



## **CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH  
(SIRHOWY ROOM) ON THURSDAY, 21ST MAY 2015 AT 5.00 P.M.**

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**PRESENT:**

C. Davies- Vice Chair (Presiding)

### **Task Group Members:**

Mrs G. Atkins, Ms E. Forehead, K. James, Miss A. Lewis, C. Mann, M. McDermott, J. Moore and D.V. Poole.

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), P. Davy (Head of Programmes), M. Lloyd (Deputy Head of Programmes), J. Roberts-Waite (Strategic Co-ordination Manager) P. Smythe (Housing Repair Operation Manager), and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Ms L. Ackerman, Mrs B. Jones, Mrs S. Jones, Mrs D. Moore and Mrs D. Price.

### **2. CHAIR'S (PRESIDING) ANNOUNCEMENTS**

C. Davies, Presiding Chair to the Caerphilly Homes Task Group referred to the recent passing of Councillor Ray Davies and all present extended their condolences to the bereaved family. The Task Group noted his long and distinguished career in local government, the manner in which he had carried out his duties and the high esteem in which he had been held by Members, Officers and the Community, and commended his contributions to the Task Group.

It was noted that Councillor Gerald Jones was recently elected as MP for Rhymney and the Task Group extended their congratulations and best wishes for the future and welcomed the new Members, Councillor Elaine Forehead and Councillor David Poole to the Meeting.

The Task Group extended their congratulations to Mrs G. Atkins on her recent marriage and wished her all the best for the future.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mrs G. Atkins, Mr C. Davies, Miss A. Lewis, Mr M. McDermott, and Mr J. Moore as Council Tenants declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items.

Mr C. Davies declared an interest in item 4, relating to the Community Improvement Fund. Details are minuted with the respective item.

#### **4. MINUTES – 2ND APRIL 2015**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd April 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **5. COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT FUND.**

Mr C. Davies declared an interest as a resident of Twyn Carno and having involvement in the project. Mr Davies left the meeting during its consideration and Miss A. Lewis presided as Chair.

The report provided details of an application made for funding from the Community Improvement Fund by Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association. The Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association are a constituted organisation with the aim of improving housing conditions, the environment and amenities within the ward of Twyn Carno and have applied for £5,000 to help finance the cost associated with installing a play facility within the local community.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be £89,052.00 (VAT component £14,842.00), and two quotes for the entire project have been included with the application. The Council have awarded planning permission (with conditions) to the Association to install a fixed and informal play facility. A 25 year lease has been agreed. The Task Group noted that due to the pressure on the MTFP revenue costs can only be guaranteed for 2015/16 for maintenance.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and sought further information on the funding available. Officers explained that the Community Improvement Fund has an allocation of £50,000 per year, with a maximum of £5,000 grant for capital costs for individual projects, which have to demonstrate that they would benefit the community.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the Caerphilly Homes Task Group support the application made by the Pen Y Dre Tenants and Residents Association. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report, the Caerphilly Homes Task Group support the application which will have a positive impact on tenants living within the adjacent housing areas subject to the follow:

- Confirmation of what products/materials will be financed via the CIF.
- The award of additional funding from the CFP (WG Communities Facilities Programme) and the Community Regeneration Fund (approval letters to be provided)
- The Association is advised there is no guaranteed maintenance funding beyond 2015/16 and they should make contingency arrangements, including appropriate insurance cover.

C. Davies returned to the meeting and chair, following the debate and vote.

#### **6. WHQS COMPLIANCE.**

The report provided details of the new requirements from the Welsh Government (WG) in relation to verification and maintenance of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

The Task Group noted that Social Housing Landlords are required to put in place a Compliance Policy by 01.04.16 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 outlined the Welsh Government requirements, sets out the timetable and consultation arrangements.

Having considered the report, the Task Group sought further information on the Officer working group. The Officer highlighted that the Officer working group has now been established and is made up of key WHQS Officers overseeing areas such as finance, data management and community benefits.

Following discussion, the Task Group queried the current information submitted to WG and the process. Officers explained that an annual return is completed which demonstrates the number of properties in total, and the number of which are WHQS compliant. The new requirements would ensure that Caerphilly CBC are progressing in order to achieve WHQS by 2020 and providing sufficient evidence to demonstrate this.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group thanked the Officer and noted the report.

## **7. HOUSING REPAIR OPERATIONS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE.**

Paul Smythe provided an update on the annual performance of the Housing Response Repair Service, which was developed by the newly formed Housing Repairs Operations (HRO) Team, against each of the Response Repair categories to deliver the housing repairs service.

The Task Group considered information on the level of customer satisfaction obtained following the introduction of telephone and face to face customer satisfaction surveys along with some of the other achievements that have been made through working in close partnership with the Repairs and Improvement Group, such as the introduction of the Relet standard, Recharge Policy, Handy Person Service and joint maintenance responsibilities.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the positive report and discussion ensued, noting the improvements achieved in the service and performance.

A Task Group Member sought clarification on the reduction in the Response maintenance budget and the reason for which this was applied. It was noted that there has been a reduction of £600,000 to the budget, which reflects the number of works that were WHQS related and therefore conducted under WHQS funding. There has been a notable change in the system for repairs and an increase in customer confidence, which has seen an increase in repairs reported and expectations of tenants increased.

Members sought further information on the categorization and process associated with Emergency Repairs and the impact of WHQS on the service. The Officer highlighted that Emergency repairs are considered a priority and associated with water, gas or electricity; however, not all reported emergency repairs are genuine cases. The Task Group noted that when the repair is completed and satisfaction survey is conducted any dissatisfaction is followed up and corrected where possible. In addition, works conducted under WHQS, can have an impact on workloads.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

## **8. OLDER PERSONS HOUSING – FULL YEAR PROGRESS REPORT**

The report provided the Task Group with an update on the progress made by the Older Persons Housing Team through the implementation of the new service model and the positive changes made in relation to the development of this service area.

Since the commencement of the new service generally people are happy with the service being delivered (81%) in sheltered housing schemes. Tenants can feedback through tenant meetings and the tenant's satisfaction survey and reasonable adjustments will be made where possible to improve the experiences of tenants.

In response to feedback from tenants a notice board has been introduced on the office door of all Sheltered Schemes with the name of the covering officer and their times at the scheme. Reassurance calls are being piloted in three schemes to consider whether these can be rolled out to all tenants interested in opting into this service.

The newly established Floating Support service has resulted in positive outcomes for older people living in council properties. Feedback from the survey was very good and our aim for this service is to market further to reach more people that need services.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and were pleased to note the changes and impacts on tenants.

Clarification was sought on the variation in figures and follow up on the feedback reports.. The Officer clarified the figures and explained that satisfaction surveys are sent to all tenants, some of which may not have a specific package of support, therefore some of the questions would not be of relevance. On receipt feedback from tenants, follow up meetings have been conducted and needs met or adaptations implemented as a result of an identified need or, in a case where assistance is not available at present, on-going communications are under way.

Discussions took place around the Residential Meetings, their purpose and locations. The Officer explained that meetings are conducted across the borough, encourage a community feel within the Sheltered Schemes and are an opportunity to provide a number of services and opportunities such as hair and beauty treatments and themed dances.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group were pleased to noted the report.

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

There were no requests for items received to be placed on the next available agenda.

The meeting closed at 6.04 p.m.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2015.

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CHAIR