

HOUSING			
	Landlord Services	Community Housing	Business Planning Division
<b>1. Portfolio</b>	<p>Landlord Services – manages the Council owned stock of 13,500 dwellings. The service is administered primarily through nine District Housing Offices including lettings, tenancy management, rent payments and the management of the estate. Rent arrears management is undertaken by a specialist team. The Division also has responsibility for the Neighbourhood Support Unit which provides support to the District Offices in combating any antisocial behaviour on Council estates, the Tenancy Support Unit which provides support for vulnerable tenants, the Sheltered Housing services which manages 32 sheltered complexes and the Homes Preparation Unit which manages the return of any vacant council housing for letting.</p>	<p>Community Housing Services - The Renewal and Adaptations service is responsible for the delivery of private sector grants, renovation grants, mandatory disabled facilities grants. Renewals is also responsible for delivering improvements in renewal areas and coordinating energy efficiency improvements across the city in all housing tenures and also council housing adaptations. Housing Options is responsible for general housing advice, assessment of applications for council housing and council tenant transfers, homelessness prevention and assessment, money advice services, management of council temporary accommodation, coordination of the nomination agreement with housing associations and coordination and development of partnerships with voluntary sector organisations.</p>	<p>Business Planning – manages a range of direct and support services including the production of the Local Housing Strategy, the HRA Business Plan and the development of the investment plan for the repair and improvement of Council housing. It also manages the Housing Futures Programme which aims to improve all Council housing up to Government standards. The Division also manages the role of enabling the provision of new affordable housing. The Division also provides support services including budget and performance management, business planning, service review and development, system support, customer services, tenant participation, communications, training and administrative services. It also manages the Right to Buy scheme and Leaseholder services. More recently, the Division has been responsible for co-ordinating a range of reforms of Housing Finance and is developing a comprehensive strategy for the provision of more Council Housing.</p>
<b>Service objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meet performance indicators that contribute to the continual improvement of services provided to tenants and their communities</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve and develop Community Housing Services to ensure that key performance indicators are achieved.</b></li> <li>• <b>Maximise the level of investment in energy efficiency measures for homes in Swansea.</b></li> <li>• <b>Deliver Sandfields Renewal Area 5 year</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To deliver the improvement of the Council housing stock up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and to manage and monitor performance.</b></li> <li>• <b>Provide an acceptable HRA</b></li> </ul>

