

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At: Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

On: Thursday, 9 July 2015

Time: 2.00 pm

AGENDA

Page No.

- 1 **Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 **Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.** 1 - 2
- 3 **Minutes:** 3 - 8
To approve, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 2 June, 2015.
- 4 **Local Housing Strategy: (Chapter 5)** 9 - 38
Improving and Making the Best Use of Housing Stock: Managing and Improving Council Housing; Letting and Managing Council Housing; Anti Social Behaviour; Private Sector and Energy Efficiency.
- 5 **Work Plan 2015-2016.** 39



Patrick Arran
Head of Legal, Democratic Services & Procurement
Thursday, 2 July 2015

Contact: Democratic Services - 01792 636923

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Labour Councillors: 9

R A Clay	B Hopkins
A M Cook	H M Morris
D W Cole	A S Lewis
J P Curtice	G J Tanner
T J Hennegan	

Liberal Democrat Councillors: 2

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Independent Councillor: 1

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Conservative Councillor: 1

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Officers and relevant Cabinet Members :

Councillor D H Hopkins	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities
Councillor W Evans	Cabinet Member for Anti Poverty
Chris Sivers	Director of People
Lee Wenham	Head of Marketing, Communications & Scrutiny
Lee Morgan	Head of Housing and Public Protection
Democratic Services	
Archives	

Total Copies Needed:

20

Disclosures of Interest

To receive Disclosures of Interest from Councillors and Officers

Councillors

Councillors Interests are made in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea. You must disclose orally to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest.

NOTE: You are requested to identify the Agenda Item / Minute No. / Planning Application No. and Subject Matter to which that interest relates and to enter all declared interests on the sheet provided for that purpose at the meeting.

1. If you have a **Personal Interest** as set out in **Paragraph 10** of the Code, you **MAY STAY, SPEAK AND VOTE** unless it is also a Prejudicial Interest.
2. If you have a Personal Interest which is also a **Prejudicial Interest** as set out in **Paragraph 12** of the Code, then subject to point 3 below, you **MUST WITHDRAW** from the meeting (unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Authority's Standards Committee)
3. Where you have a Prejudicial Interest you may attend the meeting but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, **provided** that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise. In such a case, you **must withdraw from the meeting immediately after the period for making representations, answering questions, or giving evidence relating to the business has ended**, and in any event before further consideration of the business begins, whether or not the public are allowed to remain in attendance for such consideration (**Paragraph 14** of the Code).
4. Where you have agreement from the Monitoring Officer that the information relating to your Personal Interest is **sensitive information**, as set out in **Paragraph 16** of the Code of Conduct, your obligation to disclose such information is replaced with an obligation to disclose the existence of a personal interest and to confirm that the Monitoring Officer has agreed that the nature of such personal interest is sensitive information.
5. If you are relying on a **grant of a dispensation** by the Standards Committee, you must, before the matter is under consideration:
 - i) Disclose orally both the interest concerned and the existence of the dispensation; and
 - ii) Before or immediately after the close of the meeting give written notification to the Authority containing:

- a) Details of the prejudicial interest;
- b) Details of the business to which the prejudicial interest relates;
- c) Details of, and the date on which, the dispensation was granted; and
- d) Your signature

Officers

Financial Interests

1. If an Officer has a financial interest in any matter which arises for decision at any meeting to which the Officer is reporting or at which the Officer is in attendance involving any member of the Council and /or any third party the Officer shall declare an interest in that matter and take no part in the consideration or determination of the matter and shall withdraw from the meeting while that matter is considered. Any such declaration made in a meeting of a constitutional body shall be recorded in the minutes of that meeting. No Officer shall make a report to a meeting for a decision to be made on any matter in which s/he has a financial interest.
2. A "financial interest" is defined as any interest affecting the financial position of the Officer, either to his/her benefit or to his/her detriment. It also includes an interest on the same basis for any member of the Officers family or a close friend and any company firm or business from which an Officer or a member of his/her family receives any remuneration. There is no financial interest for an Officer where a decision on a report affects all of the Officers of the Council or all of the officers in a Department or Service.

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3A, GUILDHALL, SWANSEA
ON TUESDAY 2 JUNE 2015 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT: Councillor A S Lewis (Chair) presided

Councillor(s):

R A Clay
D W Cole

Councillor(s):

J P Curtice
T J Hennegan

Councillor(s):

G J Tanner

Officers:

A Owen - Community Food and Growing Team Manager
L Jenkins - Community Food Officer
D Rees - Senior Planning Officer - Policy
G Evans - Senior Policy Officer, Housing
P Williams - Strategic Planning and Enabling Manager
J Parkhouse - Democratic Services Officer

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D H Hopkins and W Evans (Cabinet Members).

7. DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City and County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

8. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee held on 2 April 2015 and 19 May 2015 be approved as correct records subject to the following amendment:

19 May 2015

Add Councillor G J Tanner to the list of apologies.

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee Terms of Reference were provided for information.

10. **OVERVIEW OF FOOD BANKS**

The Community Food and Growing Team Manager, supported by the Community Food Officer provided an overview update regarding food banks in Swansea. The following details were provided:

- Swansea Food Bank - Trussell Trust, including criteria, distribution centres and number of vouchers issued;
- Independent Food Banks, including:
 - St Teilo's Church, Portmead;
 - Eastside Food Bank, Bonymaen;
 - Lifepoint Church, Uplands;
 - Contact Centre, Civic Centre;
 - Communities First;
 - Swansea Mosque Food Bank.

The Committee asked a number of questions of the Officers who responded accordingly. Discussions centred around the following:

- Impact of Welfare Reform;
- Rise in people's use of food banks;
- Methods used by Trussell Trust compared to Independent Food Banks;
- How the Council can assist individuals and the process in general;
- How voucher schemes are operated;
- Service provided by the Trussell Trust and Independent Food Banks.

The Chair proposed that a letter be forwarded to all Food Banks enquiring how the Council could assist them in the future.

RESOLVED that the Community Food and Growing Team Manager writes to all Food Banks in Swansea to establish how the Authority can support them in the future and reports the findings to a future Committee meeting.

11. **LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY**

The Strategic Planning and Enabling Manager, Housing and Senior Policy Officer, supported by the Senior Planning Officer - Policy provided a presentation regarding the Local Housing Strategy. The purpose of the presentation was to review the following chapters of the strategy:-

- Chapter 1 - Foreword and Introduction;
- Chapter 2 - Housing Market Assessment;
- Chapter 3 - Land Use Planning Framework;
- Chapter 4 - Affordable Housing.

Details within the presentation included:-

- Background;
- What is a Local Housing Strategy?;
- Consultation Process;
- Dividing up the Strategy;
- Chapter 2 - Housing Market Assessment:
 - Undertaken contractor (ORS) using Welsh Government Guidance;
 - Joint Project Wales Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council;
 - Results went to Scrutiny Board as part of Affordable Housing Scrutiny Process;
 - Results used to inform the Local Development Plan;
 - Started new in-house market assessment;
 - What data was considered?;
 - All secondary data;
 - Projected population change;
 - Key results;
 - Where should affordable housing be built?

Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee
(02.06.2015) Cont'd

- Chapter 3 - Land Use Planning Framework:
 - Aims of the LDP;
 - Key Statistics of the LDP (2010 -2025);
 - Affordable Housing in the LDP;
 - Timeframe for the LDP;

- Chapter 4 - Affordable Housing:
 - Social Housing Grant Allocation for Swansea;
 - Section 106 Agreements;
 - Alternative Ways of Increasing Affordable Housing;
 - Other Welsh Government funding streams, e.g. Smaller Properties Grant, Housing Finance Grant, Vibrant and Viable Places Grant;
 - New Financial Models Key;
 - Land Release Protocol;
 - More Homes Project;
 - Reform of the Housing Revenue Account and New Rents Policy;
 - Strategy for delivering Council housing being development;
 - More Homes Strategy.

