



Report of the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy and Service Transformation

To the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel –
10th May 2021

Progress towards Meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Purpose:	To brief the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel on 10 th May 2021
Content:	An update on progress towards meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and to forward views to the Cabinet Member via a letter from the Panel Convener
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy and Service Transformation
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Mark Wade and David Meyrick Tel: 01792 635215 E-mail: dave.meyrick@swansea.gov.uk
Finance Officer:	Jeff Dong
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Rhian Millar

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2019 the Cabinet Member for Homes, Energy and Service Transformation reported to Scrutiny the findings from the Welsh Audit Office's 2018 review of Council's arrangements for reaching the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as well as setting out the Council's approach to measuring and monitoring WHQS compliance.
- 1.2 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard is a statutory requirement for all social landlords in Wales and for Swansea forms a part of the council's Local Housing Strategy as well as the Public Accountability Measures. The Council has in place a

WHQS Compliance Policy and prepares an annual financial business plan to ensure sufficient investment is available to deliver a detailed programme of repairs and improvements. The Council periodically engages a third party specialist to measure the condition of the housing stock; this provides an independent assessment on WHQS compliance and identifies future repair and investment needs required to meet the WHQS. The last stock condition survey was completed in 2018.

- 1.3 Under normal circumstance the Council reports WHQS compliance on an annual basis to the Welsh Government as well as quarterly monitoring on repairs and improvements, designed to bring homes up to the standard. Due to Covid 19 Welsh Government suspended all of its WHQS monitoring activities in 2020 and has only reintroduced these in March 2021. The Housing Service has provided an interim update on WHQS compliance to full Council on the 5th March 2021 as part of the four year HRA capital investment report.
- 1.4 Tenants continue to be updated about WHQS programmes and achievement via the tenant magazine Open House, the Council's website, tenant groups and individually when major repairs are planned for their home.

2 WHQS Deadline

- 2.1 Welsh Government had originally set the deadline for social rented homes to reach WHQS compliance by 31st December 2020 after which, landlords would be required to maintain their properties to the standard.
- 2.2 The Council had developed a final programme of improvements for 2020 which was agreed at full Council on 5th March 2020, however, delivery on the ground was severely impacted due to Covid 19 related restrictions.
- 2.3 On the 21st September 2020, the Minister for Housing and Local Government wrote to Swansea Council confirming that due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, Swansea Council would be allowed an extension of time to complete its WHQS programme. The new deadline is 31st December 2021.

3 WHQS Measurement

- 3.1 The WHQS sets out its requirements across six main themes including good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated; up to date kitchens and bathrooms; located in safe and attractive environments and suit the specific requirements of the household. Compliance is reached when all elements within these themes are considered to be in reasonable condition and performing as intended or they are classed as an 'acceptable fail'. The level of compliance is recorded via house condition surveys and updated once major repairs and improvements are completed.
- 3.2 Within the WHQS guidance document is the facility to record elements as 'acceptable fail'. The document recognises that it may not be possible to bring all the elements up to the standard and social landlords are permitted to report these as one of the following acceptable fail categories: cost of remedy; timing of remedy; residents'

choice; and physical constraint. Elements which cannot be brought up to the WHQS, continue to be repaired and maintained to ensure homes remain safe.

4 WHQS Compliance

4.1 The Council previously reported compliance levels to Welsh Government as of the 31st March 2019. Due to the pandemic and the temporary halt to reporting WHQS compliance, there has been a 21 month interval between those previously reported and current compliance levels. The following figures show the change in WHQS compliance levels over this period as well as current compliance across individual WHQS elements. All figures are as of the 31st December 2020.

4.2 Over the 21 month period full WHQS compliance has increased by 2,338 to 7,753 properties. Properties which contain an acceptable fail has decreased in this period and is currently at 5,795 properties, of which 3,165 are due to resident choice and the remaining 2,630 are due to timing.

4.3 Compliance across individual elements are set out in the table below and show high levels of compliance with only small number of properties which have an acceptable fail.