		programme which commenced April 2014	Business Plan that maximises available resources and is in compliance with WG terms and conditions (annual requirement)
<p><b>2. specific activities and achievements, progress against policy commitments, key decisions that have been taken and impact / difference made</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Housing service has set up a small working group whose role is to identify mechanisms/raise awareness etc. to help mitigate the impact of the next phase of welfare reform.</li> <li>• A comprehensive survey of the condition of trees on housing land has been carried out by Parks on our behalf.</li> <li>• Further developed Tenancy Support Unit to provide a bespoke rapid response service. The aim is to provide a quick response in order to prevent homelessness and support needs escalating.</li> <li>• A Domestic Abuse strategy for Tenants has been developed in accordance with Welsh Government requirements and the housing strategy. This is due to be discussed by the estate management panel shortly</li> <li>• Review of ASB procedures/guidelines in light of new ASB legislation and staff training undertaken where necessary. This includes the development of a training programme to ensure housing staff are familiar with the concept of restorative practice in resolving ASB issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commenced Sandfields Renewal area programme of works. Phase 1 schemes scheduled to start in March 2015. Secured further funding for the Sandfields Renewal Area programme energy efficiency measures for 14/15 and 15/16 of up to £1.8 million through WG ECO initiative.</li> <li>• Worked in partnership with Utility companies and Welsh Government to secure approximately 470K of funding for energy efficiency via Energy Company Obligation (ECO) &amp; ARBED14/15 for measures in Council housing.</li> <li>• Working in partnership with a utility company for ECO (Energy Company Obligation) to fund future home energy efficiency improvement programmes.</li> <li>• Participating in Welsh Government National Home Improvement Loans initiative offering interest free loans to help make homes warm, safe and secure. Funding allocation received for 14-15 of £531,669 for delivery in 2015/16.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Provide a Local Housing Strategy</b></li> <li>• Submitted a HRA business plan to the Welsh Government in December 2014 which identifies the resources needed to achieve WHQS.</li> <li>• Commitment to develop a programme that funds around £270m investment to deliver improvement to the housing stock up to the WHQS by 2020.</li> <li>• Set up the More Homes project to review alternative models for delivering affordable housing, develop a New build strategy and carry out a pilot scheme.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Policy commitments and update as at Q3 include;</b>  <b>Support independent living; provide improved options for older people -</b></p> <p>Completing the analysis of data from support plans and reviewing available resources. There has been a notification of a reduction in SPPG funding of 5.4% for the next financial year. Steps are being taken to meet this shortfall without adversely affecting the overall quality of the service by reducing funding for weekend visiting through targeting this service solely to those tenants in the most need. In the longer term further reductions are likely to impact on our service planning for meeting the requirements of Aylward.</p>	<p><b>Policy commitments and update as at Q3 include;</b>  <b>Prioritise those in housing need, especially the homeless -</b> In house Social Lettings Agency, funded by Supporting People, commissioned to increase the supply of good quality private rented accommodation to help meet housing need</p> <p><b>Take action to address the blight of empty properties and increase the supply of housing. Work with the Welsh Government and its proposed Empty Property Loan Fund to bring empty properties back into use over four years -</b> Acted as lead authority for Western Bay region for the Houses to Homes empty homes loans scheme. 28 loans have been issued in Swansea to date to secure the reuse of 16 properties.</p> <p><b>Seek to green the built environment by working with organisations such as housing associations and other public bodies and maximising the contribution from the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) and the Welsh Government's Arbed scheme -</b> WG Arbed funding for 2014/15 awarded for energy efficiency improvements to housing in the Waun Wen (Castle 1) area. 14/15. Arbed Castle 1 scheme for External Wall Insulation (EWI) nearly complete, 134 originally with addition 59 properties awaiting approval from WG</p>	<p><b>Policy commitments and update as at Q3 include;</b>  <b>Work with Welsh Government, housing associations and the private sector to increase the supply of affordable housing -</b> The Authority has been allocated Social Housing Grant of £2.77m for 2014/15. Monthly meetings are being held with the RSLs to ensure all this allocation is being spent. Another round of smaller properties funding has been announced for 14/15 and 15/16 to support the delivery of smaller homes. Schemes have been submitted to WG to ensure the allocation of £1.7m for Swansea is spent.</p> <p><b>Increase funding for housing co-operatives and mutual housing -</b> Consultation with RSL's and Wales Co-operative centre ongoing</p> <p><b>Utilise the £11million in the Housing Revenue Account to improve Council houses and provide a boost to a local construction industry -</b> All available resources have been committed to the achievement of the WHQS</p> <p><b>Work with the Welsh Government and tenants to explore innovative ways in which to improve the quality of social housing -</b> Business Plan in place that identifies the required funding to improve the stock up to WHQS by</p>
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<b>3. headlines with regard to the performance of services within your portfolio and the key targets that you monitor to measure improvement and success</b>	<p>Key performance measures include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rent arrears have increased in recent years against a backdrop of the economic situation and welfare reform. However the amount of current tenant arrears as at Quarter 3 this year was £1,095,186 which is an improvement on £1.2m as at Q3 in 13/14. Robust monitoring, early intervention and support for tenants continues to be in place</li> <li>As a result of the systems thinking review a number of improvements have been put in place to help reduce void levels. Additional improvements to working practices are ongoing. At Q3 voids were 298 against a target of 320.</li> <li>Key performance measures also focus on supporting tenants to help them sustain tenancies. These include the reduction of ASB levels, an increase in the number of tenants receiving tenancy support/financial advice and membership of the credit union. All indicators are on track as at Q3 and it is anticipated that year end targets will be met.</li> </ul>	<p>Key performance measures include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance for the average number of working days between homeless presentation and discharge of duty for households found to be statutory homeless was achieved for Q3, i.e. 45 days against a target of 52 days.</li> <li>Target was also achieved for the average number of days all homeless families with children spent in Bed &amp; Breakfast accommodation. Performance was 1 day against a 7 day target, however this was worse than Q2 when no families were placed in B&amp;B. We continue to use B&amp;B for families as a very last resort and monitor the supply of family temporary accommodation to ensure an adequate supply.</li> <li>The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a DFG as at Q3 were 263 against a target of 290 days.</li> <li>Council Stock achieved an average SAP of 64 as at Q3 against a target range of 63 - 65</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered Capital programme of £26.9m</li> <li>Submitted annual return to WG of works undertaken to housing stock</li> <li>37 new affordable housing units delivered up to Q3 this year. RSL's project that they are aiming to deliver 241 in 14/15</li> </ul>
<b>4. how you have engaged with service users / public in your work and what</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Managers meet regularly with a number of service specific tenant groups, i.e. sheltered, estate management and repairs to gather feedback and deliver improvements in services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further consultation work has taken place in Sandfields Renewal area including community open days to gauge opinions on programme details, specification and scope of works.</li> <li>A Private Sector Landlord forum was held in November 2014. Topics for discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy is currently being updated following a consultation exercise with tenants. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the right mechanisms are in place to help</li> </ul>

