

Improvement Objectives

IO5 - WHQS Investment will transform Council homes and act as a catalyst to also transform lives and communities throughout the county borough.

Outcomes:

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 WHQS is a minimum standard for homes. The core elements are that homes are:

- 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)
- Located in attractive and safe environments
- As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household, for example, catering for specific disabilities.

We aim to ensure all council homes meet WHQS, which will improve the quality of life for people who live in those homes. We will develop 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 scheme to our tenants as promised in the Offer Document
- 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 programme will transform council homes, the lives of our citizens and our communities."

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For the priorities set for 2014/15, our delivery and achievements to date are deemed to be **partially successful**.

The original planned programme for this objective has faced major slippage resulting in revised targets to reflect the delays in contracts commencing.

Most progress has been maintained by the in house team on the internal works programme. The standard of workmanship is consistently very good and tenant satisfaction with the completed works remains high. The in house team commenced external works in the Lower Rhymney Valley but during the year resources were deployed to Rowan Place, Rhymney. As a result only 88 properties were completed externally.

The in house team is the main contractor for the major refurbishment work at Rowan Place, Rhymney. Welsh Government has approved grant funding of £1m (VVP) towards Hafod Deg and environmental works at Rowan Place. The WHQS budget for Rowan Place is £4.2m. This is now a major project in its own right. Work commenced on 15th October and will be phased over 2 years. 22 properties in Rowan Place have been completed internally.

The internal works contractors all commenced late in the financial year. The three contractors completed 171 properties.

Due to the slippage a revised programme of 1683 properties was agreed but the outturn is 700 (42% of the revised programme). The capital programme had a **budget of £29m but the slippage has resulted in an underspend of £13.5m**. The main reasons for the slippage are the delays in the commencement of the internal works contracts; the decision to retender the external works contracts in the Upper Rhymney Valley; the curtailment of the small lots programme in the Eastern Valleys to a more manageable number of contracts; and surveying issues that have slowed the external works in the Lower Rhymney Valley; together with the deployment of the in house work force to Rowan Place, Rhymney.

The slippage will need to be incorporated into the future years. In reality this will require an acceleration of the programme to ensure the WHQS is still achieved by the fixed deadline of March 2020. This has a number of ramifications but in particular the staff resources to manage the volume of work against the timescale.







The WHQS Project Board is mindful of the growing pressures on the programme. Action has been taken to strengthen the senior management. There has been a reconfiguration of the project teams with greater clarity in respect of accountabilities. Additional staff resources in all critical areas are under review but will be dependent on the ability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to absorb the additional cost.

The forward investment plan between 2015/16 and 2019/20 has been reviewed and there are some changes to the community sequence particularly affecting the external works.

To ensure the programme can be fully delivered by 2020 will require an average rate of 80 completions a week across both internal and external works.

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Actions

Title	Comment	RAG	Overall Status	% Complete
Achieve high levels of tenant satisfaction with the work undertaken to their homes	Overall satisfaction rates remain high and above target.		Complete	100
Adhere to the standards set out in the Charter for Trust. This applies to both the in house workforce and contractors	Compliance levels remain high and above target.		Complete	100
Carry out adaptations to meet specific needs of individual households	233 properties have had adaptations incorporated where this has been identified as a requirement for the tenants. Action on-going in response to need.		Complete	100
Delivery of the 2014/15 capital investment programme in respect of internal and external repairs and improvements	Significant underspend on planned programme due to slippage.		Not Met	53
Promote the Community Improvement Fund to benefit projects within the communities across the county borough	Only 2 projects supported during the year.		Not Met	20
Pursue external funding opportunities to support energy improvement measures (under the Energy Companies Obligation [ECO], Arbed or similar Government initiatives).	Successful Arbed bid for Phillipstown. Scheme extended to June 2015. The scheme covers 317 properties of which 92 are Council properties. The funding of £2.7m will meet the cost of external wall insulation and replacement of inefficient boilers.		Partially Met	40

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How much did we do and how well did we do it?

Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
Charter for Trust Standards - The Charter for Trust developed in consultation with tenants and staff 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	93.00	90.00	85.00	⊖	85.00	This measure is reported annually.
Number of homes brought to WHQS as recorded on annual return to Welsh Government (The number of houses that have achieved WHQS standard in the year)		80.00	65.00		108	This measure is reported annually in August.
Number of homes compliant with WHQS in respect of their external elements	103.00	1531.00	1400.00	⊖	23.00	The published target for 2014/15 was 2381 properties. One contract relating to non traditional properties was delayed and there was a need to retender. As a result, this will cause slippage in the programme and will have an impact on the original target. We have therefore set a new target of 1531 for 2014/15, which is still much higher than the 2013/14 target of 38 properties. The review of the investment strategy led to a further downward revision to 834.
Number of homes compliant with WHQS in respect of their internal elements	471.00	1332.00	1200.00	⊖	657	Internal works contracts all started late in the financial year. 471 figure recorded within Keystone but due to valuation issues there are properties which have not been recorded as completed within the system. From other data sources total completions are 599.

Is anyone better off?

Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
% of tenants whose homes have been improved internally through the WHQS programme are satisfied with the completed works (The percentage of tenants who's house meets the WHQS standard that are satisfied)	90.00	80.00	72.00	⊖	92.00	This measure is reported annually. In 2013/14 the overall satisfaction rate was 92%.
Number of organisations making successful applications to the Community Improvement Fund (Number of local residents who use the Community Improvement Fund which will make environmental improvements to their external surroundings)	2.00	10.00	7.00	⊖	3.00	Four new applications under the Community Improvement Fund have been received. Two of the applications were the subject of consultation with Caerphilly Home Task Group on 30th October 2014. One application was approved, and the other refused. Given the low numbers of applications for CIF this may be discontinued as a measure.