

# Local Housing Strategy

2015-2020



<b>Contents</b>		<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Foreword and Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Housing Market Assessment</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Land Use Planning Framework</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Affordable Housing</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Improving and Making the Best Use of Housing Stock</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Managing and Improving Council Housing</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Letting and Managing Council Housing</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Anti-Social Behaviour</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Private Sector</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Energy Efficiency</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups</b>	
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Homelessness</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Supporting People</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>6.3</b>	<b>An Ageing Population</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>6.4</b>	<b>BME</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Gypsies and Travellers</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Sustainable Development</b>	<b>92</b>

# Chapter 1

## Foreword and Introduction

### Foreword

Like most Welsh Local Authority areas, meeting the housing needs of a growing population is both a challenge and an opportunity.

The challenge is in ensuring there is a sufficient supply of good quality and affordable housing at a time of economic uncertainty and reduced public spending.

The opportunity is through ensuring that any economic benefit from meeting housing needs is sustainable.

A cornerstone of that regeneration is this Local Housing Strategy which sets out a vision for housing in the City & County of Swansea for the next five years.

The strategy is underpinned by a Local Housing Market Assessment (HMA), which was completed in September 2013 and has since been updated in January 2015. The HMA takes into account the dynamics of the housing market in and around Swansea. Housing markets do not respect local authority boundaries hence the assessment looked at the whole Swansea Bay area in line with Welsh Government Planning Guidance and established good practice. The HMA has provided the Local Authority (the Authority) and its partners with a clear basis for assessing current trends in the housing market and predicting future developments. This will be an essential aid to the formation of future housing policy and strategy, to endeavour to ensure that enough properties of the right tenure and size are available to Swansea's population, now and in the future.

The Local Housing Strategy is also a major Corporate Strategy for the Authority. It is an overarching document to inform policy not only in housing, but also in other critical services particularly Education, Health and Social Services. The Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) recently published their "Housing & Health Evidence Review for Health Impact Assessment (HIA)". They identified that housing is a key determinant of health and whilst it is increasingly undeniable that aspects of housing are associated with aspects of physical and mental health, the space in which we live is also bound with less tangible issues such as place, identity & community.

The Council's land use planning policy framework is currently being reviewed as part of the preparations for the Local Development Plan (LDP 2010-25), which is due to replace the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) in 2016 and will form the planning policy framework for the majority of this Local Housing Strategy period up to 2020. The Local Housing Strategy will inform the evidence base for the LDP. One of the emerging LDP's key objectives is to ensure that communities have sufficient range and choice of good quality housing to meet a variety of needs and support economic growth.

## **Introduction to Housing in the City and County of Swansea**

The 2011 Census indicated that the Authority has a population of 239,000 which is an increase of 15,500 from the figure recorded in the 2001 Census. This population figure is made up of 103,497 occupied households from 108,729 recorded dwellings. Owner occupation is the dominant tenure with the 2011 Census indicating that 64% of households are owner-occupiers; however this is less than the average for Wales as a whole. Of the remainder, 19% of households are in the social rented sector and 17% in the private rented sector.

## **The Vision for Swansea**

The Local Service Board has recently developed its Single Integrated Plan; The One Swansea Plan 2013; Place, People, Challenges and Change. The plan outlines its vision, ambitions, population outcomes and challenges for Swansea.

The purpose of the plan is to improve the wellbeing of people in Swansea by ensuring that professionals and the public work together on a shared set of outcomes and challenges. The Local Service Board includes the main public service agencies for the area and representatives of the voluntary and business sectors.

## **The Ambition for Swansea**

Swansea is a unique city by the sea. It is green, safe, caring and friendly where people are proud of their communities and get on well together. It is a city that values learning and its public services and we want it to stay that way

Swansea is a city that is passionate about its sport, history and culture and these are worth celebrating

But we also want Swansea to be a healthier, fairer and more economically active place, a city that offers more for children and young people

We want to work together to make Swansea a better place and to improve community wellbeing and togetherness in a way that targets the most deprived areas, involves everyone and does not compromise the needs of future generations.

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

- Capitalises on the distinctive relationship between its vibrant urban areas and outstanding rural and coastal 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
- Supports a competitive and prosperous economy that acts as a focal point for the wider Swansea Bay Region

- Is a thriving city centre destination that offers excellent shopping facilities and supporting leisure and business opportunities, capitalising on its proximity to the waterfront
- Celebrates and conserves its unique natural heritage and cultural and historic environments.

### **Population Outcomes**

The One Swansea Plan lists a number of key population outcomes for achievement. These are:-

- Children have a good start in life
- People learn successfully
- Young people and adults have good Jobs
- People have a decent standard of Living
- People are healthy, safe and independent
- People have good places to live and work

### **Key Challenges**

The One Swansea Plan also lists 21 key challenges that the Authority and its partners need to address over forthcoming years. These include a number which are either housing related or where housing policy and practice can make a positive contribution;

- To increase the number of people in social housing able to benefit from warm and fuel efficient homes
- To maintain current low levels of overall recorded crime
- To achieve a better balance between residential/ nursing and community based care for individual older people compared to the rest of Wales
- To significantly reduce the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived communities

### **The Role of Housing in Helping to Achieve the Authority's Vision and Aims**

Good quality Housing plays a significant role in helping to achieve the vision for Swansea and in meeting the Authority's broad aims. In relation to the Authority's own housing service, the aim is as follows;

*“To ensure that the housing service contributes to Swansea”* reaching its potential by providing quality housing services that contribute towards the Authority’s broad aims.

This will be achieved by:

- Working towards bringing all existing Authority owned Housing stock up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
- Ensuring the appropriate supply of good quality affordable homes through the publication of a clear strategy and working in partnership with others to provide new affordable homes
- Leading and promoting the improvement of housing conditions in the private sector and developing and growing the sector
- Addressing the housing needs of the vulnerable

This Housing Service aim and the content of this Local Housing Strategy closely reflect the housing priorities of the Welsh Government as set out in the Housing (Wales) Act, which received Royal Assent in September 2014. As a result this Local Housing Strategy places particular emphasis on;

- Increasing the supply of affordable housing
- Bringing back empty properties into the housing stock
- Addressing the accommodation issues of an ageing population.
- Improving an ageing social housing stock

### **The Corporate Context of the Local Housing Strategy**

Both the Local Housing Strategy and the Housing Service Business Plan are integral parts of a set of inter related plans and strategies for services provided by the Authority. The Local Housing Strategy may be regarded as one of the Authority's key thematic strategies, whereas the Housing Service Business Plan is one of a number of operational plans adopted by the Authority.

The Local Housing Strategy also acts as an umbrella for a number of ‘issue specific’ strategies, such as the Private Sector Housing Strategy and the Tenant Participation Strategy.

### **Consultation and the Local Housing Strategy**

Both the Local Housing Strategy and the Housing Market Assessment have been subject to a comprehensive consultation exercise involving the following stakeholders:-

- *Corporate Partners* – Meetings were held with representatives of other Authority based Services
- *Stakeholders External to the Authority* – A stakeholder seminar, involving over 80 organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors
- *Elected Members* – a Seminar for all elected Members
- *Regional Partners* – The Strategy was discussed in detail with other Local Authorities at the South West Wales Housing Strategy network
- *Local Authority Tenants* – comments were sought via the Authority's newsletter for tenants. In addition, the strategy was discussed by the Authority's Tenant Consultative Panel
- *Housing Service Staff* – comments were sought from staff in the monthly team meetings held by all section/office managers

## Chapter 2

### The Housing Market Assessment

#### Introduction

Opinion Research Services (ORS) was commissioned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and the City and County of Swansea to undertake a joint, comprehensive study of current and future housing requirements, housing mix and housing need.

The aim of the study is to understand the nature and level of current housing demand and need against supply and to project that forward to provide a comprehensive assessment of future housing requirements.

#### Overview of Housing in Swansea

- The 2011 Census recorded population figures of 239,000 for the City & County of Swansea. This incorporated 103,500 occupied households of which the average household size was 2.26, a decrease from 2.33 in the 2001 Census
- The 2011 Census data suggests there are 108,729 dwellings in the City & County of Swansea
- Almost 65% of all properties across the area are owned outright or owned with a mortgage
- In Swansea, the private rented sector has increased significantly over the last decade and now around 17,100 households (16%) rent privately
- Data from the UK Census of Population 2011 identifies 2,800 households living in part of a converted or shared house (including bedsits) in Swansea
- The proportion of social rented housing in Swansea is higher than the Welsh average, and hasn't changed much over the last 10 years
- The area west of Swansea on or near the Gower peninsula contains some of the most expensive dwellings in South Wales, with an average price over £228,000
- This contrasts with some areas in the north and east of Swansea which contain much lower house prices, where average house prices are below £70,000



- Affordability for single first-time buyers has declined sharply since mid-2004. Less than 20% of all sales in Swansea are for properties sold for below £80,000 with almost 40% selling for over £150,000
- Many dwellings in the private sector stock are only affordable to households with incomes of £20,000 or more. According to May 2015 figures taken from Hometrack's Housing Intelligence System, 42% of Swansea's total households earn less than £20,000 per annum
- Swansea has an above average share of its Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) featuring in the top 10% most deprived in Wales, with 18 (12%) of its 148 LSOAs now ranked in the top 191 (10%) most deprived
- In Swansea, levels of deprivation (as measured in the index of multiple deprivation) are most significant in respect of the Education, Income and Health domains, with levels in the Access to services, Housing and Physical environment domains falling below the Welsh average
- In terms of the Overall Index the 18 most deprived LSOAs in Swansea (i.e. those featuring in the top 10% in Wales) are to be found in the following wards:

Townhill (5 out of the 6 LSOAs in the ward)  
 Penderry (5 out of the 7 LSOAs in the ward)  
 Castle (2 out of the 8 LSOAs in the ward)  
 Morriston (3 of the 11 LSOAs in the ward)  
 Mynyddbach (1 of the 6 LSOAs in the ward)  
 St. Thomas (1 of the 4 LSOAs in the ward)  
 Bonymaen (1 of the 4 LSOAs in the ward)

### **Housing Demand in Swansea**

The Housing Market Assessment (HMA) has highlighted several significant features which will influence the demand for housing in Swansea.

Between the 2001 and 2011 Census, Swansea's population increased by 15,700 to a total of 239,000 people, representing an increase of 7.0%. This includes 234,400 residents living in 103,500 households, representing an average household size of 2.26 persons. Furthermore, the total number of households in Swansea increased by 9,100.

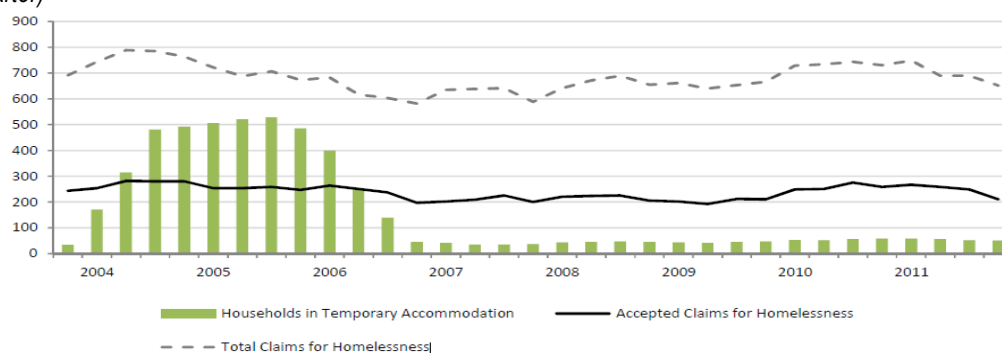
Comparison of the age structure for the population in Swansea against Wales shows a higher proportion of young adults aged 15-34 years, and particularly those aged 20-24 which is largely associated with the significant local student population. There is also a slightly higher proportion of residents aged over 75 compared to the Welsh average.

## Housing Need in Swansea

The Welsh Government's Planning Policy Guidance Technical Advice Note 2: Planning and Affordable Housing (2006) defines that housing need exists when a household cannot access suitable housing without financial assistance.

At the extreme end of housing need, Fig 1 shows that the total number of claims for homelessness, and the number of accepted claims, has remained relatively steady in Swansea. Until 2006/07, the figures also include those assessed as 'homeless at home'. Fig 1 is taken from the HMA 2013.

Fig 1 – Homeless Applications and Acceptances and Homeless Households in Temporary Accommodation Q1 2003- Q4 2011 for Swansea (Source: Local Authority P1E Homelessness Data. Note: Number of cases based on 12 months to end of quarter)



The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) together with statistics released annually by Welsh Government (WG) show that over 6% of households in Swansea claim housing benefit while living in the private rented sector, which is slightly higher than the average for the whole of Wales. Many households choose to live in private rented accommodation with housing benefit support and there are obvious financial implications for increased numbers of households relying on public subsidy to live in the private rented sector, which could be mitigated by increased numbers of affordable dwellings.

The DWP also assess the growth which has occurred in housing benefit claimant numbers in the private rented sector in each local authority in Wales between October 2009 and June 2011 and the highest growth has been in the cities of Cardiff and Swansea. In terms of affordability which has an impact on the number of households in housing need, unemployment in Wales is above 7% and some commentators predict this could remain until at least 2016. Unemployment in Swansea is currently 7.8%.

Over 46% of all non-homeowners have incomes of under £10,000 per annum, while 72% have incomes under £20,000 per annum. Assuming that housing costs (to be affordable) do not exceed 25% of income, those households can afford no more than social rent and most would need Housing Benefit support to meet the cost of social rents in Swansea.

## Modelling Future Housing Requirements

The assessment of future housing requirements has been based on robust and credible evidence to estimate future housing need and demand and then to model the required mix of housing over the LDP planning period up to 2025. This

assessment has also modelled how key housing market drivers (such as affordability) will impact on housing mix.

In line with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) the Council has used the latest WG Local Authority Household Projections for Wales as a starting point for estimating future housing requirements over the LDP period (2010-25). The Council has considered three alternative growth options as follows:

(1) The latest (2011-based) WG principal demographic trend based household projection (which is based on a 5 year migration trend that coincided with the 2008 Recession and a resulting period of reduced economic prosperity and lower average population growth attributable to migration);

(2) The highest of the latest (2011-based) WG variant demographic trend based household projections (which is based on a longer 10 year migration trend incorporating periods of high and low economic prosperity and net migration); and

(3) A policy based household projection derived from the Council's updated Economic Growth Assessment based on policy driven employment forecasts and the number of homes needed to accommodate this jobs growth.

Having regard to WG advice it was considered that it would not be appropriate to consider an option lower than their official household projections.

An indicative dwelling requirement based on the household projections has been calculated by applying local rates to make an allowance for unoccupied spaces (vacant and second homes) and households in a shared dwelling.

On the basis of evidence currently available, the official trend-based and Council's policy-based projections indicate a requirement over the LDP period (2010 to 2025) for 16,100 to approximately 17,000 new dwellings. To make provision for the highest level of potential growth, and include a flexibility contingency of 10% in-line with WG advice, land for up to approximately 17,000 dwellings will be specifically allocated in the LDP. This equates to the building of 1,140 dwellings per annum.

In identifying this highest level of projected growth the Council is mindful of the April 10<sup>th</sup> 2014 WG Policy Clarification Letter to Local Authority Chief Officers which stated that Councils should not solely rely on the WG Household Projections and need to fully consider the housing levels required to support Plans' regeneration and economic aspirations.

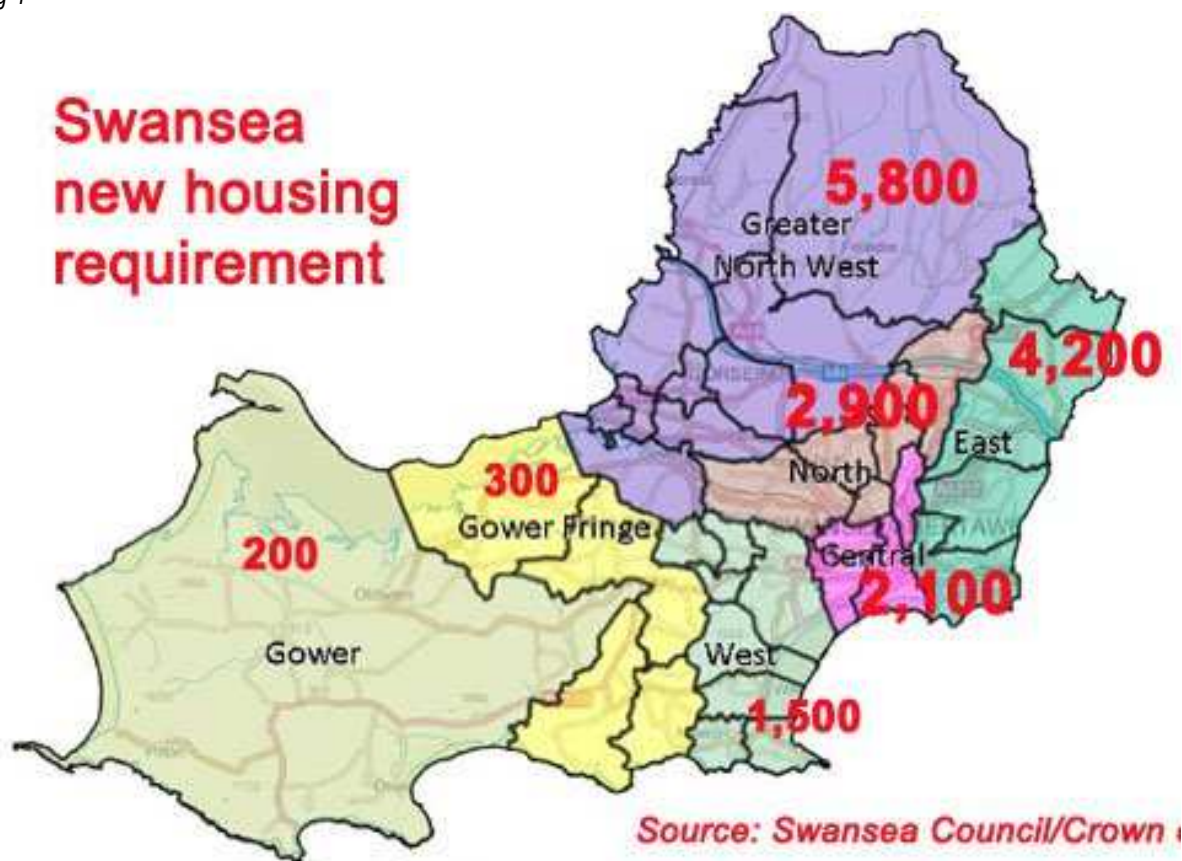
The HMA (update 2015) has modelled the housing requirements for Swansea based on the approximate 17,000 figure. The table below sets out the assessed additional dwellings requirement broken down by tenure and bedroom size.

Figure 1: Size Mix of Housing Requirement 2010-2025 for Medium High Dwelling Delivery (Note: All figures rounded to the nearest 100. Figures represented by “-“ show any shortfall or surplus which is less than 50, although this will normally be greater than 0. Figures may not sum due to rounding)

Housing Size	Number of Dwellings Required			TOTAL
	Market Housing	Affordable Housing		
		Intermediate	Social	
<b>Net Requirement 2010-2025</b>				
1 bedroom	600	300	1,800	2,700
2 bedrooms	2,100	1,100	1,900	5,100
3 bedrooms	5,300	600	1,500	7,400
4+ bedrooms	1,600	100	100	1,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,600</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>5,300</b>	<b>17,000</b>

The following map (fig 4) shows how the 17,100 overall requirement is distributed across each sub-area of Swansea.

Fig 4



### Policy Issues arising from the Local Housing Market Assessment

The results of the assessment show that the areas further west in Swansea, despite being relatively prosperous, demonstrate a requirement for affordable housing, due

to having both the highest house prices and lowest build rates. The Swansea North area has a significant demand for new housing, although has historically seen low levels of house building, primarily attributable to a lack of developer interest. Areas in the east of the city typically show less of a requirement for affordable housing mainly due to the availability of a sufficient quantity of affordable private sector dwellings in this area. Northern and some western areas of Swansea show the greatest requirement for market dwellings and the greatest capacity for delivery.

The private rented sector is likely to play an increasingly significant role in meeting housing demand in Swansea, for both those in housing need and more affluent households. The housing requirement in this study, projects a high social housing requirement to mitigate the number of households claiming housing benefit in the private rented sector. However, as delivery of the required levels of social housing is unlikely to be achieved due to a variety of factors explored further in this strategy, there will be implications arising from this which require consideration.

Changes outlined in the Welfare Reform Act are likely to lead to a greater demand for smaller accommodation as well as for an increase in shared accommodation from single persons under 35 years. Previously, single people aged over 25 were entitled to Housing Benefit to cover one bedroom, self-contained accommodation. The changes mean that single people aged up to 35 will now be assessed using the lower shared accommodation rate. This is likely to increase demand for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation within Swansea. The reforms are also likely to impede the private sector from meeting rising demand.

The delivery of new homes remains a key objective for any housing and planning strategy. The Swansea HMA has highlighted a 'gap' between household growth and dwelling completions between 2003 and 2008 as household numbers have grown but new supply has not kept pace.

This assessment indicates a need to deliver around 7,400 affordable dwellings over the period 2010-25. This translates to around 495 affordable homes per annum. The ability to deliver the rate of housing required poses a considerable challenge in the current market with several factors constraining delivery including land supply, viability and finance. The provision of affordable housing through the planning system has been constrained by the lower margins of profitability on many private development sites in the recent economic climate. This has sometimes made it unviable to secure affordable housing through Section 106 agreements when there have been other competing contributions required to mitigate the impact of developments. Also, the requirement for affordable housing provision under the adopted UDP is only currently triggered on sites of 25 units or more in most areas of the County. Affordable housing planning policy is being reviewed for the LDP on the basis of the HMA and a Viability Study in an effort to maximise the potential contribution of affordable housing from private development sites in future.

## Chapter 3

### Land Use Planning Framework

**The One Swansea Plan**

People have good places to live and work

**Housing Service Objective**

Ensure the appropriate supply of good quality affordable homes

#### Introduction

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) provides Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) with guidance on a range of issues relating to the provision of housing. It sets out that LPAs must ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available or will become available to provide a 5 year supply of land for housing at all times.

LPAs must ensure that development plan policies are based on an up to date Housing Market Assessment (HMA) taking into account the full range of requirements across the area over the plan period.

A community's need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration which must be taken into account in formulating development plan policies. Development plans must include an authority-wide target for affordable housing (expressed as numbers of homes) based on the HMA and set out the expected contributions that the various policy approaches identified in the development plan (for example, site thresholds, site specific targets, commuted sums and affordable housing exception sites) will make to meeting this target.

The main objectives are to provide homes that are well designed, in good condition, and barrier free (e.g. Lifetime Homes standards). They should be in safe attractive neighbourhoods and sustainable communities with good access to employment and services, and with infrastructure capable of supporting the development proposed. Mixed tenure communities are encouraged with greater choice over the type/ size of housing, recognising the needs of all, including those requiring affordable or special needs housing in both urban and where appropriate, rural areas.

LPAs must also have policies in place in the Development Plan for provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and where there is an assessment of unmet need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in an area, the LPA should allocate sufficient sites to ensure that the identified pitch requirements for residential and transit use can be met.

#### The Current Situation

The Authority's policies and proposals for future development and use of land are set out within the UDP which was adopted in 2008 and covers the period 2001-2016. Its main goals and objectives in relation to housing are based on the principles of sustainable development and building sustainable communities which cater for their full range of housing and facility needs. The adopted UDP will expire in 2016 and be replaced by the LDP (2010-25) which will be the planning policy framework for the

majority of this LHS period up to 2020. The LDP is due to be placed on Deposit late 2015 and it is anticipated it will be adopted in late 2016/early 2017. The LDP Preferred Strategy was published in 2014, which sets out the vision, objectives, levels of growth and spatial strategies that the LDP will seek to achieve. These are summarised below in relation to housing.

## **The Emerging LDP (2010-25) Vision and Objectives**

The LDP Preferred Strategy identifies the following key housing related issues which the Plan will assist in addressing:

- § Housing needs must be provided for if the County is to meet the forecast for growth, which includes homes of varying types at a range of locations, whilst helping to bring forward sufficient affordable housing to meet the current shortfall
- § Sufficient housing must be provided to sustain economic development and provide a resident population that supports employment growth
- § In-line with national trends, the County has an ageing population which has implications for future service and housing provision
- § There is a need for an additional Gypsy and Traveller site(s) in the County

The LDP vision is for the County to be a desirable place to live, work and visit that 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. Building from this vision, the LDP has several objectives relating to housing:

- § Ensure that communities have a sufficient range and choice of good quality housing to meet a variety of needs and support economic growth
- § Direct new housing to economically viable and deliverable sites at sustainable locations
- § Ensure that communities have a mix of uses and facilities to create sustainable, inclusive neighbourhoods that help to bring about wider social benefits and allow community life to flourish
- § Promote good design that is locally distinct, sustainable, innovative and sensitive to location
- § Support the development of safe, accessible and vibrant places and spaces
- § Create environments that encourage and support good health, well-being and equality

## **LDP Growth and Spatial Strategies**

### ***Growth Strategy***

The LDP will promote a sustainable growth strategy for Swansea that seeks to address the social and economic needs of the population and support the economic growth and regeneration aspirations for the County and wider City Region in a way that does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the highly valued natural and cultural environment. Taking forward the HMA (2015), it will identify sufficient land to accommodate approximately 17,100 homes over the Plan period which equates to an average annual build rate of around 1,140 dwellings per annum, not including

windfall sites or projected 'small site' build (sites of less than 10 units). By comparison, the average annual house build over the past ten years has been 786 dwellings falling to 735 dwellings per annum for the past five years.

### ***Spatial Strategy***

The strategy for allocating land to meet anticipated growth will be focussed on those sites that will best address the LDP's overall objectives and deliver good quality accommodation in sustainable balanced communities in both urban and rural locations. To ensure that an adequate and continuing supply of housing land is available to meet market demand in all areas, subject to environmental and infrastructure constraints, the location and distribution of new land releases has been analysed on the basis of the following strategic housing policy zones (SHPZs).

### ***North Swansea***

The North Zone incorporates the largely residential urban areas situated around the fringes of Central Swansea, and extends northwards encompassing settlements such as Penlan and Mynyddbach, until it merges with Morriston to the north. The Zone also includes the established industrial and business park areas at Fforestfach and Waunarlyydd, including the undeveloped land that surrounds this industrial land.

The Zone has historically seen low levels of house building, primarily due to lack of developer interest, and there are numerous existing housing allocations that have not been taken up, primarily within social housing areas. The LDP is unable to continue to rely on these allocations but they remain potential windfall sites. Release of additional land in the LDP needs to provide a different offer to that which currently exists.

The HMA has identified a requirement for around 2,900 new homes within this Zone over the Plan period, with the majority to be provided by the proposed Strategic Sites to the north of Gowerton and Waunarlyydd extending eastward to Fforestfach (800+), west of Morriston off Clasemont Road (up to 750), and to the north of Penderry west of Llangyfelach Road (750+).

