



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 30TH OCTOBER 2014 AT 5.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Mrs D. Price - Chair
C. Davies- Vice Chair

Task Group Members:

L. Ackerman, R.T. Davies, Mrs G. Green, G. Jones, Mrs S. Jones, Ms A. Lewis,
M. McDermott, Mrs D. Moore, J. Moore.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), J. Roberts-Waite
(Strategic Co-ordination Manager - WHQS Programme), D.A. Thomas (Senior Policy Officer -
Equalities & Welsh Language), K. Webb (WHQS- Relationship Manager) and C. Evans
(Democratic Services Officer).

Together with:

S. Hern and D. Pattison (Robert Price Builders Merchants)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K. James, Mrs. B. Jones and
C.P. Mann.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms. A. Lewis, Mr. C. Davies, Ms. G. Green, Mrs S. Jones and Mr. M. McDermott as Council
Tenants declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items.

Councillor L. Ackerman and G. Jones declared an interest in item 5, relating to the Community
Improvement Fund. Details are minuted with the respective item.

3. MINUTES – 3RD JULY 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd July 2014 be approved as
a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PRESENTATION BY ROBERT PRICE BUILDERS MERCHANTS

S. Hern and D. Pattison, Robert Price Builders Merchants, provided the Caerphilly Homes Task Group with a presentation on the Caerphilly Homes Supply Chain Update.

The Task Group were presented with background information on Robert Price Builders Merchants and a reminder of the objectives of the single source supplier arrangement. Key Information around Operations, such as lean systems, budget and time management were noted and the Task Group were pleased to note employment successes through partnership working and the commitment of Robert Price to meet their Corporate Social Responsibilities.

The Task Group thanked the officers for the presentation and discussions and debate ensued.

Levels of Unemployment within the borough were discussed and further information was sought on the commitment of Robert Price to provide employment, particularly to the long-term unemployed, and the approaches adopted to engage this particular group. D. Pattison (Robert Price) acknowledged that there are some difficulties engaging with this group; in addition, it was highlighted that a contributory factor could be that of the perception of their business as a builder/ contractor rather than a building materials supplier. The Task Group noted that work is underway with WHQS staff, to consider alternative approaches to engaging this group and changing the perception of the business.

The Task Group discussed the processes in place for ordering, quality control and the returns and were keen to receive further detail around the just in time strategy. Officers explained that a system was developed in which common items were ordered as required and not in bulk, in order to prevent wastage.

Members were pleased to note that the Tenant Display Area has been completed in the Robert Price branch at Caerphilly and it was agreed that information and advertising would be arranged by the Communications Officer in order to notify all tenants.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the presentation.

5. COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND

Councillor G. Jones declared an interest in the application from Neuadd St Cattwg Community Hall, as an employee of GAVO and Councillor L. Ackerman declared an interest in this item due to involvement with the Friends of Navigation Colliery, Crumlin and both left the meeting during its consideration.

The report sought approval for two applications received from community groups seeking funding from the Community Improvement Fund.

The applications from Neuadd St Cattwg Community Hall and Friends Navigation Colliery were detailed for Members information. Officers confirmed that Neuadd St Cattwg Community Hall were seeking a grant of £5,000 to fund improvements to the access to, and enhance the appearance of, the areas surrounding the Hall in order to increase the usability of the outside space for mother and toddler groups, birthday parties and environmental education.

Additional funding sources have been secured from partners, including Communities First, GAVO, Groundwork and NIACE, and the project is coterminous with the aims, objectives and award criteria for the Community Improvement Fund. Tenants living within the adjacent housing areas would benefit from the improvements undertaken as a result of the Community Improvement Fund.

The Friends of Navigation Colliery Crumlin sought £5,000 to finance the estimated costs associated with undertaking a Refurbishment Asbestos Survey in accordance with HSE guidance note MDHS77. The Friends of Navigation Colliery (consisting of 20 core volunteers) aim to regenerate the former colliery site in Crumlin in order to generate employment, sustainable green energy and improve the overall quality of life within the area. The redevelopment of the site will require significant investment.

The proposal does not directly comply with the aims, objectives and award criteria of the Community Improvement Fund. There is no evidence to suggest that tenants or residents living within the locality will benefit directly from the asbestos surveys proposed.

The Task Group discussed the monies allocated to the Community Improvement Fund and a query was raised as to whether the Fund was sufficient. Officers clarified that the Community Improvement Fund was developed to encourage community groups to consider their local areas and identify specific projects. This was in addition to the main environmental programme. Officers highlighted that there is an anticipated underspend this financial year, despite extensive marketing.

Following consideration of the application it was moved and seconded that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group support the application for St Cattwg Community Hall but were unable to support the application by Friends of Navigation Colliery. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

6. WHQS TARGETED RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

J. Roberts-Waite presented the report, which provided an indication of the number of targeted recruitment and opportunities created since September 2013 and the number of opportunities that have been included as a core requirement into the internal works contracts.

The report provided that, between April 2013 and September 2014, the Council has recruited 5 apprentices, 65 additional multi-skilled agency staff and a further 29 agency staff will be sought and Internal Workforce has employed 2 young people from the Jobs Growth Wales programme in order to manage the ambitious delivery programme.

The WHQS Team, following a review of the way in which they recruit apprentices, have made a commitment to only recruit apprentices via the Council's flagship Passport Programme.

The Task Group noted that, in order to create new opportunities as a result of the WHQS Programme, community benefit clauses including targeted recruitment and training requirements were built into the Single Source Supply Partner and internal works contracts as a core requirement. The targets were determined with consideration of the size and length of each contract and some were purposely included to ensure integration with the Council's Passport Scheme.

The Task Group thanked the officer for the detailed report and discussion ensued. A member queried the Living Wage. The Officer confirmed that the Contracts request each contractor to adopt the Living Wage so to help address the incidence of in work poverty and increase spend within the borough, however the Council can only encourage the contractors to adopt the Living Wage.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group thanked the Officers for the detailed report and noted its contents.

7. EQUALITIES GUIDANCE FOR LANDLORDS PROJECT

D.A. Thomas, Senior Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language) presented the report, which informed that Task Group 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.

Following a number of recent examples of case law around tenancy issues that have equalities/ discriminatory aspects to them, and in consideration of the planned Common Housing Register in the county borough, the Council's Housing team and Equalities and Welsh Language team have worked together to develop a guidance document for all Council Housing, Social and Private Landlords in the County borough.

Landlords, whether council, social or private are offered 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. The guidance document, which was developed between May and September 2014, was developed to provide legal background knowledge of Equalities issues in Wales, relevant to the landlord/ tenant relationship, along with case law and practical suggestions and links to local support and training.

In addition, the Task Group noted that this is the only project in Wales, which looks to bridging the gap between landlords and tenants and offer support and information on Equalities issues.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the detailed presentation and were pleased to note the contents of the report and the Equalities Guidance for Landlords.

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

There were no requests received for reports to be included on the next available agenda.

The meeting closed at 7.22 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2014.

CHAIRMAN