The Committee asked a number of questions of the Officers, who responded accordingly. Discussions centred around the following:

- Reform of the Housing Revenue Account and New Rents Policy;
- Review of LDP threshold and land allocations;
- Section 106 Agreements;
- Examining new methods of delivering strategies;
- Authority control over Housing/Land;
- The need for more one bedroom accommodation in Swansea;
- Partnership working with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and development of an in-house model;
- Affordable Housing based on need;
- The need to co-ordinate Housing with Adult Social Services in relation to housing need.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee
(02.06.2015) Cont'd

The Chair proposed that the following amendments be made to Chapter 1 - Foreword and Introduction - The Ambition for Swansea, paragraph 3, page 4:

“But we also want Swansea to be a healthier, fairer and more economically active place, the city that offers more for children and young people and supports independent living for older people.”

Paragraph 5 be amended to:

“The vision is that Swansea will be a desirable place to live, work and visit that:

- Is a thriving city centre destination that offers excellent shopping facilities and supporting leisure and business opportunities, capitalising on its proximity to the waterfront;
- Support for competitive and prosperous economy that acts as a focal point for the wider Swansea Bay Region;
- Capitalises on the distinctive relationship between its vibrant urban areas and outstanding rural and coastal environments;
- Celebrates and conserves its unique natural heritage and cultural and historical environments;
- Has sustainable, distinct communities in both urban and rural locations that benefit from sufficient good quality accommodation;
- Supporting infrastructure, community facilities and opportunities for recreation.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the contents of the presentation be noted;
- (2) the amendments to Chapter 1 - Introduction and Foreword be amended as outlined above;
- (3) Chapters 1 to 4 of the Local Housing Strategy be approved.

12. **WORK PLAN 2015-2016**

The Chair presented the updated Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee Work Programme 2015-2016.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee
(02.06.2015) Cont'd

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the contents of the report be noted;
- (2) an additional meeting be scheduled in order to discuss Chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the Local Housing Strategy.

The meeting ended at 3.55 p.m.

CHAIR

S: Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee - 2 June 2015
(JEP)

Chapter 5

Improving and Making the Best Use of Existing Housing Stock

5.1 Managing and Improving Council Housing

The One Swansea Plan

People have good places to live and work

Housing Service Objective

Working towards bringing all existing council housing stock up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

The Current Situation

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

In 2001 the Welsh Government (WG) set out its long term vision for housing in Wales in its strategy “Better Homes for People in Wales” and in April 2002, it introduced the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). The WHQS sets out a common target for the physical condition of all housing in Wales including Authority owned housing, and it is underpinned by legal and regulatory requirements and provides a link with other Welsh Government strategies.

In summary, the WHQS requires that all social housing properties should be;

- 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 (e.g. specific disabilities)

Whilst improving all the Council owned stock up to this standard has been a strategic priority for the Authority, until recently, the cost of its full achievement was more than what the Authority was able to access under the financial rules

However, in 2013, a HRA Business Plan was developed which identifies funding for the improvement of the Council housing stock up to WHQS by 2020.

Stock Condition Survey

The Authority's understanding of the stock's condition and the cost to meet and maintain the WHQS is based upon condition surveys carried out in 2002 and 2005 and more recently in 2012. The data from these surveys has been merged into a single comprehensive repairs programme database and the 30 year business plan has been updated annually to take account of the ongoing capital repair programmes and their impact on delivering WHQS related repair works.

Guidance issued by the WG is that such surveys should be revised on a 5 year cycle to ensure the most up to date information is used to underpin investment plans.

In March 2012, Savills Commercial Limited Chartered Surveyors were appointed by the Authority to undertake the most up to date survey. Approximately 13% of the stock was surveyed to ensure the results were statistically significant and the sample was carefully chosen so that a representative mix of properties based on different types and locations was included.

Broadly, the findings of the 2012 survey reflected the earlier 2002 and 2005 merged survey results, when completed capital repair programmes from 2005 – 2011 were taken into consideration.

In overall terms, the survey identified that investment of £310m (at 2012 prices) between 2012 and 2020 is needed to improve the stock up to the WHQS.

The total investment required has remained relatively consistent across the surveys although a review of some of the more detailed elemental costs show differences to some of the original studies. In particular, there are increased costs for environmental work required within the boundary of the property such as garden walls, paths and handrails much of which is attributed to ensure compliance with Housing Health and Safety Rating System legislation which has been introduced since the original surveys.

In contrast, kitchens and bathrooms were found not to have deteriorated as much as originally anticipated despite the absence of a programme of renewal before 2012. In practice, the new survey increases the notional life cycle of the facilities, and although a majority are older than 15 years (the benchmark year in the WHQS to consider kitchen renewal) approximately 40% are in such condition that they will not need to be replaced until after 2020. A further issue that has increased the overall total requirement is that extra costs have been identified for the repair of high rise structures.

Funding Issues

The stock condition survey findings suggest that to achieve WHQS technical compliance by 2020, investment is required as illustrated in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Breakdown between capital and cyclical investment	To meet WHQS	30 Years
Capital Repairs (major repair or renewal):	£237.5m	£720m
Revenue Repairs (responsive and cyclical repairs):	£94.5m	£405m
Total	£332m	£1,125m

Policy Issues

The Authority has in place a long standing Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements Policy. Whilst some minor revisions were undertaken in 2010 (i.e. response times and the scope of Emergency Repairs), the overall approach is based on delivering repairs based on the requirements of the Housing Act 1985. This policy is currently under review to take into account the WHQS, the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the HRA business-planning regime.

Tenant Consultation

The Council recognises that tenants have a key role to play in shaping the future direction of the Housing Service and identifying priorities for their homes and estates. The Council has in place a Tenant Participation strategy which was developed in partnership with tenants and leaseholders. The strategy is a requirement of the Welsh Government and its main purpose is to actively encourage tenant involvement to help improve the quality of services.

It is important that tenants views are sought to help inform continuous improvement and to ensure services are delivered efficiently and cost effectively. Tenants' opinions are taken into account on any policy changes to housing management, repairs and maintenance which are likely to significantly affect them. Consultation also takes place with tenants and leaseholders on future plans for improving council houses and flats in order to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard which is a priority for the Council.

The strategy is subject to review every 3 years to ensure that it supports tenant participation and continues to develop opportunities and ways tenants want to get involved.

Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

Since the publication of the last Local Housing Strategy in 2007, significant investment has continued in the stock with all available capital resources targeted on WHQS related items.

Improvements and Repairs

Since 2007, over 3,500 homes have received improvements to heating systems, 2900 properties have received electrical rewires and approximately 10% properties have received structural repairs and insulation measures.

Contribution to Wider Corporate Strategies

Energy Efficiency and Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding

The inclusion of thermal efficiency measures as part of the building and repair programme has taken place for many years. The specifying of External Wall Insulation (EWI) was standardised in 1994 and continues to be included as the standard specification for wall repair schemes.

The most recent development is the specification for communal lighting systems. A programme is set to run until 2015 aimed at renewing the electrical wiring in all communal areas of blocks of flats, which will receive a combined communal and emergency lighting system that uses LED technology. The technology requires less energy to run, has extended life and therefore reduced maintenance and renewal needs. Approximately 370 sites will benefit from this work, affecting 3,000 homes. However, we need to ensure that the lighting is adequate; Older People, people with dementia and those with a visual impairment need good lighting to feel safe, and low energy lighting is not always adequate for their needs. If poor lighting results in a fall or injury the fact that it is cheaper to run has to be weighed against the potentially huge cost of treating the fall.

A project started in 2012 to increase the levels of loft insulation in Authority owned homes. The project is being undertaken in partnership with British Gas who are jointly funding the enterprise through the former CERT, and now Energy Company Obligation (ECO), funding programmes. The scheme is significantly improving the energy efficiency of Authority owned homes and has the potential to save households around £100 a year on their fuel bills.

Fire Risk Assessments and Improved Fire Safety

The Authority as Landlord is required to undertake Fire Risk Assessments of properties which have shared/communal entrance. To date the assessment of all high rise flats have been undertaken along with most sheltered housing complexes.

The next stage will be to undertake assessments of medium rise blocks of flats. As a result, improvements have been carried out where a risk is identified. For example, one hour fire doors have now been installed in high rise flats as a result of the assessment process. Also fire safety signage has been improved and presentations have been undertaken to housing management and maintenance staff, and tenants to raise the profile of fire safety issues.

Range of Hazards

Following work with the Police Service and the Arson Reduction Team, the scope of potential hazards covered by Fire Risk Assessments has increased and now covers chemical suicides and illegal drugs laboratories.

Multi Agency working

The Authority and Fire Service have undertaken joint fire response exercises in high rise blocks with the aim of testing firefighting procedures, informing behaviour and monitoring the performance of the buildings in terms of fire and smoke protection facilities, integrated firefighting equipment and override and control mechanisms.

Future Proofing Repairs

The interpretation of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order is changing and expanding nationally due to key events; firstly through high profile fires nationally and the resulting recommendations of enquiries, and secondly the enforcement of the Act and subsequent case law.

As such and where appropriate, the design and specification of relevant repairs and improvements (e.g. fire separation works) to Authority owned homes anticipate future changes by increasing performance levels above the minimum.

Future Developments

Coupled with a strategy for modest borrowing, the HRA Business Plan demonstrates the ability to fund the improvement of the stock up to the WHQS by 2020. However, it needs to be noted that small changes in the Business Plan assumptions can have a significant effect on the forecasts, including rent increases, the level of MRA, continued efficiency savings, interest rate levels and capital grant income. Most of these factors are outside the direct control of the Authority, either being subject to prescription by the Welsh Government or dictated by market forces.

However the move to self-financing and exit from the HRAS will allow more resources to be made available and allow more local control over longer term business planning.

To compliment these changes, a formal HRA Asset Management Plan which aims to bring together the components that are already in place, is currently under development.

Summary of Main Objectives

- Develop and implement a formal HRA Asset Management plan to underpin practical achievement of WHQS and longer term Business Planning
- Update the Housing Repair and Maintenance Policy to reflect the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Welsh Housing Quality Standard and the regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order
- Continue with Fire Risk Assessments to all qualifying blocks of flats
- Continuously review the Council's Tenant Participation strategy with tenants and leaseholders in line with Welsh Government requirements

Chapter 5

Improving and Making the Best Use of Existing Housing Stock

5.2 Letting and Managing Council Housing

The One Swansea Plan

People are healthy, safe and independent
People have good places to live and work

Housing Service Objective

Addressing the needs of the all service users

The Current Situation

Introduction

The Council currently manages around 13,600 properties making it one of the largest social landlords in Wales. All properties are let at Social Housing rent levels and consist of a variety of sizes and types e.g. bedsits, 2 bedroom flats, 4 bedroom houses, high rise, OAP designated bungalows, sheltered accommodation, etc. Generally, demand for Council properties in the City and County has increased in recent times, which, according to the Housing Market Assessment, is attributed to a steep rise in property prices. It is now estimated that many first time buyers have to save for 10 years before they can afford a deposit to purchase a property (House Builders Federation).

Housing Allocations

The Council operates a points based allocation scheme for the majority of its housing stock and applications for Council housing are assessed in accordance with this policy. Applicants that are eligible for housing are awarded points, which take into account a broad set of personal circumstances. The scheme is amended when necessary to comply with legislation and to reflect changes in the conditions of the local housing market.

Within the allocation scheme, those applying for Council housing can choose from any number of the designated rehousing areas within the City & County of Swansea. This is intended to maximise housing choice as far as possible under the current Allocations Policy, which was last amended in April 2013. A number of information leaflets are provided on each rehousing area detailing the choice of properties that are available for letting. Details on the average waiting times for each rehousing area are also available on the Council's website. Applicants are also able to apply for housing managed by any of the Registered Social Landlords (RSL) operating in the City & County of Swansea area, via the nominations process and by using the same application form.

Homes Preparation Unit

The specialist 'Homes Preparation Unit (HPU)' was established to provide a more strategic approach to the management of any void properties in the Council owned stock. This includes the prioritisation of works to high demand voids. The aim of the HPU is to ensure that void properties are secure, meet the minimum letting standard and to ensure that they are prepared for re-letting cost effectively and with minimum delay.

Demand for Council Properties

In recent years, the Council has addressed issues relating to the low demand for some housing. For example, a Marketing Strategy was developed in conjunction with an external consultancy to better market Council accommodation. Other developments include "show homes" in areas of low demand, targeting unpopular bedsit accommodation through re-letting it as furnished accommodation and improved literature about the services that are on offer.

In addition, the rationalisation of some of the most unpopular properties has taken place either through demolition in the most extreme cases or as part of a programme of wider estate regeneration. As a consequence, the number of 'long term' voids has been greatly reduced in recent times.

Council Accommodation Used to Support Housing Projects

The Council continues to make accommodation available to the most vulnerable, such as identifying stock to be utilised as temporary accommodation for such schemes as the Alternative to Bed & Breakfast Accommodation (ABBA) scheme. This form of temporary accommodation provides vulnerable members of society with the opportunity to develop the required skills and knowledge to maintain permanent accommodation.

Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

Welfare Reform

Work has been carried out to manage the impact on tenants of the changes to the Housing Benefit system.

Housing@Swansea

A new website called Housing@Swansea has been developed and implemented (www.swanseahousing.co.uk) to give customers access to housing advice and information relating to their personal circumstances. This particularly benefits those who are unable to attend the Housing Options service in person. The website features not only Council Housing but also the available stock of local Housing Associations and in the Private Sector.

Credit Union

A pilot scheme was established to encourage Council Tenants to use the services of the Swansea Credit Union (LASA) in order to help them manage their money and pay their bills. The Housing Service is assisting the Swansea based Credit Union by publicising its services through the District Housing Offices and Open House, the tenants' magazine. During the financial year 2013/14, 89 Council Tenants joined the Credit Union.

Suspended Warrants for Eviction

Warrants are used to seek recovery via court action when tenants fail to reach or keep to agreements to pay rent arrears. In the past 12 months, 77.1% of warrant applications raised with the Court were suspended due to support and advice given by staff. Performance exceeded the projected target, as a result of work to ensure tenants sustain their tenancies. Eviction is seen as a last resort and staff will continue to support tenants to help them take positive action to maintain their tenancy.

Rent Arrears

In the financial year 2013/14, arrears increased by 26.9% on the previous year from £850,187 to £1,078,902. In relation to managing arrears, Rents Officers spend a significant amount of time working with tenants to ensure they apply for all the benefits that they are entitled to.

Void Council Homes

The number of voids in the Council's stock stood at of 220 (1.6%) as at 31st March 2014 against a target of 255. This is the lowest level since 1996.

A Systems Thinking Review of the voids and lettings service was carried out in 2013 and a number of successful initiatives have been introduced as a result. These include;

- A new multi-task clearance, cleaning and garden team has produced a more streamlined and effective service
- 200 key safes have been purchased and are in use. They are a contributory factor in the reduction of re-let times and enable a number of tasks to be carried out simultaneously.
- Flexibility in ending tenancies has been introduced to assist in reducing re-let times. This is carried out where it is beneficial to both the tenant and the Council to help reduce the amount of time that a property is undergoing works

Maintaining Tenancies

The Authority aims to help and support tenants to maintain their tenancy as a high turnover of properties can often result in fragmented communities. Research undertaken by the Authority indicates that 77% of tenants maintain their tenancy for at least two years.

A tend & Mend garden cutting service for OAP and disabled tenants is also delivered free of charge.

The Authority also subscribes to Homeswapper, the national organisation to assist tenants to find a suitable property to exchange their tenancy. This service is again provided free of charge to tenants. Where tenants downsize via this scheme, the Authority arranges and finances the removal costs.

The Authority has a dedicated Tenancy Support Unit that offers help and support to vulnerable tenants. Other initiatives introduced to help sustain tenancies include;

- The Authority's Financial Inclusion Officer offers help and advice to people who are experiencing multiple debt issues.
- A range of security measures to protect vulnerable households are provided under the Domestic Abuse Safety & Security Scheme. The number of tenancies which were recorded as ending due to domestic violence reduced significantly from 43 in 2012/13 to 17 in 2013/14.
- A Furnished Tenancy scheme provides tenants with the option of 3 types of furniture packs according to their requirements.

Future Developments

Rents Strategy

The development of a Rents Strategy, which will establish the aims and objectives of an effective Rents Management service to ensure it continues to be accessible and meets the needs of a diverse community.

Credit Union

The Council will encourage more tenants to join the Credit Union, which will enable tenants to manage their finances effectively, minimising the chance of rent arrears and consequent financial difficulties.

Welfare Reform

Continue to manage the impact of welfare reform by making appropriate allocations and helping tenants secure transfers to more suitable accommodation.

Summary of Main Objectives

- The development of a Rents Strategy
- Encourage more Council tenants to join the Credit Union
- Continue to manage the impact of welfare reform

Chapter 5

Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

5.3 Anti-Social Behaviour

The One Swansea Plan

People have good places to live and work

Housing Service Objective

Addressing the needs of the all service users

The Current Situation

The Authority is a key partner in the Safer Swansea Partnership which aims to curtail crime and anti-social behaviour, in order to help create safe and secure estates where residents are able to live without fear of crime or harassment.

The Authority is committed to dealing robustly with anti-social behaviour (ASB) and works closely with key partners in the Safer Swansea Partnership to tackle ASB and crime on estates. There is significant investment in resources with the Council's Neighbourhood Support Unit providing a high profile landlord presence on estates of council housing on a twenty four hour basis. There is also a small specialist ASB Team and a Family Intervention Partnership that can offer support to both victims and perpetrators of ASB.

There is recognition that perpetrators of anti-social behaviour can also be victims and the Authority's approach is geared towards supporting victims of anti-social behaviour and also offering perpetrators support to assist them in modifying their offending behaviour. If behaviour modification is not achieved, then proportionate sanctions will be taken against the perpetrators of anti-social behaviour.

Recent trends indicate that both crime and anti-social behaviour are gradually decreasing.

Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

There have been some significant developments in the way the Authority delivers its anti-social behaviour service to Council tenants. These include both technical tools and new service initiatives to help to deliver more focussed support for victims and perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. For example;

- A Remote Concierge System (RCS) has been introduced in Griffith John Street and Mathew Street multi storey blocks of flats. It allows the Council's Neighbourhood Support Unit to monitor callers to flats in these blocks from their control room. The system has helped prevent many nuisance calls and has helped to reduce drug related crime and nuisance in these blocks

- The ReAct IT system was introduced in October 2010 and has proved a useful tool in monitoring recording and managing anti-social behaviour on estates of Council housing and assists greatly with case management. In conjunction with this system, anti-social behaviour guidelines are regularly reviewed and adapted to follow best practice. Every complainant is now issued with a unique case number and informed of the responsible case management officer, who will be dealing with their case
- An Anti-Social Behaviour Support Unit has been created from existing personnel with three specialist officers who assist Neighbourhood Officers with the management of anti-social behaviour cases and the ReAct system. Their role includes providing formal case reviews, Court and Safer Swansea Partnership liaison and ensuring that perpetrators and victims in particular, are given the required support
- The Family Intervention Partnership (FIP) is part of the Authority's Tenancy Support Unit and provides specialist intensive support for those families whose anti-social behaviour may lead to them losing their home or facing legal sanctions. Funded by Supporting People, it is the only local authority FIP project in Wales. The FIP works with families and aims to reduce their anti-social behaviour, improve outcomes for children and young people, and reduce the burden of cost that families place on local services and wider society. It is not regarded as a soft option as enforcement action remains a viable alternative if their behaviour does not improve. The FIP has been successful and has achieved national recognition having won Cymorth Cymru's 'Working in Partnership' award in 2012 and the 'Outstanding Leadership by a Local Authority' award at the Chartered Institute of Housing – Welsh Housing Awards 2013
- Introductory Tenancies were adopted for new tenants in October 2012. It is anticipated that this measure will facilitate early intervention with new tenants who fail to maintain their tenancies satisfactorily
- The Council's Housing Service has been awarded the Welsh Housing Management Standard. Introduced in 2008 the standard provides a guide and benchmark for social landlords to demonstrate that they are taking a comprehensive approach to dealing effectively with anti-social behaviour. To achieve this standard, landlords must comply with the seven commitments required. A key part of the standard requires the service to consult with tenants on their expectations of the manner in which it deals with anti-social behaviour and the quality of the service delivery
- In common with other social landlords noise continues to be the main source of complaint in relation to ASB and the Council has acquired a noise monitoring device which has proved very effective in distinguishing between genuine anti-social behaviour and lifestyle issues

Future Developments

Legislative Changes

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 is in the process of being enacted. The Act seeks to introduce reforms which will abolish Anti-Social Behavior Orders (ASBOs) and housing injunctions. It also introduces a "Community Trigger" which gives victims the right to require that action is taken. ASBOs and housing injunctions are being replaced by a Crime Prevention Order (CPO), available on conviction, and the Community Protection Injunction (CPI) which, subject to safeguards, may be obtained against young people from 10 to 17 years old, as well as adults.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 stresses the need for all landlords of all tenures to be proactive in order to prevent anti-social behaviour by use of early intervention, multi-agency partnership working and tenants and their families having a clear understanding as to what behaviour is and isn't acceptable. The development of legislation to introduce the mandatory registration and accreditation of private landlords and lettings agents will take into account matters relating to anti-social behaviour.

The Authority will ensure that these proposed changes are adopted within the time frame required by the Government and that the impact of the changes continues to be monitored.

Domestic Abuse Policy

The Council's Housing Service has published a Domestic Abuse Policy which sets out the housing policy for people in need of housing services as a result of domestic abuse or the threat of domestic abuse. The Policy will promote a preventative agenda, will ensure a victim centred approach and will also comply with Corporate Strategies. Housing will be an effective partner in finding multi-agency community safety solutions to help reduce incidences of domestic abuse, along with offering support to victims.

Restorative Practice

Relevant Housing staff, such as the ASB Support Team, FIP workers and Neighbourhood Officers, have undertaken base Restorative Practice training. This is a practice that has traditionally been used with young people and has proved to be very successful in local schools and with young offenders. This approach focuses on resolving conflicts at the earliest possible stage, seeking to avoid blame and supporting people to take responsibility for finding a constructive solution to issues. It encourages effective communication and working towards positive outcomes. Selected staff, including the ASB Support Team, have undertaken more advanced training and Restorative Practice is in the process of being embedded into our approach to dealing with ASB.

Summary of Main Objectives

- Continue to work with key partners to ensure that anti-social behaviour is effectively dealt with and that victims are supported.

