



## **SPECIAL CABINET**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 10.30 A.M.**

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PRESENT:

Councillor D. Poole – Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Care and Wellbeing), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), Mrs B.A. Jones (Finance, Performance and Governance), P. Marsden (Education and Achievement), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes and Places) and E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), M. S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director - Communities), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer), S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), F. Wilkins (Public Sector Housing Manager) and A. Dredge (Committee Services Officer).

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing).

#### **2. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Mr R. Tranter, the newly appointed Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer to his first meeting of Cabinet.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors B.A. Jones and N. George declared personal interests in relation to agenda item 4 – Caerphilly Homes Asset Management Strategy. Details of which are recorded with the respective item.

#### **4. CABINET – 25TH JULY 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2018 (minute nos. 1 - 9) be approved and signed as a correct record.

## MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

### 5. CAERPHILLY HOMES ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Councillors B.A. Jones and N. George declared personal interests in relation to this item, both being tenants of the Council. As their interests were personal only, they were not required to leave the room and could take part in the debate and vote.

The report outlined the proposed Asset Management Strategy for the Caerphilly Homes housing stock, following the anticipated achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Cabinet were provided with details of the proposed Strategy which sets out how the Welsh Housing Quality Standard will continue to be maintained post 2020, and will ensure that the Council's housing portfolio continues to provide affordable, quality homes that meet customer's needs now and for the future. The Strategy will apply to the asset management of all existing and future council housing which is supported by the Housing Revenue Account.

It was explained that the Strategy encompasses a number of key issues and considerations, which will work together in an integrated way to deliver the proposed Strategy, including a Delivery Plan, a Procurement Plan, Standard/Quality, a 5 year Asset Maintenance Programme, Reactive and Void Repairs, Statutory Landlord Maintenance, and a Housing (HRA) Business Plan. Further information on these areas was set out in the report

Officers provided an overview of the functions comprising the proposed Asset Management Delivery Plan (which sets out the overarching plan for delivery, is based on a 5 year programme and ensures a fully integrated approach to the delivery of Council homes moving forward). The Plan takes into account the requirement for cyclical/statutory maintenance across Council homes, the process for reactive and void repairs, accessible housing provision, asset maintenance proposals moving forward, energy improvements, and options for increasing Council house supply. Cabinet noted that it is proposed to commence the next external works programme in 2020/21 which will be based on a five-year cycle. It is intended to commence the internal works programme in 2025/26, which will be determined by the Asset Management Database, life expectancy estimates and surveys. It was explained that the extent of work will be based on the condition and not the age of the components (such as kitchen fittings).

The report had been considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on 4th September 2018 and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 6th September 2018. The recommendations were supported at both meetings. Cabinet supported the report and were pleased to note the positive responses received from tenants in relation to the public consultation regarding the proposed Strategy. Reference was made to paragraph 13, which sets out the potential financial implications and the criteria used in listing the assumptions. Officers were thanked for providing this detail and also for their hard work and commitment in producing the Strategy.

Following consideration and discussion and subject to an amendment paragraph 16.1 (c) to read *paragraph 13.2. and not paragraph 12.2.* it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to an amendment in paragraph 16.1 (c) to read *paragraph 13.2. and not paragraph 12.2* and for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the 5 year Asset Management Strategy as set out in the report, be established;
- (ii) the proposed delivery plan as indicated in Item 6 of this report, be agreed;

- (iii) the assumptions which have been included in the Business Plan that outlines the affordability envelope and have been set out in Appendix 1 and paragraph 13.2, whilst noting that these may be subject to change which may result in further reports being submitted, be agreed;
- (iv) separate detailed reports be submitted in relation to the remodelling of sheltered housing schemes and new Council housing.

## **6. REMODELLING AND RECLASSIFICATION OF OLDER PERSONS ACCOMMODATION**

The report provided Cabinet with an overview of current sheltered housing schemes across the County Borough. Members were reminded of the review of sheltered housing in 2013, which identified 6 sheltered housing schemes in the Eastern Valleys area as unfit for purpose due to the small size of the units and 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.

Members were advised that since these studies were commissioned, further issues have arisen and investigations have identified the need for a wider review of certain older person services. Officers explained that there is a surplus of older person's accommodation across the County Borough, together with a lack of single person's accommodation, increased waiting lists for Council housing and a need to tackle homelessness within the County Borough. Therefore, in addition to the proposed options arising from the feasibility studies, the report also proposed the re-classification or decommissioning of several other schemes within the county borough in order to increase uptake of these properties, and proposed the granting of delegated powers to Officers to reclassify such accommodation in the future (in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places).

Further information on each of the schemes under consideration was discussed which outlined the number of units per scheme, the facilities available, and the level of current demand. The rationale for each proposal and the potential impacts for tenants were set out in the report that contained the Officers preferred options.

The details of the consultation carried out to date with local ward Councillors and tenants on the proposals were set out in the report and noted by Cabinet. Officers explained that responses have been minimal but positive to date and that residents have generally welcomed the proposals as an opportunity to evaluate the types of services they are currently paying for and whether or not they are needed in their scheme. Further tenant consultation will take place across a number of the schemes should the recommendations be supported.