WHQS Element	Properties Fully Compliant	Properties with an Acceptable Fail
Roofing	13,201	347
Windows	13,545	3
Doors	13,535	13
Kitchens	11,604	1,944
Bathrooms	10,907	2,641
Heating Systems	13,468	80
Energy Rating	11,847	1,701
Electrical Systems	13,417	131
Smoke Alarms	13,540	8
Gardens	9,154	4,394

4.4 Three key areas have seen significant increases in the last 21 months which has contributed to the overall all increase in full WHQS compliance:

- a. Kitchen and Bathrooms - prior to Covid19, the kitchen and bathroom programme had achieved significant momentum with 4 external contractors and the Council's Building Services delivering improvements to over 2,000 homes per year. It is expected that in 2021, despite reduce momentum because of Covid 19, all properties in the programme will have had an opportunity to receive a new kitchen and bathroom. It is also anticipated that compliance levels in 12 months' time will contain properties which are classed as acceptable fail either due to timing where properties will be subject to a longer term regeneration programme or tenant choice where tenants have opted not to participate.
- b. SAP Energy Ratings. An ongoing exercise to overhaul the energy efficiency data to ensure it accurately captures the insulation and efficiency measures

from earlier programme investment has resulted in increases in the number of compliant properties.

c. External Facilities. A significant number of garden improvement projects commenced which has contributed to further overall compliance

4.5 In the remaining part of 2021, programmes will continue to deliver improvements to Council homes and efforts will be made to encourage tenants to participate in these schemes and for the Council to increase levels of full WHQS compliance.

5 National Picture

5.1 Across Wales some social landlords have already announced they have reached WHQS compliance and are now in the maintenance phase. The following is intended to highlight Swansea Council's WHQS position against a national picture particularly focusing on other stock owning local authorities.

5.2 There are 11 stock owning local authorities in Wales of which seven have already announced they have achieved WHQS compliance. The four remaining local authorities including Swansea have received an extension in time to comply with the standard.

5.3 All seven local authorities which have reached WHQS compliance have a proportion of homes which contain acceptable fails. The table below sets out the seven authorities, the year they announced reaching WHQS compliance and their last reported levels of compliance which was at the 31st March 2019. The stock and compliance levels are taken from Stats Wales.

WHQS Compliance @ 31st March 2019	Stock	Percentage of Fully Compliant Stock	Percentage of Acceptable Fails	Year WHQS Compliance Achieved
Cardiff	13,431	76%	24%	2012
Carmarthenshire	9,160	90%	10%	2015
Denbighshire	3,376	55%	45%	2014
Isle of Anglesey	3,818	74%	26%	2012
Pembrokeshire	5,648	90%	10%	2012
Powys	5,352	47%	53%	2018
Vale of Glamorgan	3,858	82%	18%	2018

6 Conclusion

6.1 The impact of Covid 19 on delivering the WHQS programme has been recognised by Welsh Government and a 12 month extension to the deadline agreed.

6.2 WHQS reporting to Welsh Government had been suspended in 2020 due to Covid but has now resumed with the latest figures showing compliance as of 31st December 2020.

- 6.3 There are now 7,753 fully compliant homes and there are 5,795 homes containing at least one acceptable fail in Swansea. This represents 57.2% fully compliant and 42.8% with acceptable fails. Fully compliant levels will rise and acceptable fails will reduce as the remaining improvement programmes continue to be rolled out in 2021. Tenants will continue to be encouraged to participate in order to maximise full WHQS compliance.
- 6.4 The national picture shows there are varying levels of compliance and acceptable fails across local authority housing portfolios.

7 Integrated Assessment Implications

- 7.1 The Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (Wales) and must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

Our Integrated Impact Assessment process ensures that we have paid due regard to the above.

- 7.2 An IIA screening has been undertaken (appendix A) and a full IIA is not required. The refurbishment programmes for council housing in Swansea to meet the WHQS will have an overall positive impact because homes will be of an improved quality, good state of repair, warmer and more efficient, safer and will have considered individual needs of those people who live there.