- Implement the new legislative changes and ensure that the service dealing with anti-social behaviour is of a high quality and meets the needs of tenants and residents.
- Monitor the implementation of Introductory Tenancies to ensure that they become an effective tool to combat ASB.
- Restorative Practice training to become embedded in our approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Chapter 5

Improving and Making the Best Use of Existing Housing Stock

5.4 The Private Sector

The One Swansea Plan

People have good places to live and work

Housing Service Objective

Leading and promoting improvement of housing conditions in the private sector

The Current Situation

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act, has introduced new legislation that aims to improve the private-rented sector.

The Act includes a mandatory registration scheme for all private sector landlords and licensing for all landlord and agents who let and manage properties in Wales. The intention is to improve the standards of management and standards of property in this growing sector; and to support an increased awareness of the respective rights and responsibilities of tenants, landlords and letting and management agents.

The Housing (Wales) Act also requires Local Authorities to identify the location of empty properties and allows Local Authorities to impose a Council Tax penalty on homes which have been empty for more than six months, in an attempt to encourage owners to bring them back into use.

In addition, the Act will also require closer working with private landlords as the local authority's homelessness duty will be discharged by offering accommodation in the private rented sector.

National Context

According to recent figures from StatsWales currently around 70% of housing in Wales is owner-occupied and 14% is rented from private sector landlords. It follows that the private sector is a significant player in meeting national and local objectives for housing in Wales. The Housing (Wales) Act (2014) outlines a number of the Welsh Government's housing priorities regarding the private sector. These include:

- Financial assistance for organisations to bring empty homes back into use as 90% of empty properties are in the private sector
- The need to speed up the time taken to deal with Disabled Facilities Grants

- An acknowledgment that the quality of the private rented sector in Wales is poor and that action needs to be taken by Local Authorities to improve rental agreements
- A commitment to help private landlords work with tenants to drive up standards
- The Welsh Government seeking more legal powers to regulate the private rented sector

Legislative Framework

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order (2002) [RRO], replaced the previous legislation governing the provision of Housing Renewal Grants (with the exception of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) which remain mandatory). The RRO gives new wide ranging powers to provide assistance for housing renewal in the place of a previously prescriptive set of rules on providing housing grants. Local Authorities now have the freedom to decide what type of assistance to provide, and are encouraged to use other ways to help people repair and maintain their homes.

Funding

There is insufficient direct housing grant investment to deal with the range and level of problems associated with private sector housing. Other approaches, specifically the development of loan based products using home owners' own equity have been developed to increase amounts of private investment and ensure that the correct type of work is done to high standards. Loan based assistance, such as the Welsh Government's Houses for Homes scheme, is viewed as a more sustainable method of ensuring housing renewal with funds being recycled back into the loan 'pot' once a property is sold. The recycled funds are then available for use by other property owners requiring assistance.

Local Context

The Authority's approach to private sector housing and adaptations for people with disabilities is set out comprehensively in the policy document "Private Sector Housing and Disabled Adaptations Policy to Provide Assistance 2012/2017", which was approved in November 2011. The policy was developed in accordance with current legislation and describes in detail the issues faced and the policy direction to help tackle poor housing conditions in the private sector, and the needs of vulnerable older and disabled persons.

A summary of the local issues that have informed the policy are:

- The age profile of the private sector stock in Swansea is similar to that of Wales as a whole but there are more properties in the 1919-44 age band (15.9% locally compared with 10.9% across Wales)
- Across Swansea approximately 15% of private houses have a Category 1 hazard (as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System)

- There are estimated to be 12,900 (15.0%) dwellings where the household is fuel poor, 19% of which are on benefits. The highest rate of fuel poverty was in the private rented sector
- The most common hazard found was 'excess cold' accounting for 56% of cases. The top three measures needed to improve energy efficiency and impact on fuel poverty were water cylinder insulation, loft insulation and new boilers
- There is a clear association between Category 1 hazards and low income households
- There are an estimated 3,000 empty dwellings which equates to 3.5 % of the private stock. Of these, an estimated 1,800 have been vacant for longer than 6 months
- Certain areas or 'hotspots' have significantly higher rates of poor housing demonstrating the need to intervene using area based approaches
- Local research undertaken by the Council and national research for WG have linked high concentrations of HMOs with adverse community cohesion and sustainability impacts. Particular problems have been identified in the Castle and Uplands Wards with noticeable links between concentrations of HMOs and high levels of on street parking problems, anti-social behaviour, noise and waste complaints, wasted school pupil places; and negative impacts on the streetscene from poor dwelling condition, waste issues and to let signs. Swansea University's Bay Campus off Fabian Way and the relocation of Trinity St David University to SA1 could result in new demand to convert properties into HMO accommodation in St Thomas. WG are shortly due to release a toolkit which will outline best practice for Councils to consider using with regard to HMOs.
- Welsh Government studies indicate that older people are far more likely to occupy housing in poor condition. This has a significant impact upon their health and well-being and is likely to contribute to accident rates in the home as well as other illnesses. According to demographic forecasts the proportion of older persons in Swansea is set to increase significantly over the next 10 years
- There is insufficient direct housing grant investment to deal with problems in private sector housing and other initiatives need to be developed

From all the evidence compiled, the 7 key issues, and policies for tackling them, are as follows:

Identified issue	Policy
Individual homes in poor condition & housing with Category 1 hazards across the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted loans and emergency repair fund, targeted at most vulnerable • Swansea Care and Repair partnership
Poor housing conditions concentrated in certain areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hafod Renewal Area has been completed. Sandfields has been declared a Renewal Area because it requires target area based intervention to improve housing conditions • Take appropriate enforcement action with owners of private rented properties
An ageing population occupying disproportionately poor housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting loans and grant assistance • Swansea Care and Repair partnership • In house Grant Agency service to assist older and vulnerable persons • DFG and fast track housing adaptation services
A culture of grant dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of loan based assistance and introduction of 'lifetime conditions' to some forms of grant awarded • Develop other services in longer term, such as project management services for customers, advice and information packages on home maintenance
Poor conditions in private rented housing including Houses in Multiple Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlord assistance grants to support group repair and Area Renewal • Apply HMO licensing conditions to licensable properties • Take appropriate enforcement action with landlords to reduce or eliminate hazards • Take appropriate enforcement action in cases of poorly managed HMOs • LDP to include a policy on HMOs building upon the adopted UDP policy and the outcomes of the imminent WG HMOs best practice toolkit
Poorly insulated homes, particularly affecting older persons, causing increased illness and deaths in winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level Agreement with the Energy Saving Trust - advice, information, signposting services for improving home energy efficiency. • Submission of funding bids to suitable funding providers and delivery of practical projects to offer energy saving measures to households identified as needing them most.

Empty homes in areas of identified housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant Aid in return for nomination rights for homeless/ waiting list applicants • Loans for landlords & developers to bring long term empty homes back into use
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Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

- There has been a sustained reduction in waiting times for a Disabled Facilities Grant
- Grant Agency Services have been enhanced and expanded to ensure as many vulnerable customers as possible are able to access high quality repairs or adaptations to their homes delivered in a timely manner
- There has been a review of the Authority's Disabled Facilities Grant service focusing on making efficiencies to improve the service provided to customers
- A city wide House Condition Survey was undertaken to gather up to date information on the private housing stock and to inform future policy and strategy
- Group Repair and Environmental Enhancement Programmes in the Hafod Renewal Area reached completion
- Sandfields has been declared as the next renewal area and property surveys, pending group repair works, have commenced. The Housing Renewal Area programme will improve housing quality and energy efficiency. Improvements will include external wall and loft insulation, boiler replacement, external and internal repairs and home safety assistance for vulnerable residents. The programme will also benefit local businesses and create job and training opportunities through City and County of Swansea Councils' 'Beyond Bricks and Mortar' initiative
- Additional funding has been secured through the WG/ECO scheme, Welsh Government Vibrant & Viable Places and a Utility Company to expand the scope of works in the Renewal area with a focus on home energy efficiency
- Enforcement Assessments during 2012-2014 identified Category 1 hazards in 154 properties and Category 2 hazards in 403 private rented properties including HMOs and 196 Category 1 hazards were successfully reduced or eliminated by enforcement action.
- 939 private rented properties (including HMOs) were improved and brought up to standard
- Council research undertaken to identify, profile and map HMOs and highlight areas with high concentrations completed in December 2013. Politicians on the Working Group (including local councillors and Assembly Members) lobbied WG, using the research report as evidence, regarding the potential to

amend the planning system in Wales to give Councils more comprehensive powers similar to those in operation in England.

