a process whereby all applicants are entitled to receive three offers of accommodation based on the preferences they express on their application e.g landlord, property type and size, and area. All offers of accommodation that are made in accordance with the stated preferences which are subsequently refused by the applicant, without justification, are regarded by the Council as an unreasonable refusal. Upon three unreasonable refusals an application is suspended for three months. Experience to date has demonstrated that offers of accommodation that we know to be of low demand by older persons to these older applicants has impacted on their application as most refusals are considered to be unreasonable, thereby reducing their likelihood of being rehoused.
- 4.53 Re-classification of these low demand or unsuitable older persons' properties to general needs would assist older persons in receiving a successful allocation of a property of their choice and increase opportunities to house single younger persons across wider communities, and also support homeless prevention. It is therefore proposed to re-designate the following properties from older persons to general needs accommodation.
- 4.54 **One Bed Houses**
- 4.54.1 Caerphilly Homes manages 24 one bed houses across four communities, all but one of which is currently designated for older persons:
- Lower Row, Rhymney – 1 unit (general needs)
 - Railway Terrace, West End, Abercarn – 10 units
 - Central Avenue, Panside – 10 units
 - Chatham Place, Machen – 3 units

4.54.2 Demand for this type of accommodation by older persons tends to be low due to the size of the properties and the design which causes difficulties for those with restricted mobility, often necessitating adaptations or a future transfer to a more suitable property, causing inconvenience to the tenant and cost implications to the Council. Of the current tenants in these 1 bed houses only three were aged 60 or over at sign up, and only nine of the properties currently have a tenant aged 60 or over. Similar trends can be evidenced for former tenants in the last five years.

4.55 One and Two Bed Flats at Pencoed Avenue, Cefn Fforest

4.55.1 Cefn Fforest is identified within the 2015 Local Housing Market Assessment as a community with an over supply of older persons' accommodation and shortage of general needs accommodation. There are ten 1 bed and five 2 bed flats in Pencoed Avenue currently designated for older persons, in a location where the stock is predominantly designated for general needs. Demand for this older persons' accommodation is low due to its location. None of the current tenants were aged 60 or over at sign up, with only four aged 50 or over at sign up. None of the current tenants are aged 60 or over. Similar trends can be evidenced for former tenants in the last five years.

4.55.2 Acknowledging that a small number (9) of existing tenants in these properties would be eligible for older persons' accommodation, if re-classification were to be approved, appropriate support would be provided to those tenants to facilitate transfers if they wished to remain in older persons' accommodation.

4.55.3 It is recognised that there is the potential opportunity to identify additional accommodation that would be suitable for re-classification from older persons to general needs use across the County Borough. It is therefore proposed that Officers be given delegated powers to re-classify older persons accommodation to general needs, in consultation with the Cabinet Member using the principles identified above for Pencoed Avenue, when it can be evidenced that demand for specific blocks of older persons accommodation is low and there is significant unmet need for general needs accommodation within that community. If the delegated powers are approved, properties would only be allocated from the general needs list as and when a property becomes empty. The tenants already in occupation who would meet the criteria for older persons' housing would be supported to a move to older persons' accommodation if so desired, however there would be no enforced moves.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that:

Long Term – improving and future proofing our properties; providing affordable housing for current and future tenants to meet their needs and aspirations; promoting independence: providing a fair and transparent service to tenants

Prevention – providing well maintained, safe, warm and secure homes; preventing disrepair and promoting low maintenance for the future. Reducing dependence on health and social care. Reducing the requirement to build new housing to meet unmet needs by reclassification of existing stock.

Integration – improved standards of housing and community environments. Increasing cohesiveness of communities by ensuring there is a range of appropriate housing.

Collaboration – joined up working arrangements within in-house teams and cost effective procurement arrangements

Involvement – tenant meetings, consultation and information updates to obtain the views of the residents

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An EIA screening has previously been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact was identified therefore a full EIA has not been carried out to date. It is recognised that further EIA screening may be required in relation to the proposals prior to the implementation of the recommendations.
- 6.2 The Council recognises the need for older tenants to be supported, wherever possible, in accommodation that is accessible and supports their rights to independence.
- 6.3 Previous consultation with tenants on the remodelling proposals has not raised any other equalities related issues.
- 6.4 The proposal supports Strategic Equality Objective 3: Improving Physical Access, Strategic Equality, Objective 5: Inclusive Engagement and Participation and Strategic Equality Objective 7: Supporting Age-friendly Communities.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Britannia Court WHQS improvements can be incorporated into the existing WHQS budget.
- 7.2 Core remodelling works would incur the following provisionally estimated costs with further costs anticipated for associated environmental improvements and unforeseen work. This level of investment would still not guarantee future demand:

Ty Melin	£1,720,000
Ynyswen	£ 820,000
Castle Court	£2,445,000
St Marys Court	£2,746,250
Waunfawr House	£1,174,000

- 7.3 The costs for the development of a replacement scheme in the event of a decision to close 3 of the aforementioned schemes have not yet been established. A comparable new build alternative for Castle Court however was estimated at £4,513,375 which will give some indication of the cost involved. This would be subject to a further report however, funding sources such as Affordable Housing Grant and the Health and Housing fund to deliver an innovative, combined health and housing project would be investigated. There would also be the potential to offset some of the cost by disposal of one or more of the sites. Considering a new build replacement option for 3 of the schemes will ensure future proofing and viability of the scheme for the coming years. A modernised approach could be considered which would be more appealing and beneficial to current and future tenants, meeting needs and aspirations. If we were to retain the 3 schemes and remodel or improve them, it is anticipated that we will still be in the same position in a few years time in considering their future due to their dated facilities, the age of the buildings and limitations on the modernisation options available to us.
- 7.4 The full cost of the remodelling proposals, if agreed, is approximately £8.9m plus a contingency of 10%. The proposed Asset Management Strategy identifies an allocation of £2m per year for remodelling (£10million for 5 years). If a decision is taken to incorporate all six schemes back into the current WHQS programme the cost is £5.795m which would need to be built into the programme, thereby impacting on borrowing levels.
- 7.5 The proposals for Tredegar Court and Hafod Y Bryn would potentially reduce the service charges for tenants. Hafod Y Bryn improvements would provide an additional unit for rental income.

- 7.6 Re-classification of Tredegar Court would remove the current requirement for the HRA to subsidise the kitchen service. It would also result in less income for the Catering Service however some of this could be offset with the take up of alternative meal provisions being provided by the Catering Service through Meals on Wheels.
- 7.7 The full decommissioning of the partly decommissioned schemes would result in a saving on the annual Tunstall contract for repairs and maintenance and any charges for work not covered by the contract. It would also prevent the requirement to service charge tenants in the future.
- 7.8 The rent loss for low demand units would reduce if schemes are remodelled however the consequential reduction in units would result in reduced rental income for these schemes. In addition, service charges would increase for the tenants as the costs would be spread across fewer tenants.
- 7.9 Reclassification of existing older persons stock would not have any detrimental financial implications, there would be a saving on management costs and service charges to tenants would be reduced if services are removed or varied.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is not anticipated that there would be any personnel implications at this time for the Older Persons Housing service.
- 8.2 Existing personnel would be required to support tenants that may be decanted as part of the remodelling process.
- 8.3 Consultation exercises would be required and subject to the availability of adequate resources, would be undertaken by existing personnel.
- 8.4 If any remodelling is approved, it is anticipated the work would be undertaken between 2020 and 2025 and could potentially be carried out by the in-house workforce to provide continuity for those employees post achievement of WHQS in 2020.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 This report reflects the views of the consultees.
- 9.2 All local ward councillors for each of the communities with schemes affected by the remodelling proposals were invited to attend separate meetings to discuss, in detail, the outcome of the feasibility studies, reasons and recommendations for each scheme. Those councillors able to attend were supportive of the report and the preferred options being recommended. All councillors unable to attend these meetings were consulted in writing and invited to discuss any queries or concerns.
- 9.3 One ward councillor disagreed that there will be no guarantee of future demand for some of the six schemes considered for remodelling. The councillor also suggested the refurbishment of the existing building at Ty Darran for accommodating residents temporarily displaced by remodelling proposals however it is not anticipated that there will be any requirement to decant large numbers of residents in that locality. There is, therefore, no intention for Housing to seek to refurbish the existing building on the Ty Darran site to facilitate any decanting and any that may be required will be managed utilising existing stock.
- 9.4 The local ward councillors for each of the communities affected by reclassification and decommissioning proposals were consulted in writing in relation to proposals for properties in

their communities and invited to discuss any queries or concerns direct with officers. Those who responded to the consultation were supportive of the report proposals.

