



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 21ST MAY 2015

**SUBJECT: WHQS COMPLIANCE**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise CHTG on new requirements from Welsh Government in relation to verification and maintenance of the Welsh housing Quality Standard.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 Social housing landlords are required to put in place a Compliance Policy by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and review it annually. The Compliance Policy is intended to provide the Welsh Government, tenants and the Council with assurance that WHQS will be achieved and maintained. The Policy will form the basis for an independent verification process. The report outlines the Welsh Government requirements, sets out the timetable and consultation arrangements.

### **3. LINKS TO STRATEGY**

- 3.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard is intended to ensure that all local authority and housing association homes are improved and maintained to achieve specified standards.
- 3.2 The Single Integrated Plan 2013-2017 has a priority to “improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the County Borough”.
- 3.3 The Council’s Local Housing Strategy “People, Property, and Places” has the following aims:  
“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.”

### **4. THE REPORT**

- 4.1 *Background and Welsh Government Requirements*

During 2014 Welsh Government commissioned research about how landlords judge and communicate they are implementing or have implemented WHQS, how landlords are independently verifying compliance and the extent to which community benefits have been achieved by the WHQS improvement programme.

- 4.2 The key recommendations that followed this research were:

The Welsh Government should:

- Remind landlords of the necessity of collecting both primary and secondary data
- Require each landlord to produce a WHQS Compliance Policy which contains a brief specification that accurately expresses and clarifies their interpretation of the WHQS guidance
- Agree a definition of “independent verification” with the housing sector

Landlords should:

- Use the draft Compliance Policy as part of a consultation process involving tenants groups, Project Board, CHTG, P&R Scrutiny, and Cabinet
- Be able to answer tenant enquiries on compliance and provide indicative dates for works programmes
- Use the Value Wales Measurement Tool to capture community benefits of all investment

4.3 The Welsh Government has decided to take these recommendations forward and has requested all social landlords to put a Compliance Policy in place by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 and review it annually. The Compliance Policy will become part of the business planning process and will be a requirement to support the application for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA).

4.4 The main elements to be included in the Policy will be:

- Interpretation of WHQS, reflecting resources and circumstances
- Interpretation and recording of acceptable fails
- Data collection
- Data storage
- WHQS progress and reporting
- Independent verification
- Summary of annual financial investment in the stock
- Consistent with WG statistical return
- Interpretation and recording of community benefits

4.5 The Policy must clearly articulate the landlord’s approach to meeting WHQS for the whole stock and on a component basis. It also needs to cover what resources are available within the organisation to meet and maintain the stock to the standard, in the immediate future and longer term. Each landlord must set out in their Policy what community benefit targets have been set by the organisation and the way these will be reported annually. The Policy should allow for the transparent monitoring of investment in the stock and WHQS compliance, and set out the arrangements for independent assessment.

4.6 *Implementation and Timetable*

A small officer working group will be established reporting to the Project Board with responsibility for assembling and collating the information required by the Compliance Policy.

The indicative timetable is:

Establish officer working group	April 2015
Assemble information	May /June 2015
Prepare first draft	July / August 2015
Report to Project Board	September 2015
Consult with tenants R&I Group	October 2015
Amend and finalise draft	November 2015
Consult with CHTG	December 2015
Consult with P &R Scrutiny	January 2016
Policy approved by Cabinet (Council)	February 2016
Publish approved Compliance Policy	March 2016

## **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. However the implementation of the Compliance Policy will have major financial commitments.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The preparation of the Compliance Policy will impose a time commitment on staff resources that are already under pressure due to the volume of work involved in delivering the WHQS Programme by 2020.

## **8. CONSULTATIONS**

8.1 No comments have been received from the consultees.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The report is for information.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To advise the CHTG of the requirement to prepare a WHQS Compliance Policy.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

11.1 Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

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C Burns - Interim Chief Executive  
N Scammell - Acting Director of Corporate Services and S151 Officer  
S Couzens - Head of Housing