- There were 18 successful prosecutions of landlords for offences relating to licensing and management in HMOs and failure to comply with enforcement notices.

Future Developments

The Authority will continue to improve the private sector housing stock through a range of schemes and initiatives in forthcoming years. These are listed below:

Resources to Support Housing Renewal and DFGs, Loans and Equity Release

The Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy has been developed from an agreed programme of £5.2 million general capital funding in 2015/16. Welsh Government Specific Capital Grant (SCG) funding of £0.7m was confirmed for the Sandfields Renewal Area in 2015/16.

In recent years the funding available to provide housing grants for repair and renovation has decreased significantly and grants have become far less widely available. In Swansea, the targeting of resources to the most vulnerable (particularly older and disabled) living in the poorest housing conditions has therefore increased to ensure that the limited funding goes to people most in need of assistance.

Demand for grant aid far outstrips resources and the Authority has explored other ways of helping repair, maintain and adapt homes without direct grant funding. The Authority's current policy gives a commitment to continued development of loan products to support and supplement grants. The Authority has successfully introduced the concept of loan based assistance into its policy and provided loans to complete essential repairs for those householders who need them most. The Authority will continue to look to work with other Local Authorities using loan based assistance to explore the possibilities of further joint working to maximise the potential investment available to private sector households requiring assistance. This will include development and delivery of the Welsh Government National Home Improvement Loan Scheme with regional partner Local Authorities.

Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The Authority has fully embraced the principles of the HHSRS and the associated enforcement powers and has developed expertise in the HHSRS to underpin enforcement and future renewal policies.

Empty Properties

The Local Authority aims to bring empty dwellings back into residential use. In order to help deal with housing demand the Authority has identified a need to increase the amount of good quality accommodation available for rent to families. Grants for Nominations (Grants4Noms), has been developed, with particular emphasis on bringing family properties back into use that have been identified as being empty for between two to five years. The scheme intends to work proactively with private landlords to increase the supply of private rented properties available for those on the Authority's Housing Waiting List, by requiring nomination rights as a condition of the grant.

In addition the Authority has successfully used recyclable Empty Homes Loans, via the Houses to Homes Scheme and the Authority will continue to work with Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend Councils to utilise the funding to secure the reuse of empty homes through offering financial assistance and appropriate use of enforcement powers. Further funding for the scheme was received in 2014/15 and is available in 2015/16.

Area Renewal and Regeneration

Within declared Renewal Areas the Authority will aim to improve the housing stock through the group repair and energy efficiency improvement, of whole terraces and where funding allows, the local environment by linked environmental improvement schemes. The Renewal Area programme in Hafod was completed during 2013. The Authority used the results of a Private Sector House Condition Survey, undertaken in 2010, to identify geographical areas of poor house condition, fuel poverty and associated deprivation that would benefit from targeted area based housing intervention. Using this information, Sandfields has been declared as the Authority's next area to benefit from renewal activity. The Authority will continue to research available sources of funding and seek to develop partnerships with Utility Companies and other funding providers such as the Welsh Government to fund repairs and/or energy efficiency improvements in identified areas.

Partnership Working

The Authority has developed a strong relationship with private sector landlords through the Swansea Landlords' Forum. The Authority participates in the national Landlord Accreditation Wales scheme which encourages landlords to adopt a professional approach to letting by allowing 'fit and proper' landlords to gain accreditation after undertaking a training course, successfully completing an assessment and signing-up to a code of practice. This scheme will be replaced by the mandatory registration and licensing scheme when the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is enacted.

The Authority works with Swansea University and the University of Wales Trinity St David's and has a formal Swansea Student Liaison Forum made up of officers from the educational establishments including Gower College Swansea, South Wales Police and local elected members. This partnership arrangement has been responsible for the introduction and funding of a Community Liaison Officer post at Swansea University since August 2013. Following successful interventions with the student population and responses to and from the local long term communities in student areas the temporary post has been extended for a further two years.

Swansea Care and Repair will continue to provide valuable services to older homeowners in partnership with Housing, Social Services, Health and other local service providers. Swansea is currently in merger talks with Neath & Port Talbot Care & Repair.

The Disabled Facilities Grant and housing adaptation programme will be delivered with emphasis on reducing waiting times and reviewing processes to improve efficiency. Also, participation in the ADAPT project with local housing associations will help improve how the Authority allocate and reuse adapted housing for people who really need it.

The Authority offers free and impartial energy efficiency advice through its partnership with the Energy Saving Trust (EST). This relationship is a key in the Authority's efforts to secure fuel poverty reduction across the city and county.

Private Sector Landlord Survey

In late 2013, the Housing Service consulted with owners of private sector accommodation in Swansea. The consultation was done face to face at a Landlord's Forum event and via an on line survey. The main purpose of the survey was to establish the services that would encourage landlords to work with the Authority on any future private lettings scheme. The results of the survey will help shape any future schemes whilst providing empowerment for the landlords who have been involved with the process. A report containing the survey results and subsequent recommendations has been completed. A total of 72 landlords completed the survey.

The survey found that the overwhelming majority of landlords who manage either by themselves or via a Lettings Agency, use "word of mouth" (38%) and the "internet" (36%) as their preferred methods of finding tenants. They fear long periods without rent and value long term relationships and a sense of trust.

Landlords were asked what services would encourage them to work with the Authority on a private sector lettings scheme. Interestingly, landlords who self-manage and those who use letting agencies provided the same responses, albeit in a slightly different order. Both groups were in agreement that "access to interest free loans for repair and renovation" was their top priority;

Priority	Landlords who self-manage	Landlords using Lettings Agencies
1.	Access to interest free loans for repair & renovation	Access to interest free loans for repair & restoration
2.	Free EPC certificates	Tenancy support
3.	Tenancy support	Discounted membership of landlord association
4.	Discounted membership of landlord association	Free EPC certificates
5.	Landlord forums	Landlord forums

The above services were also divided into landlord groupings to identify the priorities of landlords with small (1-5 properties) and large (6+ properties) portfolios. This provided the same priority, “access to interest free loans for repair and renovation”;

Priority	Smaller portfolios	Larger portfolios
1.	Access to interest free loans for repair & renovation	Access to interest free loans for repair & renovation
2.	Free EPC certificates	Discounted membership of landlord association
3.	Tenancy support	Landlord forums

Ownership

The above services were also divided into landlord groupings to identify the priorities of landlords with differing ownership interests, as demonstrated below

Landlord Ownership			
Priority	Main Business	Secondary Business	Investment
1.	Access to interest free loans for repair & renovation	Access to interest free loans for repair & renovation	HB or LHA paid directly
2.	Free EPC certificates	Landlord forums	Rent guarantees
3.	Landlord forums	Tenancy support	Damage deposit guarantee
4.	Tenancy support	Discounted membership of landlord association	Free landlord insurance
5.	Discounted membership of landlord association	Pre-tenancy training	Regular updates on legislation & policy for landlords

The above table indicates that the landlords who consider their service as a main or secondary business have similar priorities, not only to themselves but also in context of the overall survey. However, the landlords who consider their properties as an investment focus on a set of different priorities.