<p><b>influence this has had</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A consultation exercise was undertaken with stakeholders in order to update the estate management strategy which has now been finalised, printed and distributed.</li> <li>• A sample survey has been completed with tenants in order to gauge awareness and help inform the Council as to what support mechanisms need to be put in place to mitigate further impact of welfare reform etc.</li> <li>• We have previously consulted tenants on attainment of the Welsh Housing Management Standard (WHMS) for tackling ASB and agreed a target of 72% satisfaction rating with case handling last year. This was achieved and the target has been increased to 73% this year. We are continuing to engage tenants about ASB through regular meetings in keeping with the requirements of the WHMS</li> <li>• Continual engagement with tenants to join the Credit Union and assisted this process by paying the joining fee, The target is to recruit a total of 150 tenants up to the end of 2014/15 and 126 have joined as at Q3.</li> </ul>	<p>included the Housing Wales Act and the Renting Homes Bill. The forum provides the platform for working more closely with private sector landlords over the next few years.</p>	<p>tenant get involved and access services and information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open House tenant feedback group meet to discuss each addition of the magazine to help shape future additions and ensure the right information is reaching tenants</li> <li>• Ongoing liaison takes place with tenants and leaseholders prior to major work being undertaken to properties. Satisfaction surveys are undertaken when schemes are completed and any issues inform delivery of future schemes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. what you hope to achieve over the next 12 months and what the</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing challenge of impact of welfare reform on tenants and rental income</li> <li>• Continue to offer quality tenancy support through the TSU while helping to deliver the new requirements for preventing homelessness against a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of homelessness provisions of Housing Act (Wales) 2015. A new duty will be established requiring the Council to take 'all reasonable steps' to prevent homeless. Former prisoners will no longer be housed automatically and this will present a challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise a local housing strategy</li> <li>• Deliver a £49m capital programme</li> <li>• Implement changes to the Housing Revenue Subsidy system and New Rent Setting Policy.</li> <li>• Review alternative models for</li> </ul>

<p><b>challenges are (e.g. resources / budget)</b></p>	<p>backdrop of reduction in Support People resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaising with a local RSL to provide furniture packs from our Furnished Tenancy scheme</li> <li>• Provide an improved Tend &amp; Mend garden cutting service with 3 cuts per year</li> <li>• Community growing -Exploration of opportunities to utilise gardens/land on housing estates and sheltered schemes to engage with community to grow vegetables Identified two areas of Housing owned land for possible use as Community Growing</li> <li>• Intergeneration work - Exploration of opportunities to engage with schools to work with residents in sheltered schemes on digital inclusion. Have identified potential sheltered housing complexes for a trial of wifi and training to encourage older tenants to become computer users.</li> <li>• Working with partners across the Authority to contribute to a review of accommodation support and strategy for older persons</li> </ul>	<p>in how we assist this client group. We will be able to house homeless households, to whom we have a duty in the private rented sector for the first time. This is an opportunity, but also a challenge as we try to work with private landlords to increase the supply and quality of private rented accommodation in Swansea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review of homelessness Services to identify priorities for inclusion in supporting people operational plan</li> <li>• Commencement of Sandfields Renewal Area Programme. The funding environment for Renewal Areas is challenging however Officers continue to look for additional sources of funding to support the programme.</li> <li>• Continued Improvement in Waiting Times for Disabled Facilities Grants in the context of continuing high levels of demand for the service.</li> <li>• Deliver budget savings proposals of £153,000 in 15/16 for Community Housing services</li> </ul>	<p>delivering affordable housing and development of a New build strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the existing Housing Market needs assessment and undertake a new 'in house' assessment shortly. These assessments identify current and future needs/trends in housing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Are there any specific issues where the involvement of scrutiny would be welcomed?</b></p>	<p>The Welfare Reform Scrutiny Working Group has previously considered how the Council is dealing with the impact of welfare reform to which Housing has contributed</p>	<p>Most of Community Housing services operate in adherence with statutory legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement of WHQS has been the subject of a number of reports to Cabinet/presentations to Members</li> <li>• Affordable housing agenda has recently been considered by scrutiny</li> </ul>