Cabinet discussed the proposals and acknowledged the disparity between the demand for single person accommodation and the number of voids across sheltered housing schemes and the need to take action in this regard. Members were reminded that the Authority recently reviewed its service charges and were advised that Officers will continue to work with tenants wherever possible to achieve a fair balance. The proposals will give the opportunity for Officers to review services with sheltered housing tenants to ensure they are only paying for services that they receive or require.

The report had been presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on 4th September 2018 and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 6th September 2018. A number of preferred options for remodelling and reclassification of older person's accommodation were considered and the officers preferred options were supported at both meetings.

Clarification was sought in relation to the Ty Darran site and questioned if consideration had been given to refurbishing this site and the potential for working in conjunction with Social Services at the site in moving forward. Cabinet were informed that in terms of the consultation one local ward Member suggested the refurbishment of the existing building at Ty Darran for accommodating residents temporarily displaced by remodelling proposals. It was explained that 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. Officers confirmed that should there be any proposed development at this site, then Housing would look to work with Social Services and the Health Authority as there is a Health Clinic adjoining the site.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for arranging site visits to the proposed sites and again for the volume of work that has been invested in this ambitious report.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report, Cabinet agreed the preferred Options: -

- (i) Britannia Court – Option (b) – to 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;
- (ii) Ty Melin – Option (a) to proceed with the WHQS partially compliant remodelling to provide 23 units at the cost - £1,720,000;
- (iii) Ynyswen – Option (a) to proceed with the partially WHQS compliant remodelling to provide 13 units at the cost - £820,000;
- (iv) Castle Court – Option (f) 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, be agreed;
- (v) St Marys Court – Option (d) 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, be agreed;
- (vi) Waunfawr House – Option (d) a programmed closure for the scheme for a replacement new build alternative and investigation of options for disposal or redevelopment of site – estimated new build cost £4,513,375, be agreed;
- (vii) 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, be agreed;
- (viii) the removal of the extra care classification from Tredegar Court thereby returning it to a sheltered housing scheme, be agreed;
- (ix) 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, be agreed;

- (x) the reclassification of older persons housing stock to general needs use at the specific locations mentioned within the report, be agreed;
- (xi) delegated powers for Officers to re-classify older persons' accommodation to general needs using the principles identified in the report, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places, be agreed.

## **7. PROPOSALS FOR INCREASING COUNCIL HOUSING SUPPLY**

The report advised Cabinet of proposals for increasing the supply of Council Housing and outlined principles of development mechanisms and options for delivery. Members were requested to consider the information in the report and provide views on the options to enable Officers to further develop proposals resulting in a more detailed report to be brought forward for building new Council homes on specific sites. The report also included proposals on other options which could be considered for increasing Council housing supply.

Cabinet were advised that the Council's housing stock has been significantly depleted over the years as a result of the Right to Buy process and currently there are approximately 4,300 active applicants on the Common Housing Register seeking a transfer or the allocation of a home. A breakdown of these applicants by housing category was included in the report, which clearly highlights a need for an increase in general accommodation, particularly smaller units of accommodation for single persons. Additionally, work is nearing completion on the Local Housing Market Assessment, and the data gathered suggests that an additional 282 units of affordable housing are required per annum to meet demand and that there is a particular demand for single person accommodation.

The report therefore set out a number of options for increasing Council housing supply, including the use of the Housing Revenue Account to purchase General Fund or private land at market value or provide a leasing option, the redevelopment of existing Housing Revenue Account sites, purchase via Section 106 agreements, or the acquisition of existing properties (either via private properties or through former Council properties). There is also potential to explore several funding options in order to increase Council housing supply, including the use of the Housing Revenue Account, Affordable Housing Grant, Innovative Housing Grant, the Health and Housing programme, or borrowing supported by the Housing Revenue Account.

The report had been presented to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on 4th September 2018 and the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 6th September 2018. The recommendations were supported at both meetings.

Cabinet wholly supported the report and the recommendations contained therein and were pleased to note these proposals are being discussed in 2018 instead of the anticipated date of 2020. In terms of Wellbeing of Future Generations, the report highlights that the Council is making intergenerational decisions for the long-term. It was confirmed that the three reports presented at this meeting sets out the Council's clear strategic intent in moving forward. Officers were thanked for their hard work and commitment in producing the report.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the principle of building new council homes and access the AHG in full or in part, be agreed;

- (ii) the HRA sites to progress with detailed viability studies and the principle of identifying and pursuing suitable General Fund or open market sites for the development of affordable housing, be agreed;
- (iii) the transfer and purchase of new homes through Section 106 Agreements where there is an identified housing need and associated business case, be agreed;
- (iv) the selective acquisition of existing properties to support housing need and subject to value for money being demonstrated, as set out in item 4.7 and 4.8 with individual acquisitions being progressed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Homes and Places, be agreed;
- (v) a review of resources to support the preferred approach, be agreed;
- (vi) the delivery options outlined be considered regarding the Officers' preferred Options 2 and 5 with the aim of the Council accessing AHG and delivering new council homes within the stated timeframes, i.e. 2019/20;
- (vii) the submission of future reports for approval providing more detail on any viable development sites for new Council home provision, be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.05am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on the 3rd October 2018.

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CHAIR