



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE SIRHOWY ROOM, PENALLTA HOUSE, ON
TUESDAY, 6TH DECEMBER 2018 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Councillor L. Harding - Chair

Councillors:

M. Davies, A. Hussey, L. Phipps,

Tenant Representatives:

M. James, S. Jones, D. Moore, R. Thompson

Officers:

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), S. Cousins (Principal Housing Officer), P. Smythe (Housing Technical Manager) and K. Houghton (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from the Chair and Vice-Chair therefore nominations were sought for a Chair for the duration of the meeting. It was moved and seconded that Councillor L. Harding be Chair and this was agreed unanimously.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Councillor B. Jones, D. Price, L.G. Whittle and Tenant Representatives Mr C. Davies, Y. Bryant, L. Pewtner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tenant Representatives M. James, S. Jones, D. Moore and R. Thompson declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items as Council Tenants.

3. MINUTES – 1ST NOVEMBER 2018

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 1st November 2018 be agreed as a correct record and by a show of hands was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2018 (minute no, 1-9) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2018-2022

The Principal Housing Officer introduced the report which, having been considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2018, outlined the Gwent Regional Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 and sought the views of Members on its content, prior to presentation to Cabinet for approval.

Members were advised that the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires all Welsh local authorities to undertake a review of their homelessness services and produce a four year homelessness strategy to address the issues identified. The five local authorities in Gwent have responded to the requirement by working together to produce a regional strategy, delivered through local and regional action plans. A regional approach was approved by Welsh Government and this takes into account the need to consider more partnership and cross boundary working. The Strategy has been developed from the findings of an extensive regional consultation and review. Local Authorities across Wales are required to implement their homelessness strategies by 31st December 2018. A copy of the Strategy and supporting documents was appended to the report for Members' information.

It was explained to Members that the Gwent Homelessness Review 2018 (an extract of which was appended to the Appendix) defines the scale of the issue across the region and within Caerphilly, and analyses the nature and extent of homelessness in Gwent. The strategy document (attached at Appendix 2) contains four key priorities and ten strategic objectives. A regional action plan has been developed which in Caerphilly's case, also contains the local actions that the Council intend to deliver through the term of the strategy period (attached at Appendix 3). The Equalities Impact Assessment for the Strategy (at Appendix 4) outlined the extensive consultation that has been undertaken with relevant Council Officers and via online surveys with service users who have experienced homelessness.

Members discussed the availability of the whole strategy in order to view its contents. The Principal Housing Officer assured Members that the whole strategy contained the data and extensive background to the forming of the strategy and that the most relevant documents were before them as part of the report. However a copy of the full Strategy document would be available in the Members library.

Members sought clarification regarding the prioritisation of homelessness cases and how emergency and priority need cases were identified. The Principal Housing Officer advised Members that cases are assessed against a priority need criteria. Members were provided with an example of a criterion that would deem a case as high priority, being that of a family with young children who would require emergency and temporary accommodation. By working across the Gwent region, accommodation placements can be made outside of the County Borough if there are no emergency placements available within area or Clients cannot be placed within the County Borough for safety reasons.

Members enquired as to what consideration was being given to the use of empty properties particularly accommodation above commercial properties to increase available accommodation. The Principal Housing Officer informed members that this was an option but difficult as it involved working with private owners. The Chief Housing Officer highlighted to Members that this was a national problem but did form part of the asset management strategy. The Cabinet Member for Homes and Places was keen to support work towards bringing accommodation above commercial properties in to use as not only does it provide additional accommodation in the County Borough but also has the potential to revitalise high streets.

Following consideration and in noting the details of the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group unanimously recommended to the Cabinet that the comments of the Group be noted when considering the Strategy and Action

Plan for approval. .

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the comments of the Group be noted when considering the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022 for approval. .

5. WHQS PROGRESS REPORT – FINAL STAGES

The Chief Housing Officer introduced the report which sought the views of Members on the performance of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Team to date and also set out the anticipated projected performance up to December 2020. Prior to its presentation to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet,

The Chief Housing Officer provided Members with the details of the capital expenditure for 2018/19 for WHQS works together with an overview of achievements that had been made as part of the wider commitments and benefits delivered by the WHQS programme.

Members raised concerns regarding the timing of the customer satisfaction surveys which may have resulted in confusion between tenant responses on internal versus external works. Members discussed the management of tenant expectations and the prioritisation of where works would be carried out which may have impacted on satisfaction levels. Officers highlighted to Members that works were prioritised based on the condition of properties and therefore consistency would not have been possible due to the variable condition of individual properties across the County Borough.

A Member queried the longevity of the community benefits highlighted in the report once the programme had been completed. Officers responded that although contracts were up to 2020 only the programme had provided opportunities for members of the community to develop skills that increased their employability beyond the end of the programme.

Members discussed the standard of external works carried out including circumstances when this work requires replacement or repair and whether the Council takes on the financial responsibility for these works. Officers confirmed that if works are deemed substandard and further replacement or repair is required then the contractors would be responsible for the financial impact.

Following consideration and in noting the details of the WHQS Progress Report – Final Stages, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group unanimously recommended to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee that the contents of the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report, consider the comments of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and make a recommendation to Cabinet.

6. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group received and noted the following information items:-

- (1) Allocation of New Homes and the Role of the Tenancy Enforcement Section

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

The meeting closed at 17.56pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2019.

CHAIR