### ***East Swansea***

The East Zone largely comprises the urban area to the east of the River Tawe including employment and mixed use locations, such as Swansea Enterprise Park, Swansea Vale, Swansea Port and SA1 Swansea Waterfront and extends as far north as Clydach. The urban settlements are set against undeveloped areas further east, which includes the defining landscape of Kilvey Hill. The area has been the subject of the County's greatest regeneration initiatives over the past thirty years as part of the transformation of the Lower Swansea Valley. This will continue over the LDP period through the further development of the SA1 project, the regeneration of appropriate land at Fabian Way, the continued redevelopment of the Tawe Riverside Corridor extending along the west side of the River from the City Centre fringes up to the Liberty Stadium at Morfa, and the revised proposals for Swansea Vale.

A requirement for 4,200 new homes has been identified within this Zone over the Plan period. The majority will be provided by existing strategic housing schemes at SA1 Swansea Waterfront, Swansea Vale and at Tawe Riverside areas.



### **Central Swansea**

The Central area largely comprises Swansea City Centre and adjoining waterfront, but also incorporates the established residential areas to the west, including Sandfields, Brynmill, Uplands, Townhill, and part of the River Tawe corridor through Landore to the north.

The Zone is largely built out and the future residential strategy for this area will be focussed on the delivery of new homes associated with City Centre Strategic Framework regeneration projects throughout the central and waterfront areas, windfall brownfield sites and conversion of vacant accommodation above shops. Many of the new homes in this Zone will be one and two bedroom units as part of apartment development; however the scope for a broader range of housing types will be explored in the interests of enhancing the vitality and vibrancy of the City Centre. A requirement for around 2,100 new homes has been identified within this Zone over the Plan period.

### **Greater North West Swansea**

This is the largest SHPZ and represents an extensive area of the County with significant variations in character, stretching from Gowerton in the west to Mawr in the far north. It contains significant areas of open countryside including the distinctive Mawr Uplands. Greater North West Swansea encompasses old industrial communities that have suffered since the 1980s from a dramatic decline in local employment opportunities, primarily due to the restructuring of the steel industry and the demise of the coal mining industry. As a consequence, the larger 'towns' of Gorseinon and Pontarddulais, suburban areas such as Penllergaer and Loughor, and the rural villages of Pontlliw and Grovesend have become primarily dormitory settlements.

A requirement for 5,800 new homes has been identified within this Zone over the Plan period, with a significant proportion to be provided through a proposed new sustainable settlement on land north of the M4 Junction 46 (850+ units), and proposed strategic sites at Penllergaer (850+), Garden Village (750+) and Pontarddulais (720+). Contributions will also be made by means of small/medium allocations at settlement edges where these would constitute appropriate rounding off and/or the fulfilment of remaining UDP allocations.

### **West Swansea**

This Zone is characterised by settlements located towards the west of the City, including Sketty, Dunvant, Killay North and Killay South. West Swansea rapidly expanded and merged over the latter part of the last century, as the urban form expanded to its environmental limits to the south and west i.e. from the urban waterfront through to the Gower AONB boundary. There is limited scope for major residential development over and above redevelopment schemes and small scale infill due to environmental and highway infrastructure constraints. Around 1,500 new homes are required within this Zone over the Plan period, the majority of which will be focussed on the two Sustainable Urban Extensions proposed on the Hendrefoilan Student Village (300 units) and Cefn Coed Hospital (600 units) sites.

### **Gower and Gower Fringe**

These areas are characterised by small and large villages located in rural and semi-rural landscapes, and near the fringe of the urban area to the west of the County.

The LDP will not identify any strategic development areas within this Zone. Such opportunities are curtailed by significant constraints, particularly landscape and biodiversity concerns, which preclude development on this scale. There are, however, opportunities for small-scale settlement boundary amendments at appropriate village and urban fringe locations, in instances where the existing character of the village or settlement would be maintained or improved. Any sites allocated would generally amount to less than 4ha in total. Controlled village/settlement expansion is the only viable way of delivering affordable, local needs housing. Opportunities have been identified at Scurlage, Pennard, Bishopston, and Three Crosses. Wherever possible the scale and location of land released will reflect the potential to improve or bring forward community facilities that are currently lacking.

There will be a number of infill and brownfield sites within village boundaries and fringe settlements that could come forward over the Plan period. Based on past trends, the majority of these are likely to be small windfall sites, and unless they are capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings they will not be specifically allocated in the LDP.

### **Affordable Housing Provision**

The HMA update (2015) has identified the need for 7,400 additional affordable homes to be built over the LDP period, i.e. 44% of the total housing requirement.

The HMA concludes that even if currently viable levels of affordable housing are negotiated on every proposed allocated LDP housing site there is still likely to be a shortfall on the estimated affordable housing requirement. It is not reasonable to expect that the LDP will be able to deliver the entire 7,400 affordable housing units identified as being required. The delivery of more affordable housing is a strategic priority and an objective for the Council as a whole which has been recognised by the One Swansea Needs Assessment 2014. This highlights the need to include Housing Affordability as one of the challenges to be addressed in the next One Swansea Plan. Land will be made available within the LDP for the delivery of up to 4,310 affordable housing units over 2010-2025. This represents a significant and realistic contribution towards the total identified requirement for affordable homes over this period and will support the development of sustainable balanced communities.

The adopted UDP site size trigger thresholds for requiring the provision of affordable housing clearly need to be decreased (currently the requirement only applies to sites of more than 25 units, or 10 units in West Swansea), and the proportion of affordable housing units required to be provided on development sites will need to be increased. However, the Council must balance the provision of open market housing to meet its overall housing requirement with the delivery of sufficient affordable housing to create sustainable communities. If the affordable housing target is set too high, the adverse impact on development viability will choke off supply. If the target is set too low, the need for affordable housing will not be met. Potentially viable targets have been identified in an Affordable Housing Viability Study prepared by independent consultants Andrew Golland Associates and will be reflected in the LDP affordable housing policy.

Affordable housing will be required to be provided on site in the first instance. Commuted sums will be considered only in exceptional circumstances. Where viability at the target levels cannot be achieved, it is proposed that variation may be agreed on a case-by-case basis. Where an agreement cannot be reached, an independent assessment would be required to be commissioned and paid for by the developer.

Where affordable housing is provided the LDP policy framework will require it to be integrated into the overall development and not be obviously segregated through location, layout or design.

The increased level of affordable housing provision required will impact on the operation of the housing market. Landowners and developers will therefore be expected to have taken into consideration the results of the various studies and guidance referred to in the LDP and the consequent obligations on the Council before entering into land/property disposal negotiations, to ensure that allowance for affordable housing provision and other aspects of quality place making are sufficiently reflected in the purchase prices.

## Chapter 4

### Increasing the supply of good quality affordable homes

#### **The One Swansea Plan**

Helping communities in Swansea to develop and prosper

#### **Housing Service Objective**

To ensure, the appropriate supply of good quality affordable homes

### **The Current Situation**

#### **Introduction**

The Welsh Government defines affordable housing as follows:

*“Affordable housing is housing where there are mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers”*

*(Planning Policy Wales para 9.2.14)*

Affordable housing can be classified into two distinct forms, social rented and intermediate housing. Social rented housing consists of stock that is owned by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). Intermediate housing is where the price or rent is above that for social housing but lower than market prices or rents. This is often facilitated by shared equity schemes, low cost home ownership schemes, self-build housing and intermediate rent models.

The Essex Report on affordable housing in Wales, published in June 2008, indicated wide and urgent changes were needed to be made to the way in which affordable housing is regulated, funded, assessed and delivered in Wales. It covered a broad range of issues including:

- How RSLs could be helped to build more homes
- Opportunities to attract more investment into housing in Wales
- How environmental standards of housing could be improved
- How the ‘Making the Connections’ agenda could help improve delivery of affordable housing

#### **Homes For Wales**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out the Welsh Government’s vision for Housing in Wales and provides the framework to assist the Authority in providing new affordable homes in Swansea. The Authority will seek to contribute significantly to the stated aim in the document to provide 7,500 new affordable homes in Wales by 2015.

## **The Role of the Local Authority in Providing Affordable Housing**

### **Affordability**

Affordability and access to mortgages continue to form a barrier to home ownership, particularly for newly forming households. The Local Housing Market Assessment (2012) indicated that the median income for employed people in Swansea is £18,352 (full time employed £23,369). With recent Land Registry data showing the average sale price of a property across the Authority's area at just under £150,000 and with mortgage providers requiring larger deposits, purchasing open market housing is increasingly difficult for many.

### **Housing Need**

Local Authorities are responsible for undertaking a periodical review of housing need (1985 Housing Act s8) and for Swansea, this was completed by way of a Local Housing Market Assessment, the results of which are set out in Chapter 2 of this strategy.

In overall terms, the results demonstrate that Swansea has a much higher demand for housing than the Welsh average and the requirement for affordable housing alone is greater than the total assumed number of annual completions of new build homes.

Using a scenario that best reflects key demographic trends in Swansea based on published statistics on population growth, components of population change, household composition and housing build rates; the most realistic scenario predicted by the assessment is for a requirement per annum of 1,147 dwellings, met by market housing (57%), Intermediate Housing (13.2%) and Social rented Housing (29.7%).

### **Improved Planning Framework**

Local Development Plan policies must be based on an up-to-date assessment of the full range of housing requirements across the City and County over the plan period. Local Housing Market Assessments provide the evidence base for supporting policies to deliver both affordable and market housing through the planning system. For affordable housing, an appreciation of the demand for different dwelling sizes and types is needed to enable negotiation of appropriate mixes on new sites.

Since the last Local Housing Strategy, a new Unitary Development Plan (UDP) has been adopted along with a Planning Obligations and Special Planning Guidance. Under UDP policy, developments of 25 or more units or sites of over 1 ha in the urban area will be considered appropriate for affordable housing to be included. In areas which are restricted due to environmental constraints (such as in rural communities), a lower threshold is adopted (normally 10 or more units and on sites of over 0.4 ha).

The local authority has a critical role to play in enabling the provision of new affordable housing primarily in the following two ways:

**Section 106 Agreements** under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allow a local planning authority (LPA) to enter into a legally-binding agreement as part of a planning obligation with a land developer to provide benefits for the local community as part of the proposed housing development. A S106 Agreement is utilised on all sites which can enable the provision of Affordable Housing. The agreement can take

the form of development on the site itself or a commuted sum which can be used to subsidise development elsewhere.

**Social Housing Grant (SHG)** is a Capital Grant from the Welsh Government to help subsidise new build schemes by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to make the provision of affordable housing financially viable. A Social Housing Grant programme is published each year by the Welsh Government which identifies a programme of development funding for the following 3 years. From 2011/12, the Welsh Government has allocated an annual amount of SHG to local authorities to manage locally and the level of funding reflects a combination of housing need, affordability and past delivery. The programme for the Authority amounted to approximately £9m over the three year period 2011/12 – 2013/14.

The Authority co-ordinates the allocation of Social Housing Grant to the four RSLs developing new housing within the Authority area, with priority being given to those schemes that best meet the adopted criteria which is considered in more detail later in this Chapter.

The Authority recognises the contribution that Social Housing Grant (SHG) makes in providing affordable housing units and the wider community benefits in terms of employment and investment.

## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

### **Social Housing Grant Schemes**

In the period 2007-2012 the Authority, in partnership with local RSLs have completed, handed over and occupied over 670 affordable homes and have a programme to potentially deliver a further 665 by 2015. Some notable developments completed in the period 2007-2012 include:

- 112 units on the former Cwmfelin works site by Coastal Housing Group
- 32 units at the former Marcroft Engineering Site (Viridian) by Family Housing Association
- 32 units on the former Barons Nightclub by Coastal Housing Group
- 26 units on the former Roma 2000 by Grwp Gwalia
- 69 units developed at 'D5a' at SA1 by Coastal Housing Group
- 9 affordable housing units through s106 at Ffordd Cynore, Fforestfach by Family Housing Association
- 54 units provided at 'D1a' at SA1 by Grwp Gwalia

### **Strategic Capital Investment Funding (SCIF)**

In 2008/2009, the Welsh Government made available SCIF funding to purchase land or partially/ fully built units from developers for affordable housing. Swansea received £1.3 million that enabled the purchase and completion of 48 units of additional affordable housing.

Additional SCIF was made available by the Welsh Government for 2010/2011 which could be used by local authorities to support the provision of the DIY Homebuy scheme, intermediate rental units, or to progress stalled Section 106 sites. Swansea used its allocation to develop two pilot intermediate rent schemes; 6 at Cwrt Sant Pedr (Family HA) and 4 at the Bush, Sketty (Coastal HG) and also to undertake a further 20 units of accommodation on sites that had stalled in the private sector; 6 at Cwmgelli Drive, Treboeth (Coastal HG) and 14 at the former Health Centre in Clydach (Grwp Gwalia), via the Welsh Government Land Protocol.

### **S106 Obligations**

During the period, the Authority has negotiated the provision of affordable housing with developers as part of Section 106 Agreements. This has been made more successful due to the introduction of robust evidence of the need for affordable housing from the Local Housing Market Assessment and the adoption of a Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in November 2009.

### **Welsh Housing Partnership**

The Authority has supported and assisted the provision of new units of affordable accommodation through the Welsh Housing Partnership (WHP) programme. This scheme, in partnership with Coastal HA has allowed the purchase of 14 additional units of accommodation through an innovative funding stream with the Principality Building Society. This has provided quality affordable homes to families who can't afford to buy their own homes via a long term rental package.

### **Affordable Housing Scrutiny Panel**

During 2012, a "cross party" panel of Councillors undertook a detailed enquiry into the way the Authority enables the delivery of affordable housing. The panel examined a raft of data heard from a range of bodies, including how affordable housing is provided by other housing organisations.