	<b>Housing improvement and maintenance of standards in the private rented housing sector</b>
<b>1. Portfolio</b>  <b>Service objectives</b>	Implementing the housing health & safety rating, system, regulating standards in Housing in Multiple-Occupation (HMO), illegal evictions, Empty Properties Strategy Strategic aim is to improve housing standards in the private sector
<b>2. Specific activities and achievements, progress against policy commitments, key decisions that have been taken and impact / difference made</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A firm approach to poor conditions in the Private Rented Sector has been taken with 9 Prohibition Orders and 3 emergency Prohibitions issued over the last year together with 3 formal cautions and 1 prosecution. In addition to this, where there are concerns about the landlords performance in HMOs then steps are taken to shorten the licence.</li> <li>• This Authority uses its 'enforced sale' powers proactively with another 4 properties (including 1 listed building) being progressed.</li> <li>• Staff have been working closely with WG to develop new control regimes for Mobile Home Sites and new systems for controlling Landlords and Agents in Wales. New procedures are being drafted to regulate this sector.</li> </ul> <p><b>Policy commitment and update as at Q3 include Target HMOs for improved standards of management and maintenance</b>  An increased number of owners selling HMOs or leaving them empty/letting as single households. Along with expired licences this has resulted in there being <b>1480</b> licensed HMOs at <b>31/12/14</b>. Work continues to process licence applications &amp; investigate complaints.</p>
<b>3. Headlines with regard to the performance of services within your portfolio and the key targets that you monitor to measure improvement and success</b>	Key performance measure includes; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the HMOs known to the Authority the percentage that have either a full licence or that have been issued with a licence with conditions attached. The result for Q3 was 85.3% against a target of 92.3%, (i.e. 1,480 HMOs out of a total 1736). Target missed due to an increased number of landlords selling properties/taking them out of multiple occupation. This turnover in properties has increased demand for the number of licence applications required. Work is ongoing to deal with the backlog of applications, check licence conditions, investigate complaints &amp; identify HMOs requiring licensing.</li> <li>• So far this year 128 empty properties have been returned to useful occupation.</li> </ul>
<b>4. How you have engaged with service users, public in your work and what influence this has had</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landlords forum continues along with the Student forum and other work with the National Landlords Association, all of which helps to update all parties and focus efforts where needed.</li> </ul>
<b>5. What you hope to achieve over the next 12 months and what the challenges are (e.g. resources / budget)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce mobile homes licensing legislation</li> <li>• The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 will be implemented this year and introduces regulation for all private landlords and agents across Wales. Working in liaison with a central licensing authority (Cardiff Council) there will be new enforcement challenges for the Council. The Welsh authorities have requested extra funding from WG to help enforce the new powers for a three year period.</li> <li>• Deliver current budget savings proposals for 15/16 of £50K</li> </ul>
<b>6. Are there any specific issues where the involvement of scrutiny would be welcomed?</b>  Most of Public Protection services operate in adherence with statutory legislation	

## **Update on progress with delivering additional affordable housing provision.**

### **Increasing the supply of affordable homes**

In 2013 the Affordable Housing Scrutiny Panel recommended that innovative models of delivering affordable housing are explored and debated. Since this time, officers have looked at a number of models and one in particular is being assessed in detail. In addition, the Authority has successfully applied for extra resources that have become available from a range of Welsh Government Initiatives.

- 2013/14 – the Authority successfully applied for £1.7m under the Welsh Government’s Smaller Properties initiative which was set up in response to Welfare Reform. In addition, the Authority worked with RSLs to secure Housing Finance Grant from the Welsh Government to build 137 more affordable housing over the next few years. The WG also allocated the Authority an extra £1m SHG at the end of the financial year on top of the Authority’s initial annual allocation of £2.77m
- 2014/15 – The Authority again successfully applied for £1.7m under the Smaller Properties initiative and was allocated an extra 664K of SHG on top of the annual allocation of £2.77m. Officers are currently working with RSLs to apply for further funding under the next round of the Welsh Governments Housing Finance Grant initiative.

Significant changes in the way Council Housing is financed in Wales are scheduled to take effect from April 2015. The dismantling of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (HRAS) system coupled with the reform of the rent setting policy will provide additional resources for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) over the longer term, to invest in the existing stock as well as providing more affordable housing including the building of new Council housing.

Detailed work has commenced to develop a strategy for making best use of these resources in terms of additional affordable housing and this study will aim to correlate available land supply with an updated assessment of needs to inform a programme of new build. The project will also appraise available funding options to support new Council housing and for making best use of HRA resources for more affordable housing generally.

In terms of actual development, this will need to tie in with the availability of funds. However, options for a pilot scheme for new Council housing to test viability and explore specification options is also being explored.