



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 1ST NOVEMBER 2018

SUBJECT: WHQS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with a high level update on progress regarding the delivery of the WHQS Environmental Programme.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Following the ballot in February 2012, the Council agreed that it would deliver the promises made in its Offer Document to tenants and deliver the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by March 2020. The Council also agreed that its capital investment in homes would deliver social outcomes to 'transform lives and communities'.
- 2.2 Part of the commitment to deliver the WHQS across all 10,777 homes also includes a requirement to comply with Part 6 which aims to ensure that 'all dwellings should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and in which they can be proud to live'.
- 2.3 £10.6m has been set aside in the business plan agreed with Welsh Government specifically for this purpose.
- 2.4 Three Environmental Officers were recruited to work with the Area Housing teams and local members in order to initially identify environmental maintenance / repair issues. The issues were identified and collated into a single spreadsheet with each project being detailed using a proforma.
- 2.5 Over 300 minor projects were initially identified across the county borough as part of the first phase of the programme. The majority were progressed, some were repackaged into larger schemes
- 2.6 The second phase of the programme commenced in 2017 and has involved the environmental officers undertaking an extensive engagement programme throughout the County Borough which is intended to 1) engage local communities in discussions regarding the quality and safety of their local environment 2) identify solutions to some of the challenges and constraints within communities that could be overcome via the WHQS environmental programme and 3) to work with partners to help develop more cohesive and resilient communities through joint working and the pooling of resources.
- 2.7 A copy of the programme and projects identified to date is attached as appendix 1.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to specified standards.

- 3.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that the WHQS investment transforms not only homes but also lives and communities.
- 3.3 The delivery of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme is coterminous with the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which requires public bodies to work towards a shared vision comprising 7 goals and adopt 5 “Ways of Working”. The 7 goals and the 5 Ways of Working will underpin the delivery of the programme and include planning and acting for the long term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention.
- 3.4 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to specified standards. It is a Welsh Government requirement that the WHQS is achieved by 2020. The WHQS identifies 7 specific aims in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Revised Guidance for Social Landlords – July 2008. This report relates specifically to Part 6: All dwellings should be located in an environment to which residents can relate and which they can be proud to live.
- 3.5 Caerphilly County Borough Council’s Well-being Objectives for 2018/19 include: WBO3 – Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance and support to help improve peoples’ wellbeing.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 In February 2012 tenants voted overwhelmingly for the Council to retain its housing stock as opposed to transferring its homes to a registered social landlord. As a result the Council made an ambitious commitment to utilise its £200m capital investment not only to transform homes but also lives and communities. It also committed to utilising £10.6m of the total investment to deliver an environmental programme that would ensure that all homes ‘are located in an environment to which residents can relate and which they can be proud to live’ (Welsh Housing Quality Standard, Part 6).
- 4.2 Part 6 specifies that ‘all opportunities should be taken to make improvements to the immediate environment (within the property boundary) and to the general environment’ and that consultation with residents and external audits can be used to inform the process.
- 4.3 Welsh Government has suggested that the following key elements must be taken into consideration by organisations seeking to deliver the standard:
- Attractive environments
 - Safe environments
 - Environments that people can relate to
 - Environments that people can feel proud of.
- 4.4 The decision was taken by the Project Board to split the programme into two phases; the first concentrating on low level environmental requirements and routine improvements to housing estates that would have been previously raised by tenants, officers or members or highlighted by the area housing managers. Some areas were in need of maintenance and investment to address health and safety issues, anti-social behaviour as well as making general improvements to improve the overall aspect of our estates.
- 4.5 Over 300 minor schemes were identified as a result of this process of which circa 90% have been delivered. The remaining schemes have been re-packaged into larger schemes that will be progressed during phase 2, forwarded to an alternative department or declined as they did not fit the programme criteria.
- 4.6 During phase 2, officers have concentrated on undertaking an extensive engagement exercise throughout the borough and in individual communities in order to identify improvements and amenities that communities identify as important to them and value. A

copy of the matrix which highlights the projects identified to date during phase 2 and the engagement timetable is attached as appendix 1. The table also includes the engagement events that have taken place at the Council's sheltered accommodation and the projects identified.