### **Future Developments**

The Local Housing Market Assessment 2012 strengthens the evidence base in terms of the future requirement for affordable housing in the City & County of Swansea. In meeting this need all available mechanisms will be used.

### **Prioritisation Criteria for New Social Housing Development**

The Authority will continue to set the strategic criteria to help prioritise RSL development proposals and to ensure the issue of affordability is addressed. The criteria will reflect the Authority's Corporate Strategies and will be reviewed in consultation with developing RSLs to maximise appropriate development opportunities that can be supported by SHG.

Any proposal for SHG funding will need to meet current Welsh Government requirements, in particular the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and the Development Quality Requirements (DQR). They will need to be built to the current Code for Sustainable Homes level and will need to meet environmental requirements and provide wider community benefits.

First and foremost any proposal for SHG should be;

- **In an area of housing need where that type of accommodation is needed**

Assuming it meets this requirement, the Authority will give priority to schemes which meet one or more of the criteria below (not in any order of priority).

- There is a clear need for public sector intervention
- Partnership schemes that help tackle defective Authority owned stock through area and community regeneration
- Proposals which address the support needs of vulnerable groups within the community and address priorities within the Social Care Plan, Supporting People Operational Plan & Local Housing strategy
- Schemes that complement Corporate Regeneration Strategies
- City Centre schemes in Authority priority areas and with specific allocation policies
- Rehabilitation/Regeneration schemes will in general be favoured in preference to greenfield sites
- Schemes that complement the Authority's empty property strategy
- Schemes in rural areas which meet the affordable housing requirements identified by the Authority
- Private/public/third sector partnership schemes
- Preference will be given to schemes that already have planning permission
- The scheme and RSL demonstrate a realistic level of deliverability

### **Partnership and Innovation**

The Authority is committed to continuing existing partnership arrangements with RSLs and to the creation of new partnerships with developers and funders to help develop new sources of affordable accommodation.

The Authority will seek to achieve this aim by enabling the development of new affordable housing focused on the identified needs of communities, which cannot be met effectively within the existing stock, through the use of new innovative funding streams.

The Authority will continue to explore a range of innovative financial models that could potentially be used to develop more affordable housing and will work directly with developers, funders and landowners to take these forward.



### **Vibrant and Viable Places**

Swansea Council has received £8.394m under the Vibrant and Viable Places Framework to target regeneration projects in Swansea City Centre. Welsh Government funds will be supported by public and private investment.

The projects which will receive Vibrant and Viable Places funding include:

#### **The Kingsway**

The aim is for the run down Kingsway area to become home to young professionals through a mixed use development. The new homes will be available to rent at intermediate rents and it is hoped the development will be the first phase of a wider investment programme. The aim is to transform Kingsway into a vibrant area including homes, shops and a central business district.

#### **Sandfields Housing Renewal Area**

The five-year Sandfields Housing Renewal Area programme aims to 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.

#### **Housing Above Retail Premises**

Homes Above Retail Premises (HARP) grants aim to support the conversion of vacant floor space above shops into new affordable homes. It will be used alongside Commercial Property Improvement grants. The aim is to bring new tenants into the city centre, including young professionals.

#### **High Street Regeneration**

This mixed use development will further improve the High Street and help to bring in private sector investment. The work will focus on three separate but related projects:

- Urban Village Phase 2
- People's Square
- Development of the former 'Iceland' building

Between them, the three projects will deliver social housing, commercial and retail floor space, business incubation units, and public space. They will also create jobs and training opportunities for the unemployed.

#### **Sandfields**

The Vetch housing development will enable residents to remain in their community into their old age through relocating an existing residential scheme for over 50s from the former St David's Centre to Sandfields.

#### **Property enhancement / development grant**

Swansea Market, the Glynn Vivian Gallery, the former Central Library building, the Dylan Thomas Centre, Morgan's Hotel and Dragon Hotel will all benefit from this new

grant. The scheme will complement other development proposals and the Homes Above Retail Premises (HARP) initiative.

### **Essential enabling infrastructure**

This project will improve the city centre including its gateways and links to the beach. The 2014-2015 programme will focus on the completion of the Boulevard scheme and High Street corridor. Proposals for 2015-2017 will concentrate on the Kingsway, Maritime Quarter and Alexandra Road areas. This budget will be used to match a future European funding bid for the city centre, allowing the programme to be extended through to 2020. The improvements will complement the other developments receiving Vibrant and Viable Places funding.

### **Housing Finance Grant (HFG) which replaces the Welsh Housing Bond (WHB)**

Although in its infancy, the Authority supports the principle of the Housing Finance Grant and its ability to raise additional levels of funding outside of the conventional SHG/Private Finance route. The Authority will seek to work with its RSL partners to maximise its ability to use this grant to ensure that the maximum number of new affordable homes are provided in the City & County of Swansea.

### **Smaller properties funding**

The Authority was successful in securing £1.7m of smaller properties money from Welsh Government to deliver 36 units. They have also announced that a further Smaller Properties Grant of £1.7m has been awarded to cover the period from 2014 to 2016.

### **Co-operative Housing**

Co-operative housing can provide an alternative choice to the traditional landlord/tenant arrangement. It can provide a more flexible tenure that reflects the changing needs and financial circumstances of the tenant.

The Authority will examine the contribution that the co-operative model of housing provision can play in developing new affordable housing in the City & County of Swansea.

### **Land**

The Authority will work with the Welsh Government on their land release programme to maximise opportunities to build new affordable housing on surplus public sector land. The Authority will work with partners to identify and transfer more 'new' surplus sites suitable for affordable housing development.

The Authority also plans to introduce a Land Release Protocol for affordable housing, the aim of which would be to assist the Authority in meeting its social housing/ affordable housing targets and speed up the Disposal Programme. This will include a development brief for each site with the proportion of affordable housing required, based on the need identified for that area. It will also include the preferred mix of tenure as indicated in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

### **Improved Use of Section 106 Agreements**

The Authority will continue to maximise the provision of affordable housing through the use of Section 106 Agreements, using the evidence contained in the Local Housing Market Assessment 2012.

### **Intermediate Housing**

Intermediate housing is defined as housing where prices or rents are above those of social rented housing but below housing market prices or below market rents.

The intermediate sector includes a range of tenure types such as Low Cost Home Ownership and affordable rent models. A small portfolio of intermediate housing has been provided by way of Section 106 Agreements in addition to via the SHG programme. Whilst the current provision of intermediate housing is relatively small it is envisaged that it will continue to grow.

The Authority will continue to work with the RSLs to explore innovative ways of providing affordable housing products secured without grant funding, targeted at local people in housing need who are unable to buy or rent a property on the open market. The Authority will work in partnership with the respective RSLs to agree strategic lettings priorities and to develop a housing register for residents wishing to enter into the intermediate market and low cost home ownership.

### **'Homebuy' Scheme**

The evidence of the LHMA is that there is considerable demand in Swansea for housing priced between the current open market levels and social rent levels. In addition to maximising the delivery of low cost home ownership via the planning process, the Authority will make available a limited amount of Social Housing Grant funding for 'Do-it-yourself' Homebuy, where a purchaser buys a property with the assistance of a Homebuy loan from a Registered Social Landlord. The loan can be up to a maximum of 30% of the purchase price in urban areas.

### **Private Rented Sector**

There is increasing demand for homes in the private rented sector. In addition, areas of traditionally more affordable family housing are seeing a variety of competing demands for stock to meet the needs of first time buyers, young families, private landlords and students.

The Authority will seek to work in partnership with the private rented sector to increase the provision of affordable housing. Working with accredited and approved, responsible private sector landlords, the Authority will explore new and innovative ways to utilise this sector of the housing market to increase the supply of good quality, well managed affordable accommodation.

This will complement the corporate emphasis on bringing empty properties back into use, both dwelling houses and empty shops and commercial properties.

### **Leased Properties**

The Authority will consider the leasing of property for specialist affordable housing provision to RSLs to manage and maintain. Any lease arrangement would require the RSL to substantially improve, maintain and manage the property to a high standard.

### **The More Homes Project**

To date, the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System (HRAS) has constrained the funding of new affordable housing directly by the Authority. Equally, HRA Capital resources are being earmarked to fund the improvement of Authority owned housing up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the 2020 target year.

However, following agreement between the WG and the UK Treasury, the HRAS was dismantled in Wales in April 2015 and replaced with a system of self-financing where the full value of the rental income is to be retained by the Authority. This reform, coupled with changes in the way that rent levels are calculated, will mean additional resources being made available over and above that which is needed for WHQS.

Whilst in the short term, the Authority is unlikely to be able to invest in significant numbers of new and additional Council housing, in the medium to long term; the HRA Business Plan identifies considerable revenue resources which could be used to support new-build. However any future borrowing will be limited by a debt cap on each Authority which is a requirement by the UK Treasury as part of the overall agreement.

The Council is in the process of developing a strategy for delivering more council homes over the next few years. This will be known as the More Homes Project. Construction methods, such as the PassivHaus model will be explored as part of this Strategy

### **Summary of Main Objectives**

- To continue partnership arrangements with RSLs to develop new sources of affordable accommodation for households unable to meet the market cost of housing in Swansea
- To enable the development of new affordable housing focusing on the identified needs and priorities of local communities
- To work with partners to expand the intermediate sector in Swansea.
- To continue to maximise Section 106 agreements to secure or enhance affordable housing provision
- To maximise SHG investment levels into the City & County of Swansea
- To prioritise (and review) RSL development proposals in accordance with the strategic criteria
- To secure and maximise alternative funding approaches for maximising the provision of affordable housing or enabling movement within the housing market within the City & County of Swansea
- To evaluate the effectiveness and impact of alternative funding approaches – e.g. such as WHPs, Co-Ops and WHB

- To utilise commuted sums in the provision of affordable housing
- To introduce a housing database of clients for Intermediate/Assisted Home Purchase Housing projects, maintained by the Authority
- To work with planning colleagues to set an affordable housing target in the LDP based on the Local Housing Market Assessment
- To ensure that the specific housing needs of vulnerable groups are considered within the delivery of additional units of accommodation
- Increase the managed use of private rented accommodation
- To explore the use of leasing existing dwelling for specialist provision
- To work with partners in maximising land release for affordable housing provision
- To review and project the contribution the HRA could make in terms of providing and enabling more affordable housing

## 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>£332m</b>	<b>£1,125m</b>

## 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](http://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"> <li>• Targeted loans and emergency repair fund, targeted at most vulnerable</li> <li>• Swansea Care and Repair partnership</li> </ul>
Poor housing conditions concentrated in certain areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• Take appropriate enforcement action with owners of private rented properties</li> </ul>
An ageing population occupying disproportionately poor housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeting loans and grant assistance</li> <li>• Swansea Care and Repair partnership</li> <li>• In house Grant Agency service to assist older and vulnerable persons</li> <li>• DFG and fast track housing adaptation services</li> </ul>
A culture of grant dependency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of loan based assistance and introduction of 'lifetime conditions' to some forms of grant awarded</li> <li>• Develop other services in longer term, such as project management services for customers, advice and information packages on home maintenance</li> </ul>
Poor conditions in private rented housing including Houses in Multiple Occupation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landlord assistance grants to support group repair and Area Renewal</li> <li>• Apply HMO licensing conditions to licensable properties</li> <li>• Take appropriate enforcement action with landlords to reduce or eliminate hazards</li> <li>• Take appropriate enforcement action in cases of poorly managed HMOs</li> <li>• LDP to include a policy on HMOs building upon the adopted UDP policy and the outcomes of the imminent WG HMOs best practice toolkit</li> </ul>
Poorly insulated homes, particularly affecting older persons, causing increased illness and deaths in winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Level Agreement with the Energy Saving Trust - advice, information, signposting services for improving home energy efficiency.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>

Empty homes in areas of identified housing need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant Aid in return for nomination rights for homeless/ waiting list applicants</li> <li>• Loans for landlords &amp; developers to bring long term empty homes back into use</li> </ul>
---	--

## 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;

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

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.1 Homelessness

**The One Swansea Plan**

Children have a good start in life

People are healthy, safe and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

**How services are currently provided**

The Authority's Housing Options service provides a range of services including a team of caseworkers focused on the prevention of homelessness, a money adviser who can help home owners faced by repossession through court representation and an ex-offender resettlement officer who works directly in prisons with clients prior to their release.

The Housing Options service also provides advice and help to anyone who is homeless including the provision of temporary accommodation for any household found to be homeless and in priority need. The Authority has developed a range of temporary accommodation options for homeless households.

Youth Homelessness services are provided at the BAYS project, a partnership between Barnardos and the Authority. The BAYS project provides a "one stop shop" approach for young people. The service is focused on supporting people to stay with their parents or relatives whenever possible. The partnership has developed and evolved a range of temporary and permanent accommodation options for young people including a flexible number of units of supported lodgings, emergency accommodation and accommodation for people with complex needs. Floating support for those ready to live independently is also provided.

There are a range of services and initiatives for rough sleepers in Swansea including;

- A street outreach and breakfast run
- One emergency bed that can be accessed on a night by night and weekend only basis
- 52 direct access beds
- A rough sleeping resource card, which gives key information for rough sleepers

- Partnership with Swansea Hope to assist rough sleepers into housing during the coldest months of the year
- Swansea Rough Sleepers Helpline which helps identify new locations where rough can be found
- Multi Agency Team Co-ordinator for Homelessness (MATCH) helps complex homeless individuals who need a multi-agency team response to resolve or prevent their homelessness

The Local Authority leads the coordinated response to tackling and reducing the impact of rough sleeping through a well-established Rough Sleeper Task Group. The group membership includes Local Authority staff from a number of departments, voluntary sector partners, Health Authority staff, Police, local church representatives and representatives from neighbouring authorities.

