

## Report of the Cabinet Member for Next Generation Services

Council - 25 February 2016

### WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD COMPLIANCE POLICY

<b>Purpose:</b>	To seek approval for the Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	Local Housing Strategy 2015 - 2020
<b>Reason for Decision:</b>	To approve the policy before the Welsh Government's submission deadline of April 1 <sup>st</sup> 2016.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Legal, Finance, Access to Services
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy is approved and submitted to the Welsh Government.
<b>Report Author:</b>	Peter Williams
<b>Finance Officer:</b>	Aimee Dyer
<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Sandie Richards
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Phil Couch

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Welsh Government's Housing Act 2014 states that all Local Authorities in Wales must bring their properties up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020.
- 1.2 In July 2015, all social landlords in Wales received a letter from the Welsh Government regarding their expectations with respect to Authorities working towards Welsh Housing Quality Standard compliance. Included in these expectations, is that a Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy must be produced and be in place by 1st April 2016 and reviewed annually.

## **2. Contents of the Compliance Policy**

2.1 A draft Compliance Policy has been drafted (see appendix A) and it contains 10 distinct sections. There are:-

- The framework for delivery, which covers time frames, governance arrangements, business planning and key performance indicators.
- WHQS definitions, including details of the components of the standard.
- The interpretation and recording of 'acceptable fails'
- WHQS data collection and storage arrangements
- WHQS progress and reporting mechanisms
- Verification processes to prove the standard is being met
- Improvements to properties over and above the WHQS
- Annual financial Investment
- Reporting progress to tenants
- The interpretation and measurement of community benefits.

## **3.0 Equality and Engagement Implications**

3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise has been undertaken regarding the policy. The exercise concluded that a full Equality Impact Assessment was not required as the Welsh Government have already undertaken a full Equality Impact Assessment on the Welsh Housing Quality Standard when the standard was made a legal requirement under the Housing Act 2014.

## **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 The Council has a Housing Revenue Account Business plan which is updated annually. The Business Plan indicates that the Welsh Housing Quality Standard will be met by 2020. Any additional costs related to measuring WHQS compliance will be met by the Housing Revenue Account.

## **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 allows the Welsh Ministers to ensure that the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is placed on a statutory footing for all local authorities. The Act also revised the statutory date for local

authorities to be WHQS compliant by 2020. The receipt of the Council's Major Repair Allowance (MRA) is conditional upon meeting WHQS within timescales agreed with the Welsh Government.

- 5.2 There is a statutory duty for all local authorities to submit a 30 year Business Plan to the Welsh Government outlining how it intends to reach the WHQS.

**Background Papers:** None

**Appendices:** Appendix A - Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy