



CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2014 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Task Group Members:

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

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), P. Smythe (Housing Repair Operation Manager), R. Thornett (Tenancy Enforcement Manager), K. Watkins (Communications & Tenant Engagement Officer) and C. Evans (Democratic Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Ackerman, Mrs B.A. Jones, G. Jones, C.P. Mann and Mrs D. Moore.

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.

3. MINUTES – 30TH OCTOBER 2014

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 30th October 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. RESPONSE REPAIR POLICY

P. Smythe, Housing Repair Operation Manager provided a report, which informed the Task Group on the implementation of the Response Repairs Policy for all Council properties.

The report proposed to introduce a Response Repairs policy document to replace the former 2004 policy statement, which was more of a staff training and procedure manual and included a policy statement. The original document was not intended to provide information for tenants and as such was not made available on the Council's Internet website.

The Response repairs are defined in the policy, as repairs, which are required by tenants to existing elements of their property and tenants, need to be aware of the arrangements the Council has in place for providing this service.

The report also highlighted its commitment to providing an effective and responsive housing repairs and maintenance service in order to ensure high levels of tenant satisfaction along with protecting the value of its housing stock.

The Task Group considered the report and recommendations and were pleased with the Policy.

Following consideration it was moved and seconded that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group supported the introduction of a Response Repairs Policy, prior to consideration by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee and thereafter, Cabinet. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

5. REVIEW OF WHQS INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/16

The report advised the Caerphilly Homes Task Group on a revised investment strategy and set out the HRA capital programme budget for 2015/16.

Major slippage during the 2014/15 financial year has necessitated a review of the investment strategy over the remaining five years of the programme. The slippage will cause additional pressure due to the increase in the volume of properties that will need to be completed over a shorter timescale. In order to maintain the principle of separation of internal and external works there are a large number of community area sequence changes, mainly affecting the external works. The HRA capital programme budget indicates the necessary resources based on the Savills cost plan to deliver the programme during 2015/16 to meet the revised WHQS Investment Strategy.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued, in which concerns were raised over the quality of works and achievability of the programme. Officers acknowledged that the completion numbers were high, however, when the total figures are broken down, including all contractors, the figures appear more achievable. The Task Group noted that additional staff, including Clerk of Works are being employed in order to assist with the programme and ensure that the work is completed on time and to a high standard.

The Task Group discussed the Tenant Surveys, which were conducted in various areas following completion of works. Tenants had raised concerns about the length of time it had taken for the surveys to be sent out. A number of issues were fed back to the Task Group and it was suggested that the information be supplied to Officers in order to address these issues with the tenants.

Having fully considered the report and the recommendation contained therein, it was moved and seconded that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group recommend that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee support the revised investment strategy and the capital programme for 2015/16 that flows from the strategy, prior to consideration by Cabinet. By a show of hands, this was unanimously agreed.

6. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE.

K. Watkins, Communications & Tenant Engagement Officer, provided the Caerphilly Homes Task Group with an update on communications activities undertaken over the previous year, along with plans for 2015.

It was noted that a great deal of work has taken place over the past year to raise the profile of Caerphilly Homes, both internally and externally, through a variety of methods and media. A number of new initiatives have been implemented, alongside the continuation and enhancement of existing communications activities.

A key priority for the coming year will be the establishment of a mixed stakeholder-working group to oversee a full-scale review of communications across Caerphilly Homes; the findings of which will form the basis for a revised communications strategy.

The Task Group congratulated Officers on the work so far and sought further information on the stakeholder-working group. Officers explained that this would be considered after Christmas, however, Officers are keen to have the involvement of the Armchair Reviewers for the project, along with new and experienced tenants.

The Task Group suggested that the newsletter distributions be increased above the current 2 newsletters a year. Officers highlighted that these are the most costly form of communications and the team are considering a number of other options in order to effectively communicate with tenants in a more cost effective fashion

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

7. HRA STAFF TURNOVER REPORT 2013/14

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group agreed to defer this item to a later meeting date.

8. DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

R. Thornett, Tenancy Enforcement Manager, provided an overview of the report and demonstrated available equipment, in response to a request for information on the Housing Policies in place to prevent offences relating to Domestic Abuse.

The report provided the Task Group with details of any new information and anticipated changes in the near future, along with details of the Domestic Abuse Policy for Caerphilly Homes. The Policy is contained within the Statement of Policy and Procedure for Anti-Social Behaviour, as domestic abuse cannot be tackled by one lone agency and makes reference to the key agencies involved in addressing, responding to and tackling domestic abuse throughout Caerphilly.

The Domestic Abuse Policy is intended as a cross-reference to all other Housing policies and procedures, which enables users and staff to readily access the information when required.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussed the Policy. Officers highlighted that the Policy is in need of updating, however, the Welsh Assembly are considering the legislation and therefore, Policies will be updated when the Legislation is available.

A Task Group Member sought further information on how Housing Policies are supporting Domestic Abuse and added that a dedicated team should be assigned to deal with Domestic Abuse. Officers highlighted that the Domestic Abuse Policy is in place alongside other Housing Policies and is taken into considerations in Housing aspects such as allocations.

Following in depth discussion and consideration, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

9. WHQS MONITORING REPORT 2014-2015 (HALF YEAR)

The report provided the Task Group with an overview of the performance of the WHQS Team during the six month from April 2014 to the end of September 2014, which included details of the capital expenditure programme for 2014-15 for WHQS works.

Members noted the arrangements in place to monitor and manage the performance of the WHQS programme for 2014-15, which included a number of performance dashboards used by a range of staff within the WHQS team. Performance is monitored and managed formally via the WHQS Management Delivery Team meetings, which occur every fortnight.

The Task Group noted the details of the WHQS Internal works programme, which includes 933 properties. It was noted that 249 properties (39%) were compliant in respect of the internal elements as of 11th November 2014. The external works programme includes 835 properties. Arrangements are in place to measure tenant satisfaction levels and compliance with service standards for the internal works contracts via surveys. However, surveys for 2014-15 contracts have only just been sent out, so no survey results are available.

Following consideration and discussion, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

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

The following requests were received:-

- (i) Clive Davies requested an update report on Procurement Progress.

Mr J. Moore asked why it was taking so long for new Task Group Members to receive a new phone- SC Chase

An observation was made by the tenant members of the Task Group that at 6.00pm there was only one Councillor at the meeting, that being the Chair. Concerns were raised by the tenants about the lack of Councillors' attendance at meetings. It was agreed that officers would raise the matter with the Cabinet Member

The meeting closed at 6.27 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 19th February 2015.

CHAIRMAN