Homelessness prevention in Swansea include 700 units of floating support targeted at a range of client groups, 300 supported housing spaces and the “Sanctuary” scheme ( a scheme that funds property security improvements to help households who are experiencing domestic abuse to feel safe in their homes).

The “Move On” Strategy in Swansea is a long term partnership between the City & County of Swansea’s Housing Service, local Housing Associations and various statutory and voluntary agencies throughout the City. The Move On group aims to assist people who are ready to move-on from temporary, supported accommodation into an independent tenancy. This helps to prevent “bed blocking” in the city. The scheme has been operating since the early 1990’s, but as a snapshot has housed over 200 people in the last five years alone, with approximately 85% of the tenancies maintained to a satisfactory standard.

### **Permanent accommodation**

As of April 2013 there were over 5000 households registered on the Council waiting list. The current total Authority owned housing stock is 13,600. In 2012/13, 558 homeless households were accommodated in council tenancies. This accounted for approximately 34% of the new tenancies that year.

There are also approximately 9,000 social housing tenancies provided by housing associations across the city. Swansea is also looking to provide a replacement Social Lettings Agency for the now decommissioned Ikon Lettings. The new service should be operational from 2014 / 2015.

### **Financial Support**

In 2013/14, Supporting People Programme Grant funding for Swansea totalled £14,628,115. This money is used for a range of services to prevent homelessness and to support households in their accommodation. The money also supports mental health, older person and learning disability provision. This money is frozen for 2014/15 and will be reduced to £14,498,656.18 for 2015/16.

The Welsh Government currently funds a number of services directly through S180 Homelessness Grant Funding. Approximately £300k of s180 grant funding is invested in third sector organisations providing homelessness services in Swansea

with the majority focused on rough sleepers with additional nationally funded schemes which operate across Wales.

### **A Summary and Analysis of Demand**

Swansea has a relatively high number of homelessness decisions, 3419 in 2012/13. This reflects, in part, the proactive approach to all homeless people i.e. priority and non-priority. For example, households are actively encouraged to approach the Authority as soon as they become at risk of homelessness so that work can begin at an early stage in an attempt to prevent homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.

This proactive approach to homelessness is demonstrated by the fact that consistently, Swansea has one of the lowest numbers of people in temporary accommodation across the whole of Wales. For example, during the whole of 2013/14 the Authority accommodated four families in B&B and then for an average of only six days.

The Housing Options service consistently receives between 2500 and 3000 homelessness applicants every year. Approximately 40% were accepted as homeless during 2013/14. During 2013/14, 847 households were accepted as priority need, which represents a 20% decline in statutory homeless acceptances from 2010/11 despite there being an increase in presentations of approximately 10%.

The average length of time households spent in temporary accommodation during 2013/14 was 48 days. The average time spent in Bed & Breakfast increased from 19 in 12/13 to 25 in 13/14 and in other forms of temporary accommodation from 64 in 12/13 to 73 in 2013/14. The Authority provides temporary accommodation for approximately 400 households every year.

Consistently, the main causes of homelessness are as a result of either leaving prison, loss of rented accommodation, relationship breakdown (particularly involving domestic abuse). These account for about 70-80% of all the homelessness acceptances in Swansea.

<b>Cause of homelessness</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Other violence</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Parents not willing to accommodate</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Loss of rented accommodation /NTQ</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Mortgage arrears</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Rent arrears</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Leaving Institution / Care (including prison)</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Other (including emergency / refugee)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Relationship breakdown – non violent</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Other relatives not willing to accommodate</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>843</b>

## **Homelessness Planning Arrangements**

The Homelessness Strategy Planning Team (HSPT) has been established with the aim of providing a planning framework to meet the long term accommodation, health and support needs of all people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The HSPT meets quarterly. Membership is open to any organisation providing services to homeless people and includes representatives from statutory and third sector organisations including Social Landlords, Support providers, Advice agencies and Tenancy Support Services.

The HSPT is responsible for developing a business plan that provides the framework for planning homelessness services and acts as a reference point for making recommendations to the Supporting People Commissioning group. It will also be used to inform decisions in relation to WG funding e.g. s180 and other Local Authority funding.

The HSPT commissions working groups to undertake specific pieces of work in relation to priority areas. Current working groups include:

- Rough Sleeping Task Group
- Move On Strategy Group
- Private Sector Development Group
- Gateway User Group
- Youth Homelessness Provider Group
- Join In Steering and Community Groups

The HSPT receive progress reports from working group leads and is able to advise, make recommendations or raise concerns in relation to the work of the group.

The HSPT review homelessness in the local area on an annual basis. The priorities are reflected in the Supporting People Planning documents and submissions to Welsh Government.

It also recognises that responses to homelessness are not just a housing issue, and that successful solutions are often based on sharing responsibility with Health, Probation and Social care.

## **Service User involvement**

The “Join In” strategy is the framework for service user consultation in Swansea in relation to Homelessness and Supporting People issues. It was initially established in 2004 and its membership includes voluntary, independent and statutory sector organisations. It also includes Service Users affiliated to these organisations. By actively involving Service Users, the people who commission, plan and provide services can gain accurate information about Service Users’ views of their needs, service delivery, deficiencies, changes & improvement, barriers faced, etc. Therefore, the planning, design, delivery, evaluation and monitoring of services can

be based on Service Users' actual needs and views, potentially enhanced by the fresh perspectives and new ideas that Service users can contribute. The local arrangements have now been rolled out to the Western Bay Region. Annual consultation and feedback events are being hosted on a regional basis for service users across the area.

## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

Since 2007 a number of important developments have occurred in homelessness services including the following;

### **Focus on Prevention**

The Housing Options Service has undergone two major reviews over the last five years. The reviews have concentrated on ensuring that the customer is at the centre of service provision and that prevention of homelessness is the main focus. The reviews have helped ensure that the service is able to continue meeting key performance indicators and measures, e.g. numbers in B&B, average stays in temporary accommodation, etc, despite an increase in demand for the service.

### **Housing First**

Swansea has piloted the "Housing First" approach to dealing with Rough Sleepers which involves housing the most vulnerable and using individualised budgets to encourage long term rough sleepers to engage with services. The principle of the work is currently on-going under the Multi Agency Team Coordinator for Homelessness (MATCH) worker to ensure a multi-agency response is provided for complex and multiple needs individuals who are homeless or at risk of losing their accommodation without a multi-agency approach. The success of the Individual Budgets work has been evaluated and is being explored for possible inclusion in this work.

### **B&B reduction**

The use of B&B has significantly decreased over the last five years. During 2012/13, 280 households were booked into B&B, which is an average of 23 per month.

### **Rough Sleepers Winter Plan**

The Authority has funded an annual rough sleeper's winter plan since 2008. This ensures that all rough sleepers are offered temporary accommodation during cold weather. This was extended in 2011/12 to allow the Swansea Night Shelter project to open during the coldest months of the year. The Night Shelter is a partnership between local churches and rough sleeper stakeholders to provide emergency overnight accommodation and move on options for street homeless individuals in Swansea.

### **Gateway**

In early 2009 the Homelessness Strategy Planning Team commissioned the 'Homeless Journeys' work to map the access to services for long term homeless individuals. One of the very clear messages coming out of this work was that homeless people are required to complete multiple applications and re-tell their story numerous times in order to register and access hostel or supported housing. Funding was secured from the Welsh Government in 2010 to improve access to temporary housing and "Gateway" was developed as an online referral system using



a 'tell it once' approach. It was launched in April 2011 and during 2012/13 459 referrals were made for temporary and supported housing.

## **Future Developments**

A number of significant issues will affect homelessness services over the next five years including welfare reform, proposed changes to legislation, changes to Supporting People arrangements and the potential for local authority reorganisation.

These issues will shape priorities and future developments over the coming years.

### **Welfare Reform**

Significant changes to the Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance are being implemented as part of the Government's Welfare Reform.

The headline changes include:

- Universal Credit to replace most benefits (including housing benefit)
- Reduction in Local Housing Allowance for:
  - § people with non-dependent children
  - § the 5 bed rate
  - § people of working age who are under occupying
- Reduction in the total amount of benefit paid
- Introduction of the social housing size criteria (bedroom tax)

The changes have the potential to increase homelessness as reductions in household finances may mean that people's current accommodation may become unaffordable. It may result in some households becoming more overcrowded which can also lead to tensions and strains on existing relationships.

Priorities will include working with landlords across all sectors to offer housing options that meet the needs of households affected by the changes including shared housing and the greater use of credit unions.

### **Housing (Wales) Act**

The key elements of the proposed changes to homelessness legislation are:

- A new duty for Local Authorities to corporately "take reasonable steps to achieve a suitable housing solution for all households which are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days"
- Statutory guidance on the minimum set of prevention services an Authority will need to have in place
- Requirement for Authorities to undertake a basic support needs assessment for anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness

- Priority need, intentionality and local connection tests to still apply if no 'housing solution' can be found, but with possible changes to some definitions and the inclusion of 'verified rough sleepers' and young people under 25
- Local Authorities to have the power to discharge their homelessness duty by providing access to suitable private rented sector accommodation
- The intentionality test for homeless families to be removed by 2019 and other identified groups in due course
- Vulnerability test to be applied to former prisoners who are threatened with homelessness when being discharged from custody

The issues to consider are therefore:

- Ensuring prevention services are strengthened
- Ensuring there is an adequate supply of interim/temporary accommodation
- Ensuring that accommodation remains financially viable in light of DWP funding restrictions
- Increasing the supply of good quality, affordable housing across the social and private sectors

### **Supporting People**

Supporting People funding in Swansea was reduced in 2011/12 by 1.1% and in 2012/13 there was a further reduction of 2.1%, although no additional reductions for 2014/5 there is a reduction of 5.4% in 2015/16.

The Supporting People Programme Grant which came into place in August 2012 means that the Authority is responsible for commissioning services formerly administered via the Welsh Government. This enables the Authority to have greater control over the design of services and ensure that they are responsive and flexible to the needs of homeless and vulnerable people in Swansea.

### **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Reduce homelessness as a result of domestic abuse and improve accessibility, support and move-on options
- Ensure an even greater emphasis on preventing homelessness by strengthening the role of prevention in the duties owed to people threatened with homelessness
- Work closely with the private rented sector to enable a discharge of duty by the offer of secure, private sector accommodation to people who are owed a full re-housing duty

- Increase the capacity of the private rented sector and ensuring that accommodation is well managed, affordable and of a high quality
- Ensure that the tenants of private landlords have access to housing related tenancy support
- Deal with the impact of welfare reform
- Develop and improving responses to rough sleeping
- Tackle youth homelessness including eliminating the use of B&B and improving move on options
- Develop short and long term support options for people with complex needs including older people with substance and alcohol misuse
- Develop creative support packages for people within shared housing
- Develop additional supported accommodation for adults with mental health issues
- Review Extra Care provision
- Explore options to support prison leavers in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast
- Explore options to reduce the impact of under occupation of social housing and provide additional housing units for single bedroom occupancy

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.2 Supporting People Programme

**The One Swansea Plan**

Children have a good start in life

People are healthy and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### Introduction

The Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) is aimed at preventing people becoming homeless or requiring residential or institutional services, through the provision of 'housing related support'. The programme is a key tool in addressing the prevention agenda. Housing related support enables people to develop or maintain the skills and confidence necessary to maximise their ability to live independently.

The City & County of Swansea's ring fenced 2013/14 allocation of £14.6 million funds both temporary and permanent housing. Short term temporary accommodation includes homeless hostels and domestic abuse refuges. Longer term temporary supported accommodation includes The Foyer, supported lodgings and shared supported housing. Permanent supported housing is provided for people with mental health support needs or learning difficulties and the programme also supports sheltered housing and floating support services. At any point during the year, there are more than 4000 individuals in receipt of housing related support from the programme in Swansea.

#### The Current Situation

The Supporting People Programme will continue to implement the findings of the Aylward Review, an independent review of housing related support in Wales.

The service is subject to increasing demand. Strategic investment of the Supporting People Programme Grant is directed by a combination of the Homelessness Prevention action plan and the Social Care Commissioning plans. The Supporting People Commissioning Group, a multi-agency group consisting of Health, Social Services, Housing and the Probation service is responsible for local commissioning decisions. The detailed commissioning activity and administration for the grant programme and associated contracts is administered by a dedicated Supporting People Team based in the Social Services Directorate but physically located within the Housing Options Service. This team will ensure that all services are evaluated on a 3 year cycle so they are strategically relevant, safe and deliver on the National Supporting People Outcomes Framework.

The number of people presenting with complex needs is increasing and finding solutions for those people is more challenging. A range of groups collaborate on future service planning, including the Homelessness Planning Team, Social Care accommodation subgroups, third sector forums, local and regional supporting people collaborative forums and the Join In Service user Involvement Framework.

The Local Supporting People Commissioning Plan contains details about the programme, what it funds, how it is administered and the future priorities for the programme. This plan has replaced the Supporting People Operational Plan. Following Local Cabinet and Authority approval, this plan will be scrutinised by the newly established Supporting People Multi-Sector Regional Collaborate Committee. This Committee will be able to agree funding changes of up to 10% although anything greater than this will have to be referred to Welsh Government.

It is intended that the City & County of Swansea's Commissioning Plan, along with the equivalent from Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend, will contribute to the development of a Regional Commissioning Plan for Western Bay.

