

## Our Improvement Objective – 2015/16

### Investment in Council homes to transform lives and communities.

#### **1. What difference do we plan to make?**

The Welsh Government and this Council believes that everyone in Wales should have the opportunity to live in a good quality home within a safe and secure community.

To help achieve this, the physical standard and condition of existing housing must be maintained and improved to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

The standard seven main parts:

- In a good state of repair.
- Safe and secure.
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated.
- Contain up-to-date kitchens and bathrooms.
- Well managed (for rented housing).
- Are located in attractive and safe environments.
- Meet and suit the specific requirements of the household (as far as reasonable and practicably possible). For example, catering for specific disabilities.

We will aim to ensure all council homes meet the WHQ Standard, helping to improve the quality of life for the people who live in those homes. The programme of work will create long-term arrangements, which will help sustain local jobs, offer skills development and training opportunities, and deliver wider community benefits.

By 2020 we want our communities to know:

- We delivered the best quality home improvements to our tenants.
- We did it with them and not to them.
- Their homes created real jobs in our communities.
- We delivered the whole project on time and in budget.

These ambitions can only be achieved with the entire council and tenants and other key stakeholders working together and we are confident that with their support this program will transform council homes, the lives of our citizens and our communities.

## **2. Why we have chosen this**

The long-term affordability of housing, effects of the current credit crunch, fuel poverty and improving the quality of housing in the social sectors, are some of the main challenges facing the Authority.

Council homes across our County Borough will require over £200 million investment over the next few years as part of a Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme.

In 2012 Council tenants took part in a ballot to have their say about the future management of their homes and they voted to remain with the Council as their landlord.

We have outlined major spending plans in the “Your Home Your Choice” document to give our housing stock a massive facelift to meet the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). This is a major flagship programme that will be a boost to the local economy. In addition, the Council has set the ambition that money spent improving homes should be a catalyst to wider regeneration, improving lives and communities.

In 2008, we had an independent housing stock condition survey carried out by a company called Savills, to determine the scope of the works needed to bring our council homes up to WHQS. We have also established a ‘Caerphilly Homes Task Group’ with 7 councilors and 7 tenant representatives, who periodically meet and discuss progress within the WHQS Programme and the improvements to the housing service. The Task Group is informed by A Tenant’s Repairs and Improvements Group.

## **3. Where are we now?**

During 2014/15, we set ourselves very ambitious plans in order to progress the WHQS investment plan. However, delays and slippage in beginning the internal works contract, retendering for the external contracts and surveying issues has meant some major slippage in our work programme to date. Over 3,500 properties were scheduled for either, internal and/or external repairs and improvements during 2014/15, but we are only likely to complete around 1,000, which emphasises the importance of keeping this priority as a focus of importance.

## **4. What actions are we going to take to improve?**

There needs to be a significant increase and emphasis in the work programmes during 2015/16 to address:

- And secure, the appointment of critical front line staff (e.g. Surveyors, Clerk of Works, Tenant Liaison Officers).
- The continued delivery of the capital investment programme in respect of internal and external repairs and improvements.
- The continued pursuit of external funding opportunities to support energy improvement measures.
- The understanding and importance of carrying out timely and sensitive adaptations that meet specific needs of certain individual households.
- And adhere to the standards set out in the Charter for Trust. This applies to both the in house workforce and contractors.

- Achieve and maintain the high levels of tenant satisfaction with the work undertaken to their homes.
- The promotion, uptake and success of bids submitted to the Community Improvement Fund, enabling community projects to add further benefits to communities across the county borough.

### **5. How will we know we have improved?**

We will be able to demonstrate that we have made improved changes to; the quality of our social housing stock, their surrounding environments and tenants lives, through:

- The number of Internal home improvements in accordance to the WHQS guidelines.
- The number of External home improvements in accordance to the WHQS guidelines.
- Tenant satisfaction levels with any works undertaken to their homes.

### **6. Who are we going to work with to deliver this objective?**

The Council will work with tenants, community groups, other public/private and third sector organisations, in-house work groups and contractors, to deliver the WHQS programme within Welsh Government guidelines and targets.

### **7. What resources do we have to deliver this objective?**

The Welsh Government and the Council has committed to an investment programme of £200 million to meet the WHQS standards by 2020. We now have a well-established management structure in place and a recently reviewed investment strategy. Delivery of the necessary changes and improvements are, and will be, subject to certain physical resource constraints and at the mercy of wider market influences (such as the availability of quality and efficient tradesmen, contractors, access to homes and delivery of quality installation and repair products and technologies).

IO – Evidence	2014/15 Result (baseline)	2015/16 Target	2015/16 Result
<b>We will measure how much we are doing using the evidence below</b>			
Number of homes compliant with WHQS in respect of their external elements		2275	
Number of homes compliant with WHQS in respect of their internal elements		2242	
Number of homes in local authority ownership brought up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (the number of houses that achieved the standard in the year).		909	
<b>We will measure how well we are doing using the evidence below</b>			
Internal work (all 4 internal components – Heating, Electrics, Kitchens and Bathrooms) completed within 20 days of start of works.		90%	
<p>Charter Trust Standards: The Charter for Trust developed in consultation with tenants and staff, which will be assessed by specific questions on the customer satisfaction survey.</p> <p>This sets out the standards that tenants can expect when work is being undertaken in their homes, which will be assessed by specific questions on the customer satisfaction survey (before, during and after works).</p>		90%	
<b>We will measure whether anyone is better off using the evidence below</b>			
% of tenants whose homes have been improved internally through the WHQS programme who are satisfied with the complete works.		80%	
Number of tenants whose homes have been adapted as part of the WHQS works to meet their specific needs		Dependant on the needs identified when delivering the WHQS programme, therefore we are unable to set targets for this measure.	

Further information regarding “The Welsh Housing Quality Standard” can be found in the revised guidance for the social landlords on interpretation and achievement of WHQS July 2008, or by access to the Welsh Government website as follows:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-regeneration/housing-quality/welsh-standard/?lang=en>