



Report of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change & Service Transformation

Cabinet – 20 January 2022

Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026

Purpose:	This report is for information and introduces the Housing Rents Management Strategy for 2022 – 2026.
Policy Framework:	Local Housing Strategy
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance, Legal. Service Users, Social Services, Tackling Poverty Services, Revenues and Benefits, Third Sector Partners
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For Information	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 There is no duty on local authorities to publish a Rents Management Strategy, it has however been an aim of the Housing Service to develop a strategy which has now been finalised. Whilst there is no duty, it is widely recognised within the social housing sector that to have a clear and transparent Strategy with a robust action plan is good practice.

2. Purpose of the Housing Rents Management Strategy

- 2.1 This Strategy sets out the guiding principles for the development and delivery of Swansea Council's Housing Rents Management Service over the next 4 years. It considers the national and local context that the Housing Rents Management Service is currently working within. It

identifies current and future challenges and sets out how the service will seek to address these challenges through the objectives of the Strategy taking account of the wider Corporate priorities, particularly those of tackling poverty and safeguarding.

2.2 This Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, have been developed following consultation with service users and stakeholders to ensure that it accurately captures the aims and objectives of the Housing Service.

3. Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026 Aims and Objectives

3.1 The Strategy sets out the guiding principles for the development and delivery of the Rents Management Service over the next 4 years; with an overall aim to “effectively prevent rent arrears to ensure that Council tenancies are sustained and income to the Housing Service is maximised”. This will be achieved through the following four objectives:

- Objective 1: Maximise the collection of rental income to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)
- Objective 2: Prioritising early intervention and prevention of rent arrears
- Objective 3: Minimise rent arrears when they occur and support Council tenants to sustain tenancies and prevent eviction
- Objective 4: Mitigate the impacts of existing and future Welfare Reforms on Council tenants and the Housing Service

The Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026 is located at appendix A, and the Action Plan at appendix B.

3.2 The aims and objectives of the Housing Service are delivered through the Housing Rents Management Service which provides individual support to Council tenants to help them to sustain their tenancy and to assist in tackling poverty.

4. Consultation

4.1 In developing this Strategy, the following consultation has taken place:

- Workshop – as part of the Housing Commissioning Review a discussion workshop with internal stakeholders took place in respect of the delivery of Housing Rents Management services.
- Tenants Consultative Panel – Initially members of the Tenants Consultative Panel were invited to discuss the draft Strategy and provide feedback in respect of the Strategy and proposed survey.
- All Council tenants – A letter was sent to all Council tenants inviting them to consider the draft Strategy and complete a survey, which was available online and in alternative formats.
- Internally – the draft Strategy was considered within Housing Services Division and by internal partners including Legal Services, the Tackling Poverty Service, Revenues and Benefits Service and Community Cohesion.

- External Partners – the draft Strategy was considered by external partners including Shelter Cymru, Crisis and Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot.

Across all the consultation responses some clear, common themes emerged particularly in respect of the need to maximise income to the Housing Revenue Account, mitigating the impacts of welfare reform, the approach to prevention and early intervention, sustaining tenancies and preventing eviction. The views provided assisted in developing the aims, objectives and actions for the Strategy.

- 4.2 Ward Members were provided with a copy of the draft Strategy and given the opportunity to comment on it.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The aims and objectives of the Strategy are considered to be robust and fit for purpose. Progress towards achieving the Strategy's aims and objectives will be measured and monitored on a regular basis using key performance measures and service indicators. An annual review of the action plan will be undertaken.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, 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 Acts.
- 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
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 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 acting, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

6.1.2 The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

6.2 The Housing Rents Management Strategy was subject to a full Integrated Impact Assessment approved in December 2021, see appendix C. The Integrated Impact Assessment indicated that the Strategy would have a positive effect on protected groups. No negative impacts were identified.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A	Housing Rents Management Strategy 2022-2026
Appendix B	Housing Rents Management Strategy Action Plan
Appendix C	Housing Rents Management Strategy IIA