Houses in Multiple Occupation

With the introduction of the Housing Act 2004, the Authority moved from registration to licensing of HMOs. Mandatory licensing for larger HMOs of three or more storeys with five or more occupants applies to all areas of the city.

An Additional HMO Licensing scheme applies in the Castle and Uplands wards which incorporates smaller HMOs, and those consisting of fully self-contained flats which are specifically exempt from Mandatory Licensing.

There are 1,539 licensed HMOs as of February 2015 out of an estimated total licensable stock of 1,700 properties. Living conditions, including safety factors, have improved and there is a focus on improving management and street scene associated with multiple occupants.

The Authority's HMO Licensing Policy in December 2010 is currently under review.

The LDP should include a policy on HMOs building upon the adopted UDP policy and the outcomes of the soon to be published WG HMOs best practice toolkit.

Park Homes

Swansea has four licensed residential Park Home sites housing around 300 households in a mixture of owner occupied and privately rented homes, varying from modern mobile homes to more traditional caravans.

The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013, introduced in 2014, updated legislation that had been in existence for over 40 years and introduces new licensing arrangements for Park Homes to assist in improving housing conditions and security of tenure for occupiers.

Work is ongoing with the four site owners to re-license the sites under the new legislation.

Summary of Main Objectives

The Authority aims to:

- Provide high quality services that target limited housing grant resources on tackling home health and safety hazards in order to help older, disabled and vulnerable people to remain living independently at home
- Develop loan based assistance to secure recycling of funds in future years
- Ensure that building work is of good quality, utilising our in house Grant Agency services, targeted at vulnerable older and disabled clients
- Take full advantage of available capital resources through research, bids, development of partnerships and practical delivery of appropriate housing renewal and energy efficiency projects
- Improve housing in the Sandfields area through a renewal area programme

- Improve the housing stock and environment in identified areas for targeted area based renewal through bespoke repair solutions, energy efficiency improvements and linked environmental improvement schemes
- Target enforcement to deal with properties with Category 1 hazards to bring about improvements in housing conditions and consequently help to improve the health of occupiers
- Actively participate and support the partnership with Swansea Care and Repair, ensuring good quality welfare advice, advocacy and handy person services are delivered to older persons in Swansea
- Develop its strategic role in the coordination of energy efficiency improvements and investment to the private housing stock through development of partnerships with Housing Associations, private landlords and other home owners, with special consideration to the outcomes proposed in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Provide high quality home energy efficiency advice, information and signposting services through the Energy Saving Trust and other means
- Meet local performance standards targets, benchmarked against other Local Authorities, for private sector housing renewal and disabled adaptation services
- Explore increased joint working between landlords, agents, other local authorities, housing associations and other organisations to make the best possible use of the private rented sector for local people
- Use the results of the Private Sector Landlord Survey and the continuation of regular landlord consultation to help develop a private sector social lettings agency
- Engage with the owners of empty homes to offer financial assistance through local and national schemes to secure the reuse of those homes for housing purposes
- Explore Council Tax based penalties outlined in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to Empty Properties

Chapter 5

Improving and Making the Best Use of Existing Housing Stock

5.5 Home Energy Efficiency

The One Swansea Plan

People have good places to live and work

Housing Service Objective

Leading and promoting the improvement of housing conditions in the private sector

The Current Situation

National Context

Increasing fuel prices and subsequent rises in numbers of households in, or at risk, of fuel poverty (estimated at 386,000 - Wales Fuel Poverty Projection Tool 2012) means improving the energy efficiency of homes is of ever increasing importance. The Authority's approach to energy efficiency and fuel poverty reduction is based on joint working and coordination with other housing providers and partner organisations that have an important role to play in meeting targets set by the Welsh Government's (WG's) Climate Change Strategy.

Local Context

A Private Sector House Condition Survey was carried out in 2010 and highlighted the following local issues in relation to energy efficiency:

- The mean SAP (SAP 2005 energy rating on a scale of 0 (poor) to 100 (good)) was 54 in Swansea, which was higher than the average of 50 found nationally based on the findings of the Living in Wales 2008 survey
- The least energy efficient dwellings were older dwellings (pre-1919); and converted flats. The mean SAP rating for privately rented dwellings was 51, lower than that for owner occupied dwellings (55)
- Improving energy efficiency will contribute towards a range of Swansea's corporate priorities and indeed contribute to a wide range of issues e.g. reduced carbon emissions, tackling fuel poverty, elimination of Category 1 Hazards, improved health and well-being and warmer, better homes
- The level of excess cold hazards is an issue given the numbers of older residents in Swansea (35.5% aged 60 or over) and the potential link with cold related illnesses

Currently the Authority works closely with the Energy Saving Trust (EST) to provide an impartial energy advice service for local households.

The Authority's main objectives in relation to energy efficiency across all housing tenures are:

- To promote and publicise energy efficiency and assist residents in obtaining information to help reduce energy consumption and fuel bills
- To signpost residents to sources of available funding for energy efficiency measures such as the WG's Nest scheme
- To improve the Standard Assessment Performance (SAP – a measure of how efficient a property is) rating of homes
- To reduce carbon dioxide emissions and energy use
- To increase the take up of renewable technologies such as solar panels and heat pumps
- To bid for available funding and manage the delivery of projects to maximise the number of energy efficiency measures fitted to homes in Swansea.
- Continue investment to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) which sets a target SAP level of 65 for social rented homes.

Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

Affordable Warmth Action Plan

Swansea was the first Local Authority in Wales to produce an Affordable Warmth Action Plan. This was developed in partnership with the Swansea Fuel Poverty Task Group and National Energy Action (NEA), a leading charity in the field of fuel poverty reduction. The Affordable Warmth Action Plan underpinned collaboration with public, private and third sector organisations to tackle poverty and reduce carbon emissions. An example outcome from the Affordable Warmth Action Plan was the Max Your Money project. This provided disadvantaged communities with energy and money saving advice.

Advice Services

The Energy Saving Trust (EST) is an important partner providing free, impartial advice and information for people in Swansea who want to save and/or generate energy, reduce their energy bills and use water more efficiently. The EST regularly attends events across Swansea providing face to face advice for local residents. Local households are regularly surveyed by post and those that return completed surveys receive bespoke energy advice on their home and information on available grants. Survey results are then made accessible to the Authority through the Home Energy Efficiency Database (HEED). This helps identify and target areas with inefficient housing. The EST also has a website with large amounts of information and useful tools for users to assess their energy use. Visitors to the energy section of the Authority's website are directed to the EST for further advice and assistance.

Publicity

Raising awareness of energy efficiency is key to the Authority achieving its aims and objectives. Through joint working with partners there are a range of tools to ensure energy advice is effectively communicated to the public. There are a number of public events supported by the Authority held throughout the year that aim to tackle poverty, social exclusion and fuel poverty.

Regular articles feature in publications such as Open House (the quarterly magazine for Council tenants and leaseholders) and the Swansea Leader and through a 'Sustainable Development Steering Group', energy efficiency and fuel poverty messages are sent to staff.

A free Affordable Warmth advice leaflet has been produced to help people who are concerned about their energy bills. The leaflet is available in all publicly accessible Authority owned buildings.

Energy Monitors

In the autumn of 2010 the Energy Monitor Loan Scheme was launched in partnership with SWALEC. Monitors were available in libraries across the city to be borrowed by local households to take home for a period to show how their home uses energy. They help people understand their energy use and where possible identify areas where they can make savings on their fuel bills.