Consultation undertaken to understand and meet individual needs forms a key strand in the development and delivery of WHQS refurbishment programmes. Consultation with all householders affected by repair and improvement programmes ensures there is ongoing engagement. Statutory Consultation via the Planning Process is carried out where planning consent is required. Communication to all tenants via the Council Open House ensure that key information about this programme is available.

Improvements to council homes to reach WHQS compliance results in securing long term viability of council homes. These homes become more efficient, healthier places to live in safer and more attractive environments. The investment contributes towards the local economy and more widely in Wales through investing in the Council's direct labour organisation, utilising Sell to Wales when engaging external

contractors and employing social contracts to generate training and work place opportunities and breaking down barriers to gaining employment.

- 7.3 Overall risk to the project is low. Programme development, engagement and delivery processes are already well established. Progress to achieving the WHQS is monitored via the Council's risk register and further governance arrangements within the Housing and Public Health service monitor planning and delivery activities with a clear reporting structure. Progress monitoring is reported to the Welsh Government annually and there are periodic monitoring meetings with Welsh Government officials. Financially, the WHQS programme is monitored monthly and a business plan is prepared and submitted to Welsh Government annually.

8 Legal implications

- 8.1 WG can exercise powers under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 if there is a failure to meet the statutory obligation referred to above.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report

Glossary of terms:

WHQS Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Background papers: None

Appendix A: Integrated Impact Assessment screening

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Form

Please ensure that you refer to the Screening Form Guidance while completing this form.

Which service area and directorate are you from?

Service Area: Housing and Public Health

Directorate: Place

Q1 (a) What are you screening for relevance?

- New and revised policies, practices or procedures
- Service review, re-organisation or service changes/reductions, which affect the wider community, service users and/or staff
- Efficiency or saving proposals
- Setting budget allocations for new financial year and strategic financial planning
- New project proposals affecting staff, communities or accessibility to the built environment, e.g., new construction work or adaptations to existing buildings, moving to on-line services, changing location
- Large Scale Public Events
- Local implementation of National Strategy/Plans/Legislation
- Strategic directive and intent, including those developed at Regional Partnership Boards and Public Services Board, which impact on a public bodies functions
- Medium to long term plans (for example, corporate plans, development plans, service delivery and improvement plans)
- Setting objectives (for example, well-being objectives, equality objectives, Welsh language strategy)
- Major procurement and commissioning decisions
- Decisions that affect the ability (including external partners) to offer Welsh language opportunities and services

(b) Please name and fully describe initiative here:

The council as landlord is required to bring its homes up to the Welsh Government's Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) as per the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The WQS contains six main themes including good state of repair; safe and secure; adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated, up to date kitchens and bathrooms; located in safe and attractive environments and suit the specific requirements of the household. The WHQS was introduced in 2002, became a legal requirement in 2014 and has a deadline by the end of December 2021.

Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel have requested an update on progress towards reaching the WHQS and this form relates to the report being prepared for Scrutiny on the 10th May 2021.

Q2 What is the potential impact on the following: the impacts below could be positive (+) or negative (-)

	High Impact		Medium Impact		Low Impact		Needs further investigation
	+	-	+	-	+	-	
Children/young people (0-18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Older people (50+)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other age group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Future Generations (yet to be born)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race (including refugees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asylum seekers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gypsies & travellers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or (non-)belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poverty/social exclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Carers (inc. young carers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community cohesion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage & civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3 What involvement has taken place/will you undertake e.g. engagement/consultation/co-productive approaches? Please provide details below – either of your activities or your reasons for not undertaking involvement

The Council has and will continue to roll out repairs and improvements to individual council properties to meet and maintain the WHQS. The delivery programme includes consultation with all householders affected by the programme via the Council’s Major Works Agreement and individual needs are identified and accounted for as part of the programme preparation and delivery processes. Statutory Consultation via the Planning Process is carried out for any schemes requiring planning consent. Progress towards the standard is communicated to tenants via the Council’s Open House magazine and the Council’s website.