## **Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

The Supporting People programme has:

- Ensured that £14.6 million SPPG and additional contributions from the local authority and health board, were invested in housing related support services aimed at prevention of homelessness
- Administered the Join in Services User Involvement Framework to ensure that the voice of homeless people is heard and influences the commissioning of homelessness and housing related support services
- Monitored and prioritised support packages to prevent homelessness and enable move on using the Temporary Accommodation Gateway, Mental Health OASIS Project, Tenancy Support Unit Central Referral Core and the Youth Homelessness Strategic Group
- Worked collaboratively with Sheltered Housing providers to make progress to implement Aylward Review recommendations, especially the recommendations concerning severing the link with tenure
- Delivered further supported housing accommodation options to deliver the aim of eliminating the use B&B for 16 & 17 year olds
- Delivered a range of new build supported housing projects to address the priorities of learning disability, mental health and young people. For example, the Supporting People team have enabled the delivery of additional supported accommodation for older people with complex needs, a new domestic abuse refuge, 24 hr supported accommodation for care leavers and a regional project for women with complex needs

- Established innovative and collaborative multi agency responses to prevent homelessness and enable access to suitable accommodation.

## **Future Developments**

Many of the current priorities are highlighted in the Homelessness Chapter of this Strategy, but in addition:

- The Supporting People team intend to work to improve the availability of move-on accommodation to enable the move away from supported housing.
- Following a SPPG reduction of 5.4% in the 2015/16 financial year, the Supporting People Team indicated that they will be carrying out a strategic review of all supported services in Swansea and will then re-commission services in line with the findings of their review. The review will be based on the results of a needs assessment.
- The Supporting People team will monitor welfare reforms changes which specifically impact on rental income of projects and their sustainability.
- The Supporting People team will fully explore the impact of the new regional governance structure.
- The Supporting People team will continuously review and improve service delivery in order to achieve the national and local strategic outcomes needs to continue.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Work with projects to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform
- Improve the availability of Move-On accommodation
- Model the impact of a reduction to the SPPG on local services
- Contribute to the development of the Authority's offer to the private rented sector to support the development of social lettings and established responsive support packages.

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.3 An Ageing Population

**The One Swansea Plan**

People are healthy, safe and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

##### Introduction

Nationally, the number of older people relative to the rest of the population is increasing and the fastest rate of increase is forecast to be in those over 80 years of age. Information from the 2011 Census indicates that 18% of the local population are over 65 (42,800 people).

Whilst recognising and valuing the important continues contribution we all make to all areas of life as we age, one of the major challenges for the Authority is to continue to plan and deliver services that meet the needs of its ageing population. Housing is recognised as a key determinant of health and it follows that as people age health needs become more complex and having suitable housing becomes more important. Welsh Government studies indicate that older people are far more likely to occupy housing in poor condition, which has a significant impact upon their health and well-being.

Research into the housing choices and aspirations of older people commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2008 found that most people expressed a preference to stay where they were currently living for as long as possible. However as a demographic group, older people generally tend to be asset rich and cash poor, and may struggle to finance the necessary adaptations to their homes such as grab rails and stair lifts, which would make their homes more suitable to their needs and reduce health risks. Falls in particular are more prevalent in older persons due to problems with balance, coordination and/or strength and where falls occur; they tend to have greater general health implications. However, evidence suggests that fall prevention can reduce the number of falls between 15% and 30% and that falls, are, therefore, not an inevitable part of ageing. The overarching aim of the Ageing Well in Wales Falls prevention thematic network is to reduce the risk of falling and the number of falls amongst older people in Wales.

Older people are also more likely to experience physical and sensory impairments than the rest of the population with around 20% being classed as permanently sick or disabled. In addition 49% report living with a limiting long term illness and 19% are providing unpaid care for other people.

Fuel poverty is another concern as older people need to spend a greater proportion of their income on heating their homes during the winter months and may struggle to finance high fuel bills.

The percentage of older people owning their own home is higher than in the population as a whole, with 76% of those over 50 being owner occupiers. This proportion rises to 81% of the 50-64 age group, but reduces to 54% of the 85+ age group.

### **Key Local Research**

The findings of a research exercise carried out by Opinion Research Services in 2005 to determine the housing needs of people over 50 years old in the Authority area highlighted the following issues:

- The majority of older people want to continue to live independently in their own homes. This will require innovative support services and through the work of Network 50+ older people have told us that;
  - They want to remain at home provided they are not lonely and isolated in that home
  - They need to be supported to live in homes and communities that are suitable for their needs
- Older people will need repairs and adaptations to their homes to assist them to live independently and to help to prevent them going into care
- A significant proportion of the Authority's housing stock is pre or inter-war and this will pose a challenge as older properties can be more difficult to adapt
- An ageing population will result in an increase in the number of people living alone risking social isolation
- Under-occupation will provide a challenge
- There will be an increase in the numbers of people requiring assistance to maintain their home and garden
- Advice and support services must link with others to ensure people are aware of all their options
- Older people prefer a variety of housing options so that they can choose the one that best meets their needs
- Maximising the use of technology based support services will be a cost effective way of providing more support to more people
- The proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) older people is also increasing with the latest statistics indicating that 1.3% of over 50s were from BME groups compared to just 0.6% in 2001



## **Strategy for Older People 2013-23- Living Longer Ageing Well**

Within national work on developing the third phase of the Strategy for Older People older people said:

*- That their housing needs change as they age, and either the home or its location needs to change to adapt to their changing needs.*

The WG aims for housing through the Strategy for Older People is:

*Older people have access to housing and services that supports their needs and promote independence.*

With the following issues needing to be addressed:

- Effective services that can provide appropriate aids and adaptations to help people retain independence.
- Supported housing
- Simpler and more effective arrangements for people who rent their homes
- Housing improvements such as the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- Energy efficiency measures
- Availability of housing options for older people and appropriate support to move.
- Alternative housing models (including retirement communities, sheltered housing and extra care) and a variety of provision.

The following indicators will be monitored:

- Number of Disabled Facilities Grants and reduced waiting times
- Number of units of support available for older persons and funded via Supporting People programme
- Number of people helped by Care & Repair services and Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

The following policies or strategies will help achieve these outcomes:

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Renting Homes Bill (Wales) 2014
- Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013
- Framework for Action on Independent Living
- Support for Care & Repair
- Supporting People Programme
- Nest and Arbed

## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

### **Older Persons Housing Strategy**

A key aim of the Authority's Older Person's Housing Strategy is to develop a range of flexible services to address present housing provision and to work with partners and voluntary groups to allow people to live more independent lives for longer.

The Authority has been working closely with the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board Community Resource Team and Care & Repair, to maximise older people's independence within their own homes through a range of initiatives and funding streams, and to address key issues raised in the Older Person's Housing Strategy.

A local implementation plan for the Strategy for Older People is being developed and an Ageing Well Plan through the LSB is expected by the end of October 2015, with planning groups on each of the priorities.

### **Renewals and Adaptations**

Nearly 35% of the Authority's households contain at least one older person, with 26% of households being solely occupied by older residents. The vast majority of older person households are single person households.

A recent review of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy concluded that the targeted assistance for vulnerable, older and disabled persons should continue. The review also highlighted the success of partnership working, particularly with Swansea Care and Repair which maximises value for money when providing minor repairs and adaptations to the homes of older persons.

### **Joint Working**

The previous Local Housing Strategy (2007-2011) identified a need to contribute to the delivery of the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People by promoting integrated working between housing and support and care services, and by linking into health and social care strategies. As a result of this work, the Authority will continue to ensure that joint commissioning of services is based on strategic priorities and assessment of need and also that joint commissioning takes advantage of opportunities to maximise resources.

The importance of housing related matters also features in the Social Services Commissioning Plan for Older Peoples Services and Housing are represented on the Age Friendly/ Dementia Sensitive group as well as the Local Service Board Ageing Well Planning Group.

### **Future Housing Provision for Older Persons**

A key aim outlined in the last strategy was to promote the housing needs and aspirations of the over 50s in the City & County of Swansea by supporting a strategic shift away from residential care and acute settings, into community-based housing, support services and preventative services. This includes extra care housing which aims to support people to stay at home for longer by maximising the benefits of Assistive Technology and Telecare.

To contribute to achieving this aim, a review of the Hazel Court extra care complex has been completed and the findings will inform future work in this area. Work has also taken place on exploring the development of more flexible, responsive and outcome focussed long term domiciliary care linked to sheltered housing schemes. This work will be progressed during the time frame of this strategy and a corporate 'Care at Home' working group has been established which will oversee this.

The Authority is working to continue to maximise the use of technology based support services as a cost effective way of providing more support to more people.

### **Adequate and Appropriate Future Housing Provision**

The previous strategy also highlighted the need to ensure a range of good quality and affordable public and private housing which meets the changing needs of older people. Since the production of the last strategy there have been a number of new social and affordable housing developments undertaken in partnership by the Authority and local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), to provide accommodation specifically for older persons.

Some of the most recent developments include the development of 14 units of older person accommodation at the former medical centre in Clydach and also a mixed use redevelopment of St Michael's Church, Manselton, where 6 units of older person accommodation were built in the grounds of the churchyard. The above schemes were developed in partnership with Gwalia Housing Group,

Coastal Housing has undertaken the Mariner's Court development in the SA1 area of Swansea. This scheme of 80 flats allows residents to release the equity tied up in their existing home and purchase an affordable flat alleviating the worry of possible high maintenance costs in the future.

Work has also been undertaken to address the housing needs of older people with complex needs and substance misuse and Family Housing Association have developed a block of 8 units to provide housing solutions for those unable to access sheltered housing.

### **Future Developments**

The Authority will continue to strive to develop new accommodation that meet the needs of older people, be it through specific developments or through more flexible designs which allow properties to be easily adapted to reflect the changing needs of the population.

Further investment will be made in assistive technology to help people to maintain control over their lives, contribute to their independence and manage risk more effectively.

The Authority will build on the experiences of current extra care schemes, to explore options to meet the future demand for accommodation which has a care and support element; including sheltered housing schemes and dementia care services. A key feature of the provision of extra care will be the avoidance of residential care through the flexible capacity to increase 'at home' support when needed.

There are increasing numbers of older people living with a learning disability, mental illness, dementia, or with a history of homelessness, all of which require more tailored housing and associated support services. In 2010 there was an estimated 3,189 people living with dementia in Swansea over the age of 65. By 2021, it is predicted that this number will increase by 19.6% to a total of 3,814 people.

### **Social Services Commissioning Plan for Older People 2011-2014**

A detailed Commissioning Plan for Older People's Services has been developed by the Authority's Social Services Department in partnership with stakeholders. Key priorities are listed under the plan, a number of which have direct or indirect implications for older persons' housing, especially when enabling older people to remain at home for longer. For example:

- There is an aim to maximise investment in services that provide a rapid response to manage urgent unplanned care needs and provide support in a crisis which will enable people to stay at home. This should be accessible on a 24 hour basis
- The commissioning of long term domiciliary provision will be designed and evaluated in terms of its success in meeting the outcomes identified by the service user
- The Authority is keen to reshape day services to meet a wide range of needs especially supporting access to advice and information to better support people with lower level needs
- There is an aim to increase the capacity and variety in dementia care services to meet the growing need. These will be founded on a person centred and strengths based model of care, promoting human rights and the independence and emotional wellbeing of service users and will endeavour to support them to remain in their own home

### **Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013**

The Declaration was signed by Cabinet in February 2014 – part of the supporting pledge includes to:

*Promote and support the development of neighbourhoods and communities for all ages that are diverse, safe, inclusive and sustainable, and that include **housing** for older people that is of the highest quality. Particular attention should be given to the needs of older people in assisted living, residential care and nursing homes where their dignity and autonomy is at greater risk.*

One of the 8 domains/Essential Features of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities checklist, which underpins the Declaration, is in relation to housing:

- Sufficient, affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community
- Sufficient and affordable home maintenance and support services are available
- Housing is well-constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather
- Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways

- Home modification options and supplies are available and affordable, and providers understand the needs of older people
- Public and commercial rental housing is clean, well-maintained and safe.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.

The implementation of the strategy and Dublin Declaration is supported by the Ageing Well in Wales Programme. The programme has five priority areas:

- Age Friendly Communities
- Dementia Supportive Communities
- Falls Prevention
- Opportunities for learning and employment
- Loneliness and Isolation

Within the priority area of Dementia Supportive Communities there is the following outcome:

*Ensure engagement of public services, such as housing and transport, with the dementia agenda.*

And within Loneliness and Isolation:

*Older people are aware of and have access to housing schemes that promote social interaction and inclusion.*

### **Areas where future joint working would be beneficial**

The Authority considers the combating of fuel poverty as an increasingly pressing issue as many residents cannot afford to heat their own homes adequately. Health studies have concluded that older people are disproportionately affected by living in fuel poverty. The Authority will continue to work in partnership with energy companies to maximise energy efficiency measures in housing of all tenures.

As outlined above, a key aim is to promote a strategic shift away from residential care into community-based housing and support services. This will require more extra care housing and increased investment in equipment and adaptations, including assistive technology and telehealth.

The Authority will continue to review the delivery of private sector housing renewal and adaptations for disabled people to ensure there is a range of good quality and affordable public and private housing which meets the changing needs of older people.

