



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 30TH JUNE 2016

SUBJECT: WHQS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To outline the arrangements for implementing the WHQS environmental programme.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 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 a commitment to utilise its £200m capital investment not only to transform homes but also lives and communities.

2.2 The Council also committed to utilising £10.6m of the total investment to deliver an environmental programme to meet the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, Part 6.

2.3 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 should be used to inform the process.

2.4 In September 2015, the Council appointed three environmental officers to lead a programme of consultation and engagement which would underpin the delivery of the WHQS environmental programme. The officers were each allocated a housing area and focused their efforts initially on gathering data and intelligence from previous research, the land asset review and intelligence from officers and local community groups who are familiar with the issues that are regularly notified by residents to the Council.

2.5 Since their appointment, the officers have been based within the Community Regeneration Team. On the 6th June 2016, the three officers moved from the Community Regeneration Team to Public Sector Housing to establish closer working relations with the Estate Management Officers (EMOs).

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 Council's Local Housing Strategy "People, Property, and Places" has the following aim:

“To provide good quality, well managed houses in communities where people want to live, and offer people housing choices which meet their needs and aspirations.”

- 3.4 The delivery of the WHQS environmental programme is coterminous with the aims of the Council’s Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 which aims to ‘improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the county borough’ and the recently approved, Caerphilly Poverty Strategy 2015.
- 3.5 The delivery of the WHQS environmental 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 the 5 “Ways of Working”. The 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. The WHQS investment in Council homes to transform lives and communities is a Well Being Objective.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The three environmental officers are based now within the Tenant and Community Involvement Team (TACI) and aligned with the area housing teams.
- 4.2 The programme will continue to be overseen by the Strategic Coordination Manager but the delivery arrangements will be coordinated and managed by the Public Sector Housing Manager. Although the Environmental Officers will be line managed by the TACI Manager, they will be allocated a housing area and be required to work closely with the Estate Management Officers (EMO’s) and Housing Managers in order to identify priority environmental maintenance and improvement requirements throughout the respective housing areas, which have often been brought to the attention of the housing office by local tenants or members.
- 4.3 In addition, the environmental officers will be expected to utilise the contacts they have already made with local members and the wider community in order to identify key community priorities and local concerns. Information will be collected on an EMO area basis thereby allowing the environmental officer to ‘pair up’ with the relevant EMO to capture the important issues and potentially identify some quick wins.
- 4.4 As a result of following this process it is envisaged that the funds available will be targeted at the areas of greatest need in the first instance and then utilised to support wider community projects that may be highlighted by local members, stakeholders and the community subject to the overall availability of funding.
- 4.5 A list of environmental requirements/improvements from each area will be presented in a spreadsheet format between June and December 2016 to the WHQS Project Board for consideration. This will enable projects identified via this process to be approved and implemented relatively quickly where this can be achieved with in house resources.
- 4.6 A timetable is attached outlining the deployment of the environmental officers against EMO areas.
- 4.7 More significant projects that are identified by the relevant environmental officer will be consulted upon within the local community and relevant stakeholders via community drop in sessions before being presented to the WHQS Project Board for discussion. These projects will require further exploration and discussion at a local level and will naturally take longer to come to fruition.
- 4.8 The environmental officers will also be required to identify alternative sources of funding in order to maximise the funding available via the WHQS environmental programme. It is likely departments within the Communities directorate i.e. highways, countryside and urban renewal will directly benefit from becoming actively involved in the delivery of projects identified via this process.

- 4.9 A virtual consultation group comprising key officers in Parks, Highways, Countryside, Planning etc. will be created to enable relevant service areas to provide comments/ advice on proposals. Officers in relevant departments will be consulted upon any proposals before information is presented to the WHQS Project Board.
- 4.10 Any ongoing maintenance requirements will also be clearly identified before any decisions are made.
- 4.11 An alternative approach will be undertaken in Lansbury Park due to the potential to secure additional WG monies that may be available during the latter part of 2016/17 and the need to consider a wider vision and strategy for the area.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EqIA screening has not been undertaken as the report is for information.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the report. However progress on committing expenditure against the environmental fund does need to be made as this is an integral part of the whole WHQS programme to be delivered by 2020.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 Comments received from consultees have been incorporated within the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The report is for information.

10. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To advise the CHTG on the arrangements to deliver the WHQS Environmental Programme.

11. STATUTORY POWERS

- 11.1 Housing Acts 1985, 1996, 2004, 2014 and Local Government Act 2000.

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Consultees: Cllr David V Poole - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing
Christina Harrhy - Corporate Director Communities
Phil G Davy - Head of Programmes
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Marcus Lloyd - Deputy Head of Programmes
Mandy Betts - Tenant and Community Involvement Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – EMO Areas & Environmental Programme Timetable.