Q4 Have you considered the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 in the development of this initiative:

- a) Overall does the initiative support our Corporate Plan’s Well-being Objectives when considered together?
Yes No
- b) Does the initiative consider maximising contribution to each of the seven national well-being goals?
Yes No
- c) Does the initiative apply each of the five ways of working?
Yes No
- d) Does the initiative meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?
Yes No

Q5 What is the potential risk of the initiative? (*Consider the following impacts – equality, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, legal, financial, political, media, public perception etc...*)

High risk

Medium risk

Low risk

Q6 Will this initiative have an impact (however minor) on any other Council service?

Yes

No

If yes, please provide details below

Building Services, Procurement, Legal, Finance, Highways, Corporate Property and Planning will all be involved in the WHQS programme.

Q7 What is the cumulative impact of this proposal on people and/or communities when considering all the impacts identified within the screening and any other key decisions affecting similar groups/ service users made by the organisation?

(You may need to discuss this with your Service Head or Cabinet Member to consider more widely if this proposal will affect certain groups/ communities more adversely because of other decisions the organisation is making. For example, financial impact/poverty, withdrawal of multiple services and whether this is disadvantaging the same groups, e.g., disabled people, older people, single parents (who are mainly women), etc.)

The focus of the WHQS is to improve the quality of social rented properties across Wales. Swansea Council's programmes of improvements has improved the condition and quality of housing and the local environments they are located in as well as identifying and meeting individual needs. The programme has also contributed towards the local economy and through the Council's Beyond Bricks and Mortar programme, refurbishment contracts have created training and job opportunities for local people, frequently targeting those who have faced barriers to entering the jobs market in the past.

The report to Scrutiny Panel is intended to set out the Council's progress towards meeting the WHQS in Swansea.

Outcome of Screening

Q8 Please describe the outcome of your screening below:

- Summary of impacts identified and mitigation needed (Q2)
- Summary of involvement (Q3)
- WFG considerations (Q4)
- Any risks identified (Q5)
- Cumulative impact (Q7)

The refurbishment programmes for council housing in Swansea to meet the WHQS will have an overall positive impact because homes will be of an improved quality, good state of repair, warmer and more efficient, safer and will have considered individual needs of those people who live there.

Consultation undertaken to understand and meet individual needs forms a key strand in the development and delivery of WHQS refurbishment programmes. Consultation with all householders affected by repair and improvement programme ensures there is ongoing engagement. Statutory Consultation via the Planning Process is carried out where planning consent is required. Communication to all tenants via the Council Open House ensure that key information about this programme is available.

Improvements to council homes to reach WHQS compliance results in securing long term viability of council homes. These homes become more efficient, healthier places to live in safer and more attractive environments. The investment contributes towards the local economy and more widely in Wales through investing in the Council's direct labour organisation, utilising Sell to Wales when engaging external contractors and employing social contracts to generate training and work place opportunities and breaking down barriers to gaining employment.

Overall risk the project is low. Programme development, engagement and delivery processes are already well established. Progress to achieving the WHQS are monitored via the Council's risk register and further governance arrangements within the Housing and Public Health service monitor planning and delivery activities with a clear reporting structure. Progress monitoring is reported to the Welsh Government annually and there are periodic monitoring meetings with Welsh Government officials. Financially, the WHQS programme is monitored monthly and a business plan is prepared and submitted to Welsh Government annually.

The report to Scrutiny Panel will set out achievement levels and progress towards the 30th December 2021 deadline and is considered a further tier of scrutiny of progress and the arrangements in place.

(NB: This summary paragraph should be used in the relevant section of corporate report)

Full IIA to be completed

Do not complete IIA – please ensure you have provided the relevant information above to support this outcome

NB: Please email this completed form to the Access to Services Team for agreement before obtaining approval from your Head of Service. Head of Service approval is only required via email.

Screening completed by:
Name: Dave Bratley
Job title: Housing Asset Manager
Date: 27th April 2021
Approval by Head of Service:
Name: Mark Wade
Position: Head of Service
Date: 27th April 2021

Please return the completed form to acesstoservices@swansea.gov.uk