## Summary of Main Objectives

In order to meet the housing needs of older people, the Authority will need to:

- Monitor and evaluate the work of existing extra care housing schemes in order to assess whether it would be beneficial to fund further schemes
- Continue to ensure that all frontline staff undertake training with respect to the Equality Act 2010
- Work with housing developers to ensure adequate and appropriate future housing provision
- Promote safety and accessibility in the home in partnership with other statutory and third sector agencies
- Promote and support property maintenance and repairs in partnership with third sector organisations
- Support the tackling of fuel poverty in partnership with third sector organisations
- Work closely with Social Services and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board in exploring the development of more flexible, responsive and localised domiciliary support at home
- Further investigate the potential for assistive technology and associated support services to help older people, particularly those living with dementia, to remain in their own home
- Ensure all frontline staff have a better understanding of how to support people living with dementia, including a positive approach to managing risk, so that obstacles which prevent people remaining at home can be overcome
- Support work on the appropriate objectives within the Strategy for Older People Development Plan and Ageing Well Plan (in particular creating Age Friendly and Dementia supportive communities)

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.4 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)

##### **The One Swansea Plan**

People are healthy, safe and independent

##### **Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### **The Current Situation**

##### **Current Population**

Over the past 20 years the population in Swansea has become more diverse and its Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have nearly trebled in size. In December 2012, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the official 2011 Census population figures by ethnic group for Local Authorities in England & Wales.

The 2011 Census data suggests that an estimated 14,326 people in Swansea were from a non-white ethnic group, around 6.0% of the total population; higher than the equivalent figure for Wales (4.4%) and the third highest percentage of the 22 local authorities in Wales. However, these proportions are much lower than the equivalent figure for England and Wales combined (14.0%).

In 2011, 20,368 (8.5%) of Swansea's population were non-'White British' (i.e. also including other white ethnic groups); above the Wales average (6.8%) and again third highest of the Welsh LAs, but below England & Wales (19.5%).

Over the period 2001 to 2011, the proportion of people in Swansea from a non-White ethnic group increased from around 2% of the population to 6%, an overall increase of approximately 9,500 (+198%). The number of non-'White British' increased over this period by 10,800 (+113%). Both figures exceed the equivalent increases for Wales (+118% and +78%) and England & Wales (+70% and +65%).

The 2011 Census data suggests that the largest non-white ethnic groups are:

- Chinese – 2,052 people (0.9% of Swansea's population)
- Bangladeshi – 1,944 (0.8%)
- Other Asian – 1,739 (0.7%)
- Black African – 1,707 (0.7%)
- Arab – 1,694 (0.7%)

Amongst the non-white ethnic groups, the largest estimated increases in population between 2001 and 2011 were in the Black African (+1,500 approx.), Bangladeshi and Indian groups (both +900). There was also a significant numerical increase in the 'Other-White' population of 1,400 (+40%), mainly reflecting the inflow of economic migrants from Eastern Europe since the beginning of EU Accession in

2003. Other minority groups which had very low populations in 2001 have seen significant growth in proportionate terms, for example, the Pakistani population has increased by 89% to 591. +89% (to 591).

Growth in the Bangladeshi ethnic group, long regarded as the largest non-white ethnic group in Swansea, has continued between 2001 and 2011, almost doubling (+94%) over the period. However the latest estimates suggest that the Chinese ethnic group is now larger than the Bangladeshi population in Swansea.

Amongst children, the ONS estimates suggest that the numbers aged 5-15 from non-white ethnic groups increased from around 1,000 in 2001 to 4,500 in 2011 (Census). The latest Swansea data from the Schools' Census (PLASC) suggests that the proportion of the school population who are not white-British increased from around 7.5% in 2004 to 11.3% in 2013 (around 4,100 pupils).

Ward level breakdowns of Swansea's population by ethnic group are also available from the 2011 Census. The largest ethnic minority populations were recorded in the urban wards of Uplands (2,091), Castle (3,202) and Sketty (1,323). In proportionate terms, Castle and Uplands both record ethnic minority populations of above 10%. Within wards, the 2011 Census data also reveals evidence of distinct ethnic group clusters, for example, the Arabic population in the Castle, Sketty and Uplands areas. However, these are also areas with high numbers of students and while it is important that the housing needs of BME students are considered, it is important that this is not confused with the housing needs of the rest of Swansea's BME population. The two groups may have different needs, use different parts of the housing sector and require different long term planning and action.

The following table provides information from the 2011 Census that will be useful in understanding how the housing sector in Swansea is used by those of different ethnic groups at present. For example, those in the Other White category are more likely to live in private rented accommodation than White British households. Also those from Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British ethnic groups are more likely to live in the social rented sector. While this data will not give indications as to the reasons behind this, it helps understanding of the current use of housing in Swansea and enable future consultation aimed at removing barriers that may exist preventing individuals from accessing certain parts of the housing sector and understand future needs of groups.

*Fig 5 Different housing tenures used by BME population in Swansea*



<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Owned: Owned outright</b>	<b>Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership</b>	<b>Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)</b>	<b>Social rented: Other social rented</b>	<b>Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency</b>	<b>Private rented: Other private rented or living rent free</b>
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	33,517	30,188	12,075	6,173	10,904	2,950
White: Irish	176	172	50	45	109	31
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	3	4	3	6	1
White: Other White	353	414	233	174	771	69
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	22	53	38	19	47	7
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	6	8	13	10	20	6
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	20	50	24	15	40	11
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	16	41	40	23	49	11
Asian/Asian British: Indian	74	221	15	9	180	19
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	14	60	19	9	36	13
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	56	256	44	23	71	20
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	123	131	25	61	359	65
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	50	174	72	27	186	46
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	30	70	265	74	286	59
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	17	24	19	17	24	7
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	4	6	9	4	11	0
Other ethnic group: Arab	70	82	57	38	474	31
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	25	38	102	50	115	18

Source: Census Data 2011- tenure by ethnic group by age

This data enables the Authority to address potential options for some. For example, groups less likely to own their own homes such as Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black

British groups may be able to access other forms of housing, such as affordable housing or intermediate renting/purchase options.

### **Quality of Accommodation**

The Authority has an important role in ensuring those from BME communities in Swansea are able to access appropriate accommodation that meets their needs. Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that over a third of privately rented homes were of a poor quality standard and that the private sector was the most expensive renting option. Given those from BME communities in Swansea are more likely to rent than others, this will have a disproportionate impact on these communities and underlines need for appropriate action to be taken by the local authority to ensure the private rented sector complies with appropriate standards. Environmental Health and HMO licensing will play an important role in this, in accordance with the measures detailed in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **Religion**

The 2011 Census is also the latest definitive source of information on religion. Christianity remains the predominant religion in Swansea (55%); although 34% held no religious beliefs and 7% did not answer (as the Census question on religion is voluntary). Of the groups listed, 5,415 people (2%) stated their religion as Muslim.

Information from the 2011 Census on the distribution of non-Christian religion by Ward again sees the greatest numbers in Castle (2,049), Uplands (1,208) and Sketty (886). In proportionate terms, the wards of Castle (13%), Uplands and Landore (both 8%) have the highest rates of population with a non-Christian religion.

Religion plays an important role in the choice of area, for example, the high concentration of Muslims in the Castle and Uplands wards may be attributed to a Mosque being within walking distance. Places of worship can be good indicators for people's choices of areas. Therefore, the Authority should ensure there is good quality and appropriate accommodation that meet the needs of communities in these localities.

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Asylum Seekers and Refugees may face similar issues to people from Black and Minority Ethnic people but they do not form one homogenous group; they come from many different countries and speak different languages, representing at least 100 different nationalities.

Swansea was designated a dispersal area for Asylum Seekers in 2000. By March 2012 an estimated 690 lead applicant asylum seekers lived in Swansea and there were 204 Asylum Seekers resident in Council properties.

In October 2012 Ready Homes (part of the Clearsprings Group) took over the contract from the Home Office to supply accommodation for Asylum Seekers. The Authority, however, through the work of one full time refugee resettlement officer, continue to offer refugee resettlement support for those former Asylum Seekers who received a positive decision on their case and moved to Council properties.

The Housing Service has long established working relationships with relevant third sector organisations and Social Services to meet the needs of asylum seekers and well as refugees.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Communities**

There are several Gypsy & Traveller communities residing in the Swansea area; there is one official Council site, a tolerated site, and on various private sites. It is important to establish whether these communities have any accommodation needs; be it the need for more plots for family members, more pitches or exploring the possibility of moving into bricks & mortar accommodation. These needs are recorded via Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs surveys that are undertaken on a bi-annual basis. 2011 Census figures state there are currently 95 Gypsy & Travellers residing in the Swansea area. However, due to the transient nature of these community groups the population figures could be higher or lower than indicated on any given day. More comprehensive information regarding Gypsy & Traveller communities can be found later in this strategy.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Previous equality duties have been amalgamated in The Equality Act 2010. The Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, with race as one of the protected characteristics incorporated within the Council's first Strategic Equality Plan 2012-16. This plan superseded the Equality & Diversity Scheme 2009-2012. The Equality Act 2010 included a new public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'). This means the Council is required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan has close links with a number of key Council strategies and plans such as the Community Strategy and includes 30 equality objectives which are reviewed and monitored annually.

### **Equality Monitoring**

It is very important to incorporate equality into service monitoring. Without this, it would be difficult to establish the nature or extent of inequalities, the areas where action is most needed, and whether the measures aimed at reducing inequality are succeeding.

The monitoring of customers using services provided by housing is mainly done by using the 'About You' monitoring form and also by recording information directly onto the housing register.

The About You monitoring form was introduced at Corporate level in 2008. The form has been tailored to suit the Housing Service and results are collated and distributed throughout the service on a regular basis. The collation of About You statistics by the

Housing Service began in October 2008 and the latest results were captured in January 2013. Since the inception of About You 5695 customer's details have been analysed with 4% from BME communities and 5.2% of unknown ethnicity. The BME figure for using the Housing Service (4%) is lower than the overall BME population in Swansea. This could indicate that members of BME communities do not need, are not able to access, do not use or do not want to use the service. It should also be noted that taking part in equality monitoring is optional, with someone choosing to or not to take part. Effective monitoring can help to establish and clarify these reasons.

The About You monitoring form also records the languages spoken on a day to day basis. English is the main language used and there are a number of 'other' languages, recorded with Polish and Arabic being the most popular. There are 50 other individual languages recorded.

The Housing register is used exclusively by the Housing Service and the ethnicity and main/preferred language of applicants (including current tenants) who apply for housing should be recorded on the system. Doing so will evidence the ethnicity of all prospective tenants and subsequently all applicants who then become tenants. However, the current levels of monitoring via the register make it difficult to establish a true record of how many housing applicants and tenants are from BME communities.

The Housing Service is keen to focus on the monitoring of ethnicity to better establish the nature or extent of inequality, and/or the areas where action is most needed. Initiatives to improve the monitoring of ethnicity will be introduced in 2013/14 such as a relaunch of the 'About You' form monitoring to also include new protected characteristics.

### **Housing Options Service**

The Housing Options Service monitors the ethnicity of all families and individuals that approach the Homelessness Service. These statistics are robust and formulate part of the homelessness statistics required by the Welsh Government. Figures recorded show that there were 2,665 homeless decisions made during 2011/12, of which 200 were of 'Non-White' ethnicity (3.75%). However, the way these statistics are recorded could be improved upon as currently 'specific' ethnic groups are not recorded. Whilst it does appear that a disproportionately low number of people from BME communities use the homeless service without more specific monitoring of BME groups using the same it is difficult to understand why this is so.

Essentially all the statistics recorded for housing services emphasise that Swansea's BME population is growing and becoming more cosmopolitan with an increasing amount of diverse ethnicities and languages. Therefore, it is important to monitor this effectively, to ensure services are sensitive, knowledgeable, accessible and relevant.

### **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

- An agreement was made between the Housing Options Service and Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC) that if requested and/or required, housing advice/ homeless interviews with people from BME communities could be held at the SBREC offices

- There were ongoing reviews with RSL partners regarding potential city centre BME development opportunities; identifying areas of Swansea where BME communities were most likely to reside and whether there was suitable accommodation available. For example, Family Housing Association committed to the building of two larger than standard properties earmarked for larger BME family groups
- The Asylum Seekers and Refugee Team have provided accommodation and support services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, in accordance with the contractual obligations of the UK Border Agency up until October 2012 when Ready Homes took over the contract
- The Making Voices Heard Project was disbanded as SBREC were satisfied with the findings and their Chief Executive now meets with the Housing & Public Protection Head of Service three times a year to discuss Housing related matters
- In May 2010, the City and County of Swansea was the first local authority to become a partner in the Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS). This service provides all translation and interpretation requirements directly for written and face to face interviews and indirectly via *'thebigword'* telephone interpretation service.
- The Housing Service is committed to the training of all front line Housing staff in both Race Equality and Multi-Cultural Awareness
- The 'About You' monitoring format was devised, initially at corporate level and was then adapted by the Housing Service. The About You monitoring form enables the Housing Service to monitor a number of protected characteristics of all people who use the Council's housing services
- The SBREC devised and delivered their "Not On Our Estate" initiative, which targeted four Council Housing Estate areas (Townhill, Blaenymaes, Sketty and Dyfatty), in order to eradicate racism and to increase reporting of hate crime. All events proved to be successful with good interaction between BME communities at grass root level and service providers

## **Future Developments**

### **Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC) Recommendations**

The SBREC have made recommendations for the future, some of which build on previous suggestions:

- The Housing Service should continue to reinforce the terms and conditions of tenancy agreements, with the overall objective of further reducing racial harassment. In addition, the housing service should build on established links with the Police, Victim Support's Hate Crime Project, SBREC, Welsh Refugee

Council and others in order to address harassment and racism experienced by people from BME communities

- The Housing Service should research, consult and establish why people from BME communities prefer to live in certain areas of Swansea. This will enable the service to anticipate future BME population trends and to subsequently target resources at expanding communities, for example, the Bangladeshi community tends to cluster in the Hafod area of the City, whereas the Chinese or Sikh communities are more dispersed
- Some BME communities (Indian, Arab) traditionally have larger families and RSLs could try to be more flexible with their allocation policy- for example, allocating two accommodation units rather than one
- The Housing Service and the SBREC recognise that although the monitoring of ethnicity for those using the Council's Housing Service has improved, there are still strides that can be made
- The Chinese Community Centre have approached the Housing Service and Social Services to request assistance in undertaking a survey of the housing and care needs of the Chinese population in Swansea. This is as a result of their concern regarding the ageing Chinese population in Swansea and the challenges this will present. This survey could be used as a template when the Housing Service considers how to meet the future needs of other BME groups with ageing populations
- The Housing Services should be more pro-active in the raising awareness of Hate Crimes, both to its staff and to its customers. Any such ventures could be undertaken with SBREC, Victim Support's Hate Crime Project and South Wales Police

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Reinforce tenancy conditions to current tenants, strengthen racial harassment clause in the Tenancy Agreement
- Undertake research to establish why BME Communities prefer to live in certain areas which will allow more accurate targeting of resources
- The Council to hold discussions with RSLs regarding the possibility of them introducing a more flexible approach to allocation and accommodation policies
- Improvements to be made to the ethnic monitoring of people utilising the Council's Housing Services
- Assist the Chinese Community Centre to undertake a housing and care need assessment of the Chinese population of Swansea

- Ensure the needs of Asylum Seekers are addressed by the new Communities First Cluster areas and integrated into community cohesion work undertaken by the Council
- Use data that is collated as part of equality monitoring and use consultation with affected groups to improve services to BME communities and remove barriers that may create inequalities

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.5 Gypsies and Travellers

**The One Swansea Plan**

People have good places to live and work

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

##### Introduction

Addressing the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales is a stated aim of the Welsh Government

The Authority currently has one authorised Gypsy and Traveller site located at Ty Gwyn in the Llansamlet area of the City and County. The Gypsies and Travellers on the site are required to pay rent to the Council

In addition to the authorised site, there is a 'tolerated' site at the Park and Ride site in Swansea Vale. The number of caravans on this site can vary greatly over time.