Website

The Housing website contains information for both tenants and private households on energy efficiency. With changes on the horizon for energy efficiency funding, especially for the private sector, the website will be updated to supply appropriate advice and guidance for the public to access.

Max Your Money (MYM)

From September 2010 to March 2011, the unique Max Your Money project recruited unemployed young people through the Future Jobs Fund to provide advice on saving energy, identify where people were not claiming entitlements, benefits and discounts; get help to reduce bill and debts; and help people to get cheaper borrowing and saving. The MYM team targeted Swansea's most disadvantaged areas and worked closely with Communities First Officers to engage communities in a range of activities such as door knocking, road shows, group talks and presentations. The scheme proved popular, helping many people across Swansea. Max Your Money week was held in October 2011.

Improving Housing

The energy efficiency of housing is measured via the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) which provides a score ranging from 1 to 100 (the higher the score the more efficient the dwelling). All Council owned void properties are surveyed and the resulting Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is made available to new tenants to inform them of the properties energy performance. The EPC is valid for 10 years. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard for target for SAP in social housing is 65 and the Council continues to work to improve its housing stock up to this standard through programmed works and taking advantage of available grant funding for energy efficiency measures.

CESP – Community Energy Saving Programme

The Authority in partnership with Scottish Power and 'Regen and Renew' has participated in CESP for financial year 2012/13. The Authority has been able to claim grant funding for energy saving measures that reduce the level of carbon being emitted when heating homes. Improvement work which has contributed towards carbon saving include the renewal of G rated boilers for new combination condensing gas boilers, external wall insulation and doors renewal.

As of December 2012, the Authority has been able to claim just over £1m in grant funding. Further claims are to be submitted and the grant money claimed will be ploughed back into major repairs to Council owned homes.

Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding

The Council has recently undertaken a loft insulation project through a partnership with British Gas who jointly funded the project through the former CERT regime. The scheme insulated 2,500 homes whilst CERT funding was available and will significantly improve the energy efficiency of Authority owned homes and has the potential to save households around £100 a year on their fuel bills.

CERT has now ended and been replaced by the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). The Council is currently evaluating options to access ECO funding to pay for loft insulation in homes that still need it in partnership with a Utility Company.

ECO funding is also available to private households and this is promoted through the Authority's relationship with the Energy Savings Trust.

Arbed (Welsh for 'Prevent' or 'Save')

Arbed is the Welsh Government's energy efficiency funding programme designed to bring environmental, social and economic benefits to Wales and coordinated investment into the energy performance of Welsh homes. It is targeted at low income communities. In 2010 the Authority was successful in its bid for £1.9 million of Arbed funding. 3 area projects were delivered in partnership with Warm Wales and the Authority's Renewal Area team. The projects also attracted funding from 2 Utility companies through the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), the Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) funding scheme and the Swansea Strategic Regeneration Area. 316 homes in Clydach, Pontarddulais and Hafod which were classed as fuel poor/low income energy inefficient homes, were fitted with energy saving measures such as external wall insulation, efficient boilers, connection to a mains gas supply, solar thermal and photovoltaic panels. The Authority is currently finalising bidding proposals for the WG Arbed Eco programme.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES)

Since 2007 Swansea households have benefited from almost £6m of improvements through the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme. Over 12,000 improvement measures have been carried out on homes that included loft and cavity wall insulation, fuel switching, heating system upgrades and draught proofing. In April 2011 HEES came to an end and was replaced by the Welsh Government's new fuel poverty scheme called Nest. Nest will be delivered via a partnership between the Energy Saving Trust and British Gas.

Nest

The Nest scheme aims to help households most susceptible to fuel poverty and improve the worst performing housing by providing improvements suitable to the home. Nest is only available to private households who are vulnerable or on low incomes that live in properties which have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of 'F' or 'G'. Nest takes a whole house approach and aims to raise the energy efficiency rating of the property to 'C' by installing measures including solid wall insulation, fuel switching, heating upgrades and in certain circumstances renewable technology. Every person enquiring about Nest is referred to EST in the first instance. Whether or not they qualify for Nest funding they receive an assessment and further advice and guidance on potential financial support available through other energy efficiency schemes.

Future Developments

As well as continuing to promote and advise on energy efficiency generally the Authority will seek to develop approaches to home energy efficiency improvements. The following are areas of likely future activity:

Arbed Phase 2

The Welsh Government has indicated phase 2 of the Arbed programme will continue in 2012 through to 2015. Work will continue with partner housing providers to identify areas in Swansea that would benefit most from Arbed funding to provide energy efficiency measures for the housing stock. The Authority will lead the submission of bids to WG and work with WG appointed project managers and other stakeholders to ensure the effective delivery of energy measures within the identified areas.

Green Deal & ECO

The Green Deal is a new finance framework that will provide householders and businesses with funding to carry out energy efficiency improvements to their properties. Funding will be repaid through the energy bill of the householder. A Green Deal charge will be applied to the electricity meter at the property. The Authority is currently working on its response to the Green Deal to ensure as much investment as possible comes to Swansea through this new programme. Eco providers are being identified.

Renewable Technology

The Authority will continue to monitor developments in renewable energy technology including opportunities to secure income from sources such as the Feed in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive. Where renewables are a viable alternative to traditional energy efficiency measures these will be installed in the housing stock. The Authority will work with partners to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these technologies through area based schemes such as Arbed.

The Authority is also investigating the feasibility of a Community Renewable Energy and Enterprise Scheme (CREES) which aims to develop community scale renewable energy projects, where local people benefit from the renewable energy produced. The project also aims to act as a platform to build capacity to a point where the community are able to develop further schemes.

Housing (Wales) Act

As part of the policy impact screening for the Act, consideration has been given to the five headline indicators in the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Scheme. Tenants in the private rented sector are expected to experience improved management of their accommodation, with reduced heating bills if better insulation is installed. The Authority will continue to monitor the implementation of any new legislation and ensure decision making in relation to housing, particularly home energy efficiency, meets its requirements.

Summary of Main Objectives

- To promote energy efficiency and help residents obtain information and advice to help reduce energy consumption and fuel poverty levels in Swansea
- To help individual residents access funding to pay for energy efficiency improvement measures such as insulation with associated environmental benefits in reducing carbon dioxide emissions from homes
- To work in partnership with funding providers in the management and delivery of projects to maximise the number of energy efficiency measures fitted to homes across all tenures in Swansea
- Obtaining Energy Efficiency funding to assist with strategic area approaches, e.g. renewal and target areas

Report of the Chair

Communities Cabinet Advisory Committee – 9 July 2015

COMMUNITIES CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

Date	Subject Area	Lead
2 June 2015	Local Housing Strategy (Chapters 1-4): Introduction; Housing Market Assessments; Land Use Planning Framework and Affordable Housing.	2 June 2015
13 August 2015	a. Local Housing Strategy (Chapters 6 & 7) <i>Addressing the Needs of specific Groups: Homelessness Supporting People; An Ageing population; The housing needs of the BME Population; Gypsies & Travellers and Sustainability & Housing</i>	Peter Williams
10 September 2015		
8 October 2015	a. Update on Anti Poverty Training – Community Development and Strategic Poverty Plan training	
12 November 2015		
10 December 2015		
14 January 2016		
11 February 2016		
10 March 2016		
14 April 2016		
12 May 2016		
To be Scheduled/Confirmed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. private rented sector lettings team and change in policy b. rent recovery and Housing Benefit fraud c. The Senior Welfare Rights Officer provide an update following completion of the Universal Credit Seminars d. Rose McCreesh provide a presentation on changes to Council tax in respect of empty properties e. The role of third sector organisations and how they impact/compliment the Poverty Prevention agenda. f. Joseph Rowntree Foundations (JRF) publication on Black and Ethnic Minority Poverty. 	