



HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – INFORMATION ITEM

SUBJECT: WELLBEING OBJECTIVE 3: 6 MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE
(APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2020)

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides members with a 6-month progress update on Well-being Objective 3: *'Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and to provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people's well-being'*.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Well-being Objective is set over a five-year period, between 2018-2023. This is the 6-month progress update for the first half of the third year.
- 2.2 Covid-19 and the impact it has had on every aspect of society has been a constant theme throughout this reporting period. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, good progress was being made against the Well-being Objective. As part of the Council's programme for supporting the vulnerable and communities, and the impact on working practices brought about by Welsh Government guidelines, we have had to significantly change some of our working practices, which has consequentially impacted on service delivery. The pandemic is likely to have a significant impact on the outcome of this Well-being Objective, however, at this stage it is too early to assess the level of impact.
- 2.3 Performance, as expected, has been variable throughout this reporting period. Despite the immense pressure placed on the service by the ongoing pandemic, some aspects of the service have been able to maintain expected levels of performance and in some instances, we have been able to exceed performance. Throughout this period our efforts have been focused on providing essential services to the vulnerable within our communities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This report is for information purposes. Members are asked, therefore, to scrutinise the contents of this report and to satisfy themselves that adequate progress has been made in the first 6 months of the 2020/21 financial year in respect of Well-being Objective 3.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That members are informed and can challenge any areas of underperformance, where appropriate, and assure themselves that the Council is working towards successfully delivering the well-being objectives contained within the 2018-2023 Corporate Plan.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 Eight key aims have been devised to help achieve the successful realisation of this Well-being Objective:

1. All council housing is improved to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020;
2. Increase the provision of new, affordable, social housing that meet the 'Lifetime Homes' principles and identified needs, whilst supporting the governments' innovative housing programme;
3. Deliver adaptations to support the health and well-being of people in their homes and maximise the delivery and appropriate use of accessible homes;
4. Increase the supply of housing by supporting opportunities to bring long-term, empty homes in the private sector back into use;
5. Tackle the determinants of poor health and wellbeing by improving housing conditions in the private sector;
6. Prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping;
7. Sustain tenancies by providing a range of housing related services; and
8. Help reduce fuel poverty by making homes more energy efficient and providing people with advice on how best to heat their homes.

What has gone well

- 5.2 Below are some examples of the achievements made during this period. Further details and examples can be found in Appendix A.

- Although significantly reduced home visits have been undertaken, we have been able to support a significant amount of our tenants via telephone calls and IT systems.
- We have exceeded our annual target to assist our tenants to maximise income through additional welfare benefits and water savings through reduced tariffs.
- Tenant satisfaction levels with the quality of work carried out on their homes through the WHQS investment programme remains high.
- This year our housing associations partners are expected to access £8.4m of grant funding to build new affordable homes in the borough to address housing needs identified by the Council.
- The Council has appointed a consultant to assist with the production of a new Local Housing Strategy.
- The Council has received Innovative Housing Programme funding approval from Welsh Government to build 20 new homes built to the Passivhaus standard and Linc Cymru has completed the construction of 38 new homes to the Passivhaus standard in Caerphilly town centre.

What has not gone well

5.3 In some instances the actions we have undertaken have either exceeded their target date for completion and/or not reached the expected level of performance:

- Due to delays experienced with carrying out works due to Covid-19, the WHQS investment programme has been extended by Welsh Government for 12 months to December 2021, although, we expect to complete all works by August 2021.
- The construction of new, affordable homes (housing associations) has, in some instances, been delayed due to a shortage of materials and social distancing guidelines.
- With staff time being refocused on essential services, we have been unable to focus on increasing the percentage of social housing stock that has an accessibility code.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of adaptations provided to disabled people due to Welsh Government guidelines and the need to protect vulnerable clients.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of grants/loans provided to improve housing in the private sector due to Welsh Government guidelines and the redeployment of staff to work on the Buddy Scheme.
- Only one long-term, private sector empty home was brought back into beneficial use as the work was initially deemed non-essential.
- No inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation have been carried out, with all inspections being suspended due to the pandemic.

Impact

5.4 There is an extensive body of empirical research which shows the positive impact good quality housing can have on people's health and well-being. In addition, national and local performance indicators that we maintain also provides a sense of the positive impact the Council is having on people's lives. This can range from providing good quality and affordable housing to provide support to people to maximise their household income and providing adaptations to enable disabled people to live independently to tackling poor conditions of housing in the private sector.

Conclusion

5.5 We are now at the mid-point of year 3 of the Well-being Objective. Progress in the first 2½ years of this Well-being Objective, as previously reported, has been regarded as good. However, the onset of Covid-19 and the national lockdowns which consequently ensued has placed additional burdens and pressures on service delivery. As the Council reshapes its services to support the vulnerable and communities throughout the pandemic, and as a direct result of Welsh Government guidance on combatting Covid-19, some of the actions underpinning this Well-being Objective have been impacted. With the pandemic ongoing it is too early to say whether it will ultimately prevent the successful delivery of this Well-being Objective within the 5-year timespan.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 The successful completion of the actions detailed in Appendix A is directly affected by a range of external factors. Too numerous to list here, they include UK and Welsh Government policy/legislation, the economy, building costs including, land, materials and labour, demographic changes, sufficient levels of expenditure and the demand for services. Covid-19 was unforeseen and has had a significant impact on service delivery and our ability to achieve the successful outcome of this Well-being Objective.
- 6.2 The resources to deliver this Well-being Objective have been assessed within the context of the current Medium Term Financial Plan.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 7.1 The Well-being Objective links to the following Council policies:
- Caerphilly County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2018-2023
 - Caerphilly Homes Service Plan 2018-2023
 - Caerphilly Homes Asset Management Strategy
 - Gwent Homelessness Strategy & Action Plan 2018-2023
 - Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy (2014)
 - Strategic Equality Plan 2016-2020

Welsh Government Policies

- 7.2 Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales (Welsh Government, 2010), sets out the national context for improving homes and communities, including the energy efficiency of existing homes.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 The Well-being Objective is both wide ranging and multifaceted. A significant body of empirical research shows that the provision of good quality housing and related services has positive health and well-being outcomes by, for example, providing safe and secure places to live, promoting vibrant and sustainable communities, providing employment and training opportunities and minimising the impact of our actions on the environment. We have identified that the successful accomplishment of this objective clearly links to 5 of the 7 national well-being goals:
- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
- 8.2 The five ways of working, as defined within the sustainable development principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, and listed below, provides a framework which enables the Council to demonstrate that its proposed actions take into consideration the well-being of future generations:
- Long term – Housing is a long-term social need and, therefore, the housing and services we provide are set within this context. The outcomes we are attempting to achieve in the short

to medium term will ensure that housing is sustainable (cost, quantity, condition and location) for people to occupy over the longer term, whilst minimising the effects on the environment and contributing the health and wellbeing of our communities.

- **Prevention** – The quality of housing has a direct correlation with the health and wellbeing of its occupants. Preventing people from becoming homeless by providing access to good quality accommodation and related services, creating communities that are sustainable and vibrant by working with agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour and help communities become resilient, reducing poverty by maximising incomes, providing advice and support to sustain tenancies, are all actions that positively impact on health and wellbeing. The WHQS objective of improving homes, lives and communities has helped the Council tackle local unemployment, which links to the employment related well-being objective. It will improve the look and feel of the environment and this can help to prevent anti-social behaviour as people have pride in where they live.
- **Integration** – Given that the provision of good quality housing is central to the good health and wellbeing of the population, it is likely that this objective will impact on the successful outcome of other objectives. The provision of good quality housing is, therefore, likely to have a positive impact on the budgets and priorities of other public bodies such as the National Health Service and it is important, therefore, that we work closely with such organisation to address shared priorities.
- **Collaborate** – In order to facilitate successful outcomes, we will collaborate with a range of different organisations and people. These include Welsh Government, Rent Smart Wales, internally with other Council departments, regionally with other local authorities, building contractors, housing associations, third sector organisations, private sector landlords, empty property owners etc. We acknowledge that the constraint on public sector finances means that this is an area we will need to look at doing more of to share resources and achieve joint outcomes. The need to collaborate has, therefore, never been more essential.
- **Involvement** – Given the broadness of this objective, we will need to work with a range of different groups if we want to achieve a successful outcome. Our intention is to involve a wide range of people including homeowners, private rented sector and Council tenants, tenants and residents associations, elected members, public sector bodies, third sector organisations etc. The level of involvement will differ between actions and organisations. We know that the quality of our services has been improved by involving a range of key stakeholders in their redesign.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 We know that many individuals and groups of people who are be regarded as 'protected characteristics' under the 2010 Equalities Act, can often affected to a greater extent by poverty, vulnerability, homelessness etc. Although no equality impact assessment has been undertaken on this report, equalities implications may be assessed for those actions contained within this Well-being Objective and reported to Members as part of further update reports.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The delivery of many of the actions associated with this Well-being Objective are dependent on the continuation of funding either from Welsh Government, via the various grant streams, or the Council, via the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account. Ongoing budget pressures facing local government and the requirement for service areas to satisfy the

Council's medium term financial plan priorities may impact on our ability to improve current levels and standards of service delivery and to identify additional resources to invest in new services to meet the changing needs and aspirations of our service users.

- 10.2 The resources to deliver the Well-being Objective have been assessed within the context of the current Medium Term Financial Plan.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 Consultation responses have been reflected in this report.

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 The update of the Well-being Objectives is part of the Local Government Measure 2009 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

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Background Papers:

Corporate Plan 2018-2023 - available from the Council's website

Appendices:

Appendix A - Well-being Objective 3: 6 Month Performance Report 2020/21