The most recent Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) identified a need for 10 additional pitches but no clear need for Transit Site provision.

There has been a resident Gypsy & Traveller population in Swansea for at least the past 25 years. The only official site is located at Ty Gwyn, Llansamlet. The site accommodates 7 pitches but has a good standard of associated facilities but is frequently at full capacity. There are several private sites in Swansea but not a current recognised need for additional site provision, according to the GTAA 2013.

The Council has historically had to manage a number of unauthorised encampments, which tend to be on Council owned land in the Llansamlet area. The families unlawfully parking on Council and sometimes private land are not provided with any facilities and normally equates to around 5 caravans (Official WG Caravan Count, Jan 2015 recorded the figure as 3).

In addition, there is a tolerated site in Llansamlet which was afforded such status following a High Court ruling in which Council failed to gain a possession order. It is clear that until the Gypsies & Travellers gain access to an official site, the Council will be unlikely to gain a possession order for this location.

According the most recent Official WG Caravan Count, Jan 2015 there were 13 caravans at the site, which has limited toilet and washing facilities. The site was created to facilitate moving the family from their previously tolerated location at the Park & Ride site, Llansamlet. This enabled the Lower Swansea Valley Flood Risk



Management Scheme to be implemented, which involved large scale works on the Park & Ride site.

The numbers of caravans and people resident at the tolerated site can fluctuate but there is an extended family who reside there “permanently”. Any additional persons would be visiting family members as the aforementioned High Court ruling prevents anyone else other than those named in the ruling from living on the tolerated site. This area is positioned on the flood plain and is not suitable for medium or long term occupation unless Natural Resources Wales decide to renew its flood zone designation.

There is currently no official Transit Site provision within the County and no clear identified need for such facility in the immediate future. This is also the case from a regional perspective whereby both Carmarthenshire and Neath & Port Talbot Councils have concluded that there isn't a clear need for such provision. From a national context it is clear from evidence that the demand for such facilities is within the counties of Cardiff, Newport and Pembroke

In March 2010, Cabinet resolved to start the search for a new site(s). In order to engage Members on a cross party basis, a Member led Task and Finish Group was formed to work with a multi-disciplinary group of officers in applying agreed criteria as part of a sifting process. The Task and Finish Group received regular progress reports on the process undertaken which examined all Council owned land against a set of criteria as agreed by Cabinet. In line with established need, the work focussed on making site provision to accommodate 1-12 pitches with the capability of being sympathetically expanded to approximately 20 as in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. This work was completed in 2013 but failed to reach a decision on an appropriate site(s) and the search process followed is subject of ongoing review by the Scrutiny Committee. This ongoing work is a Corporate led exercise and is detached from the Local Development Plan (LDP) preparation process but once concluded it is envisaged that appropriate site(s) provision will be identified to cater for the immediate need and long term requirements. The culmination of this exercise would require planning permission to have been granted on appropriate site(s) provision prior to LDP Adoption.

### **Understanding the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

The Authority is committed to furthering its understanding of the needs and requirements of Gypsies and Travellers in the City & County.

During 2013 a GTTA was undertaken in accordance with the Welsh Government's Guidance. The Assessment identified a need for 10 pitches within the City and County. In addition the assessment is required to look at maximum 'potential' demand for pitches over the next 5 years taking into account cultural factors, such as younger teenage gypsies and travellers that will turn 18 in the next 5 years might want a pitch of their own to start their own family unit. This part of the assessment identified the likelihood of more pitches being required in the future.

In addition to the above, there is a requirement to accommodate the potential need over the LDP Plan period (up to 2025). However, it is important to note that not all younger Gypsies & Travellers currently living with their parents will want to marry at

an early age and start their own family unit and some of those who do may elect to move away from Swansea.

### **The Housing (Wales) Act 2014**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to undertake a GTAA and includes a duty of Local Authorities to provide sites for Gypsies & Travellers where a need has been identified in those Assessments. The Act is in force, having received Royal Assent on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This requires all Authorities to undertake a GTAA by February 2016. However, the majority of its provisions still need to be brought into effect by further commencement orders by the Welsh Ministers. The Gypsy & Traveller elements of the Act are anticipated to be enforceable from March 2016 whereby the need for sites has been identified but not met., Welsh Ministers will have the power to compel Local Authorities to provide sites for Gypsy & Traveller communities. Sites will need planning permission in the same way as any other development.

### **Welsh Government Circular 30/2007- Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites**

Circular 30/2007 states that where there is an assessment of unmet need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in an area, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should allocate sufficient sites in its LDP to ensure that the identified pitch requirements for residential and transit use can be met. The LPA will need to demonstrate that sites are suitable, and that there is a realistic likelihood that the specific sites allocated in LDP will be made available for that purpose. This helps to provide certainty for all concerned when planning applications are determined by LPAs, or, appeals are considered.

### **The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2014**

The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2014 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014. It updates the existing legislation, originally put in place in the 1960s for residential mobile homes.

The new legislation required the licence agreements for gypsies and traveller residing on the authorised site to be revised and this exercise has been completed.

### **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

Between 2009 and 2012 the Authority made successful bids to the Welsh Government for grant funding to improve the authorised Gypsy site at Ty Gwyn.

As a result of this grant funding, considerable improvements have been made to the environment of the site and the level and quality of the facilities available. The improvements include;

- The refurbishment of the service blocks
- Fencing and gates for each pitch
- Site perimeter fencing
- Drainage improvements to the site
- 2 upgrades to the playground facilities
- Improvements to the drainage of the site
- The introduction of a range of fire safety measures

- An onsite caretaker facility
- Speed ramps on the approach road to the site
- Security lighting on the site
- Extensions to Service blocks
- Solar Panels installed on Service Blocks

## **Future Developments**

In order to comply with the Welsh Government's new Housing Act, the Authority plans to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment before February 2016 so that the conclusions gained can further inform the requirements of the forthcoming LDP. This would require an additional analysis of the potential pitch requirements over the Plan period (up to 2025).

In recognition of the potential need for an additional authorised site, the Authority is currently reviewing its approach to site location assessment

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- A new Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment will be undertaken and is likely to commence September 2015

## Chapter 7

### Sustainable Development

**The One Swansea Plan**

People have good places to live, work and do business

**Housing Service Objective**

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

#### The Current Situation

**Regional and Local Legislation**

In recent years it has become increasingly recognised that well designed, high quality housing can have a positive impact on peoples' health and wellbeing and natural environment whilst conversely poor developments place a potentially destructive burden on the natural environment and negatively impact peoples' health and well-being. It is now accepted that to accomplish improvements in the environment in which people live, it is necessary to consider these wider impacts. Governments at international, national, regional and local levels are developing and implementing laws and policies which should result in a more sustainable use of resources, produce energy efficient housing and greater protection for bio-diversity.

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act was given Royal Assent and became law on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The Act will apply to Welsh Local Authorities from April 2016. The Act seeks to build a sustainable future for Wales and places an obligation on Welsh public bodies to integrate social, economic and environmental well-being, through its strategic decision making by making sustainable development the 'central organising principle' for the Welsh Public Sector.

To meet this duty, Council services must take account of the long-term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention elements of the sustainable development principle. The Housing Strategy is a key contributor to the health and well-being of Swansea communities now and for future generations and will make a fundamental contribution to the Council meeting the obligations and duties of the Well-Being of Future Generations.

The challenge of climate change is one of the biggest environmental problems faced by all levels of Government. The Welsh Government acknowledges the role housing can play in helping to tackle climate change through both the planning process (via Planning Policy Wales) and through Part L of the Building Regulations (Conservation of fuel and power).

**The City & County of Swansea**

The Authority's One Swansea Plan highlights sustainable development as one of the key, cross cutting policy areas. The Authority is an active member in all the key partnerships appointed to lead on achieving the Vision for Swansea outlined in the One Swansea Plan. One key partnership is the Swansea Environmental Forum, the

lead partnership that has responsibility for all aspects of the natural and built environment including issues relating to Housing.

The Authority has adopted sustainable development as one of its under-pinning principles in the One Swansea Plan, which will be delivered by embedding guiding principles contained in the Authority's Sustainable Development Policy, reviewed and adopted in 2012.

These principles compel the Authority to adapt working practices so that they will support:

- Integrated thinking and planning around social, economic and environmental issues
- Effective joint working in partnership with others
- Changing the working culture to one that works on the basis of long term planning and considers the wider sustainability costs
- Increased community engagement and participation

In addition, the Authority's Sustainable Development Policy sets out key aims which include enhancing and protecting the natural environment, decarbonisation and climate change, sustainable resource use, social inclusion, economic resilience, governance and procurement.

## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

### **Climate Local**

The Council recognises the opportunities and benefits of action on climate change and signed up to the Climate Local Initiative in May 2014. Climate Local is a voluntary, best practise Local Government Association initiative which promotes a pro-active approach to addressing climate change that has positive benefits on all aspects of wellbeing. As a signatory to the initiative the Council is required to set commitments which demonstrate how the Council is reducing carbon emissions and management climate impacts. One of the current commitments is for *"the Council to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in building working in partnership with other organisation including housing association and other public sector bodies"*. The activities in Home Energy Efficiency (Chapter 5.5) will make a significant contribution to meeting this commitment.

### **Sustainable Developers Guide**

In 2007, the Authority launched "The Sustainable Developers Guide", which provides a useful best practice resource, giving the construction industry advice on addressing sustainability in the planning, design and maintenance of buildings, and management of the wider impacts of construction. The Guide refers to two building standards; The Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) and Eco-Homes. Eco-Homes has been replaced by Code for Sustainable Homes. Both these standards are used to assess the environmental performance of both new and existing homes and buildings. It is regarded by the

UK's construction and property sectors as the measure of best practice in environmental design and management.

### **Welsh Housing Quality Standard**

The Welsh Government's "Welsh Housing Quality Standard" (WHQS) includes provision for increasing the thermal efficiency of existing social housing. The WHQS also includes a requirement to improve the general environment of estates. The Authority's investment to secure achievement of this standard in Authority owned housing by 2020 will take appropriate measures into account.

### **Development Requirements**

Currently, any affordable housing funded by Social Housing Grant is required to meet the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Code. The Authority will continue to work in partnership with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) on increasing the code level whilst retaining economic viability.

## **Future Developments**

### **Housing Design**

The Authority has a responsibility and is committed to take the lead in implementing environmental good practice in housing design construction and maintenance. This can be achieved by ensuring that local housing programmes adopt sustainable development as a core objective, ensuring all new build, refurbishment or conversions exceed statutory requirements, employ sustainable design principles, link with community regeneration strategies and support the local economy.

New developments will also support core principles including supporting the need to reduce the amount of waste in the environment and also that negative impacts on wildlife and habitat resources are minimised.

### **Community Growing**

The Housing Service is keen to support local projects which promote community growing and will continue to explore ways of addressing barriers to the availability of land.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

The City and County of Swansea will aim to develop high quality inclusive communities which maximise social, economic and environmental benefits by investing in sustainable development principles in housing construction and maintenance. This will be achieved by:

- Working in partnership with national and local bodies to ensure joint action on sustainable development, including Welsh Government, Swansea Environmental Forum and the Green Building Forum, also developing links across different departments
- Developing a training schedule to raise awareness and train staff on the principles of sustainable development and sustainable construction

- Continue to survey the environmental performance of the housing stock in Swansea, establishing targets for continual improvement in performance
- Adhering to sustainable design principles in line with the Sustainable Developers Guide as appropriate and developing procedures to ensure best practice
- Continue to implement the Housing Service Sustainability Action Plan which includes continuing to promote the issue of sustainability to both housing staff and tenants
- Working in partnership with Value Wales to identify whole life costing opportunities for housing stock, this will include examining partnership working with RSLs and private housing developers
- Working in partnership with Constructing Excellence in Wales and Value Wales to identify opportunities to source local products and services to stimulate the local economy
- Developing a review process to monitor the sustainability and environmental performance of new and existing housing stock