- 4.7 The nature of the engagement / consultation has varied between communities depending on size, existing community infrastructure and whether there are already a number of active participants / groups in the community that have already made efforts to determine the needs of their community. In some cases door knocking has been undertaken together with a specific community 'Shape your Place' event. In other communities consultations have taken place on buses or via pop up shop type events in town centres in order to engage with as wide an audience as possible. Many events have been undertaken in partnership with the community regeneration team, the Parent Network, Keep Wales Tidy, Citizens Advice, Community Safety etc to ensure that those attending are able to access the full range of support if needed and to enhance the engagement experience for those attending.
- 4.8 Examples of the events that have been held are contained in appendix 2. More people have attended in some communities than others but all have been promoted via flyers, newsletters, door knocking, social media posts, word of mouth etc.
- 4.9 Officers have identified 82 communities throughout Caerphilly borough. To date, engagement and consultation efforts have been completed in 36 and are ongoing in 22 thereby leaving 24 communities remaining. In Spring 2018 the decision was taken by the Project Board to ensure that the larger communities were brought forward into the start / middle of the programme as inevitably there were likely to be larger, more complex projects to deliver by 2020.
- 4.10 The only exception to this has been Lansbury Park where the engagement / consultation was postponed pending completion of the EWI (external wall insulation) programme and a potential external funding application. The consultation and engagement in Lansbury Park has now started.
- 4.11 Projects identified have included new parking infrastructure, new / renewal of play facilities, skate parks, the installation of green gyms, planting projects and actions designed to improve safety and accessibility within communities i.e. new lighting, renewal / widening of footpaths and knee rails thereby protecting and enhancing green spaces.
- 4.12 Efforts are being made to extend the lifecycle of existing community infrastructure and futureproof our communities through the renewal or repair of existing assets and amenities as well as in some cases providing new, thereby reducing future maintenance requirements.
- 4.13 Where possible, the relevant service area will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance liabilities associated with the provision of new facilities.
- 4.14 In 2017 the Project Board mandated a requirement to ensure that the programme delivered 'synergistic opportunities' for departments and teams throughout the Council and a conscious effort has been made to ensure that as much work as possible is undertaken in house.
- 4.15 Whilst this has helped strengthen teams, brought greater integration, pooled budgets and enhanced learning between teams, it has also resulted in delays in the delivery of schemes that have been approved. This is due to capacity issues within areas such as Parks and also Highways and Engineering.
- 4.16 Delays in project implementation have occurred throughout the entire programme but particularly in Penyrheol, Fochriw and Ty Sign where Parks related contracts are awaiting delivery.

- 4.17 The WHQS programme is therefore funding a specific WHQS Landscape Officer to oversee the packaging and procurement of WHQS environmental 'Parks' related contracts and is also contributing towards the fees and salaries of experts located within the Highways and Engineering division whose involvement is invaluable. It is anticipated that the Landscape Officer will be in post by November 2018 and outstanding contracts relating to Skate Parks etc packaged and issued by Christmas.
- 4.18 A detailed programme of planned works from the Green Spaces and Transport Services Manager responsible for Parks has been requested by the Chief Housing Officer.
- 4.19 An integral part of the WHQS environmental programme has been the delivery of the Council's garage programme this has included enhanced landscaping works that were not included in the original garage budget. Enhanced landscaping works have and will include new parking areas and space for recreation within the borough's communities.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 The delivery of the WHQS improvement programme is coterminous with the aims of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) act 2015, in particular the 5 ways of working:-
- **Long Term:** the report includes continued investment and performance to achieve WHQS by 2020. This investment provides long term improvements to homes, communities and to tenants' health and wellbeing.
 - **Integration:** The programme looks to integrate physical and environmental improvements that will benefit and transform lives and communities throughout the county borough. It further brings together a variety of stakeholders to deliver long term sustainable benefits for lives and communities.
 - **Involvement:** Tenants and local residents are being consulted on the proposed property improvements and environmental works along with various initiatives that are part of the WHQS programme delivery.
 - **Collaboration:** The programme delivery is focused on internal collaboration, wider partnership arrangements with suppliers and contractors, joint working with the community and various other groups. The delivery of community benefits and tenant engagement by all involved with the WHQS programme is a key focus and is clearly demonstrable within its delivery.
 - **Prevention:** The works to improve lives and communities will help tackle local unemployment, tackle fuel poverty and promote greater well being. It will further improve the look and feel of the environment and help prevent anti-social behaviour.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required as the report is for information.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 £10.6m has been identified within the WHQS business plan to support the delivery of the environmental programme.
- 7.2 On an annual basis, £350,000 is allocated from within the main budget to the Area Housing Offices (£100,000) and Neighbourhood Housing Offices (£75,000) to address maintenance and repair issues as the original housing maintenance budget was incorporated into the Environmental Programme in 2012.

- 7.3 Appendix 1 contains a spreadsheet illustrating the projects that have been identified to date and the estimated cost of those projects (£2,111,378.72).
- 7.4 The budget spent since 2017 when the programme started is £1,605,321.60 (including the garage enhancements) however, the majority of the projects identified are in the process of being undertaken with many others at the feasibility, design or procurement stage so expenditure information at this stage is limited as invoices have not been submitted. Appendix 3 illustrates the budget spent to date.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications arising from the report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 All responses from consultations have been incorporated in the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To advise Members of the progress made in relation to the delivery of the WHQS Environmental Programme.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004, Local Government Measures 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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Consultees:

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Dave Street	- Director of Social Services and Housing
Shaun Couzens	- Chief Housing Officer
Fiona Wilkins	- Public Sector Housing Manager
Mandy Betts	- Tenant and Community Involvement Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – WHQS Environmental Programme 2017-2020

Appendix 2 – Portfolio of Environmental Engagement and Consultation Events (to be circulated at the meeting)

Appendix 3 – WHQS Environmental Programme - Spend to Date