



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP - 30TH OCTOBER 2014

SUBJECT: EQUALITIES GUIDANCE FOR LANDLORDS PROJECT

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members of a project being undertaken between the Council's Housing Division, the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team and local social and private landlords.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The planned Common Housing Register in the county borough, together with the growing case law around tenancy issues that have equalities/discriminatory aspects to them, led the Council's Housing team to contact the Equalities and Welsh Language Team, to work with them to develop guidance to help all those who have landlord responsibilities (whether council, social or private) to understand the issues involved.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The guidance links to the following areas:
- The development of the Common Housing Register and common allocation policy,
 - The Council's current Housing Allocations Policy,
 - Caerphilly Delivers - the LSB single integrated plan
 - The Council's Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives
 - Community Cohesion and Hate Crime issues
- 3.2 The project also links to "Part 1 : Regulation of Private Rented Housing" of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which introduces a mandatory training element for all private sector landlords, operated by the licensing authority.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Caerphilly CBC's Council's Housing team contacted the Equalities and Welsh Language for advice following a number of recent examples of case law around tenancy issues that have equalities/discriminatory aspects to them.
- 4.2 Producing equalities guidance is a target for the Equalities and Welsh Language Team each year and so it was a natural progression following the meeting that Equalities and Discrimination Guidance was developed for all Council Housing, Social and Private Landlords in the county borough.

- 4.3 Landlords, whether council, social or private are provided with support and information on legal matters relating to building regulations, health and safety issues and a range of other practical matters that have an impact on their role. Little has been offered in the past however around this kind of Equalities-related guidance and the relationship between landlords, tenants and even neighbours.
- 4.4 This guidance document has therefore been developed to help landlords understand that the greater the level of understanding and information they and their tenants share in terms of Equalities issues, the better the business relationship will be. Further, any potential problems or issues, if known about from the very beginning of the business relationship, can be used to the advantage of all parties and can avoid simple things developing into costly legal action.
- 4.5 The document developed between May and September 2014 is attached as Appendix A for information and contains the legal background of Equalities issues in Wales and how it relates to the landlord/tenant relationship, a case law example, practical suggestions and links to local support and training.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The guidance will provide landlords with greater access to Equalities information and support when dealing with tenants from different backgrounds, or if issues arise between their tenants and neighbours for example.
- 5.2 It is also meant to support the relationship between different landlords, tenants and neighbours by potentially improving or avoiding dispute resolution between people of different backgrounds.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 As producing Equalities guidance is a target for the Equalities and Welsh Language Team each year, initially the costs of producing and publishing this guidance document was part of core costs for the Council, met from the existing corporate budget.
- 6.2 In this case however, additional funding has been secured via a successful bid to the TDS Charitable Foundation for £5,000 to both expand the print run and allow landlords in the county borough to access the Council's Equalities and Welsh language training for free until March 2015.
- 6.3 Caerphilly County Borough Council is one of only five bodies from around the UK (and the only one in Wales) to share in grants from this first round of national funding.
- 6.4 £35,000 was available in the first round however the Foundation received bid applications worth over £500,000, making Caerphilly CBC's success even more significant.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no personnel implications to this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Consultation with officers and stakeholders took place on the guidance document between May and September 2014 via email and hard copy, and the final version is attached as Appendix 1. The consultees on this committee report are shown below.
- 8.2 All relevant comments received have been included in the final versions presented here.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That members note the content of the report and guidance document.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The guidance document will provide useful legal and practical information for landlords on an area they may not be as familiar with as other legal requirements.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Housing Act 2004, Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Equalities Guidance for Landlords
Appendix 2 TDS Foundation Press Release