- 9.5 Britannia Court tenants will be informed of the proposal to undertake WHQS work as part of the sheltered housing programme of work if approved.
- 9.6 The sheltered housing tenants in the schemes identified for remodelling have previously been consulted on the principles of remodelling. A further update to tenants and follow up consultation will be provided following the outcome of this report.
- 9.7 Tenants in the Hafod Y Bryn sheltered housing scheme will be consulted and advised on future proposals if the recommendations are supported.
- 9.8 Tenants in Tredegar Court will be consulted and advised on options for future meal provisions and changes to services and future charges if the recommendation is supported. If not supported tenants in Tredegar Court will be consulted on a review of their service charges.
- 9.9 The tenants in the 4 partly decommissioned schemes will be consulted and advised on future proposals if approved. Face to face visits would be required to provide advice, progress the full decommissioning and install a fully dispersed alarm service.
- 9.10 The reclassification of older persons housing stock detailed in this report would not require consultation but face to face meetings would be held with those tenants affected to explain the reasoning behind the decision and to establish their intentions and support requirements.
- 9.11 There would be a legal requirement to serve a variation of tenancy notice to tenants where services are being removed or varied.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To consider the following proposed options for each scheme and provide comments for consideration by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet:

10.1.1 BRITANNIA COURT

- (a) Retain and incorporate the current scheme into the current WHQS programme of work – estimated cost of £15k per unit (30 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £900,000 for internal improvements only.
- (b) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work, and decommission the external flat blocks from the scheme if feasible following further investigatory work and consultation with existing tenants – estimated cost as above plus the provision of dispersed alarms (8 units @ approx. £40 each) for the blocks of flats, totalling £900,320

Item (b) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

10.1.2 TY MELIN

- (a) Proceed with the WHQS partially compliant remodelling to provide 23 units at the aforementioned cost - £1,720,000.
- (b) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling – estimated cost of £15k per unit (33 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £945,000 for internal improvements only
- (c) Agree to a programmed closure of the scheme and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site

Item (a) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

10.1.3 YNYSWEN

- (a) Proceed with the partially WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 13 units at the aforementioned cost - £820,000.
- (b) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling – estimated cost of £15k per unit (19 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £785,000 for internal improvements only.
- (c) Agree to a programmed closure of the scheme and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site

Item (a) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

10.1.4 CASTLE COURT

- (a) Proceed with the fully WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 44 units (29 in main block) at the aforementioned cost - £2,445,000.
- (b) Proceed with the fully WHQS compliant remodelling at the aforementioned cost, and decommission the external flat blocks from the scheme if feasible following further investigatory work– estimated cost as above plus the provision of dispersed alarms (15 units @ approx. £40 each) for the blocks of flats, totalling £2,445,600.
- (c) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling– estimated cost of £15k per unit (56 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £1,340,000 for internal improvements only
- (d) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling, and decommission the external flat blocks from the scheme if feasible following further investigatory work– estimated cost as above plus the provision of dispersed alarms (15 units @ approx. £40 each) for the blocks of flats, totalling £1,340,600
- (e) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site
- (f) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site – estimated new build cost £4,513,375

Item (f) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

10.1.5 ST MARYS COURT

- (a) Proceed with the fully WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 25 units at the aforementioned cost - £2,746,250.
- (b) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling – estimated cost of £15k per unit (33 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £995,000.
- (c) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site.

- (d) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site – estimated new build cost £4,513,375

Item (d) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

10.1.6 WAUNFAWR HOUSE

- (a) Proceed with the partially WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 16 units at the aforementioned cost - £1,174,000.
- (b) Retain and incorporate into the current WHQS programme of work without remodelling– estimated cost of £15k per unit (22 units) plus £500,000 for communal upgrades, totalling £830,000.
- (c) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme and investigate options for disposal or a redevelopment site.
- (d) Agree to a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative as a replacement for 3 schemes and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site– estimated new build cost £4,513,375.

Item (d) above would be the Officers preferred option for this scheme.

- 10.2 To agree to the reclassification of the Hafod Y Bryn Sheltered Housing Scheme from Sheltered Housing to designated general needs and older persons housing, subject to consultation and technical feasibility and to convert communal facilities into a ground floor 3 bed flat.
- 10.3 To agree to the removal of the extra care classification from Tredegar Court thereby returning it to a sheltered housing scheme.
- 10.4 To agree to the full decommissioning of the 4 partly decommissioned schemes – estimated cost of providing dispersed alarm to 133 units £5,320 if required by the tenants.
- 10.5 To agree to the reclassification of older persons housing stock to general needs use at the specific locations mentioned within this report.
- 10.6 To agree to the delegated powers for Officers to re-classify older persons' accommodation to general needs using the principles identified in this report, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To ensure the future viability of sheltered housing and older persons' accommodation whilst meeting the needs and aspirations of current and future tenants.
- 11.2 To rationalise the numbers of sheltered housing units in the Risca/Crosskeys locality.
- 11.3 To address the low demand issues in sheltered housing and some older persons' accommodation.
- 11.4 To enable the authority to meet current and future housing demand for single persons general needs housing accommodation and improve the distribution of single persons housing across the County Borough.
- 11.5 To reduce the ongoing financial liability to the Council in relation to low demand, the provision of associated services and the consequential impact of these on tenants.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Housing Act 1985

12.2 Landlord & Tenant Act 1985

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