

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Date of Meeting | Wednesday, 16 th May 2018 |
| Report Subject | Welsh Housing Quality Standard, Environmental Programme |
| Cabinet Member | Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing |
| Report Author | Chief Officer Housing and Assets |
| Type of Report | Operational |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001 the National Assembly of Wales approved the National Housing Strategy for Wales 'Better Homes for People in Wales'. The strategy set out Welsh Assembly Governments long-term vision for housing in Wales. Central to that vision was the expectation that all households in Wales have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. To achieve this, the physical standard and condition of existing housing must be maintained and improved to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

This report focusses on the development of the Environmental Programme which is set out in section 7.6 of the WHQS 'Located in attractive and safe environments'

The Council has, in developing its programme of work for the whole of the WHQS, split the County into six geographical areas of broadly the same size, with each receiving a programme of work in each financial year. It has a six year rolling programme of work activity which commenced in 2015/16 and the workload is set so that the WHQS will be achieved by 2020. The full programme requires an investment of £118m, with the remaining three years of the environmental programme requiring £0.969m (18/19), £1.977m (19/20) and £2.016m (20/21).

When undertaking an evaluation of environmental work in a specific area there needs to be an objective base and criteria with which to make decisions

RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | That Members consider the decision matrix and make observations, if any on the criteria. |
| 2 | That Members review the schedule of work and advise on its completeness and appropriateness and content. |

REPORT DETAILS

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 1.00 | EXPLAINING THE WHQS ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMME |
| 1.01 | In 2001 the National Assembly of Wales approved the National Housing Strategy for Wales 'Better Homes for People in Wales'. The strategy set out Welsh Assembly Governments long-term vision for housing in Wales. Central to that vision was the expectation that all households in Wales have the opportunity to live in good quality homes. To achieve this, the physical standard and condition of existing housing must be maintained and improved to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. |
| 1.02 | The WHQS was introduced in 2002 with a revised standard issued in 2008 which provided clarification on the minimum requirements and expanded interpretation together with changes which reflect legislative requirements and responsibilities, a result of the Housing Act 2004. |
| 1.03 | Minimum Requirements develop the Standard in greater detail and are considered to be an acceptable minimum. Each element of the Standard has been categorised into Primary or Secondary with a Primary element being one which impacts on the safety of residents and a Secondary element more focussed around the comfort of residents. |
| 1.04 | This report focusses on the development of the Environmental Programme which is set out in Part 6 of the WHQS Guidance (Part 6, section 7) section heading 'Located in attractive and safe environments'. |
| 1.05 | <p>In the context of the all of the elements within Section 6 of the Standard all are considered to be Secondary elements and broadly fall into the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roads and footpaths;• Soft and hard landscaping with planting;• Street lighting (adequate);• Adequate and safe play space;• Adequate and practical and maintainable communal areas;• Dwellings clearly identifiable with definable boundaries;• Utility services practically located and well identified;• Adequate and practically located parking clearly visible; |
| 1.06 | The Council has, in developing its programme of work for the whole of the WHQS, split the County into six geographical areas of broadly the same size, with each receiving a programme of work in each financial year (refer to |

| | |
|------|--|
| | <p>appendix A). It has a six year rolling programme of work activity which commenced in 2015/16 and the workload is set so that the WHQS will be achieved by 2020. The full programme requires an investment of £118m, with the remaining three years of the environmental programme requiring approximately requiring £0.969m (18/19), £1.977m (19/20) and £2.016m (20/21).</p> |
| 1.07 | <p>Programmes are developed using information flowing from stock condition surveys, but also by using feedback from our tenants, Members and officers on the ground. Condition survey data is regularly reviewed and adjusted to reflect the revised, improved condition of properties following refurbishment.</p> |
| 1.08 | <p>When undertaking an evaluation of environmental work in a specific area there needs to be an objective base and criteria with which to make decisions. The document included at appendix 'B' is the matrix used by Officers when assessing schemes, this criteria has been used successfully for a number of years, however, Members may consider that it does not fully reflect requirements and if so then it would be helpful to understand this during the meeting so that officers can respond and consider further.</p> |
| 1.09 | <p>Based upon the criteria detailed in appendix 'B' the programme of environmental works has been included at appendix 'C'. Members should review the schedule and advise if they feel it adequately considers the requirements in their respective areas. After the meeting the document will be copied out to all Members so that they can consider and respond accordingly.</p> |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 2.00 | RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS |
| 2.01 | <p>The HRA Business Plan 2018 – 2048 covers the period of the WHQS and beyond and sets out the Councils investment strategy for its social housing stock.</p> |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 3.00 | CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT |
| 3.01 | <p>Informal discussions with tenants, housing officers, Local Members often highlight the Environmental issues within a community.</p> <p>Before any scheme commences, our proposals are shared with tenants via letter or through consultation days through our local Connects Centres.</p> <p>The Capital Works Team held Tenant Consultation Workshops in late 2014 and sent over 7,000 questionnaires to the tenants of Flintshire to understand their priorities for their home and community with regards to the WHQS Upgrade works. The majority of tenants asked for their Internal Upgrade works to be completed first, followed by External works and then finally the Environmental Works to tackle the community wide issues such as Car Parking. The Capital Works Team then organised Member Consultation Workshops for all Councillors to attend, so that they could be part of the decision making process.</p> |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 4.00 | RISK MANAGEMENT |
| 4.01 | <p>Risk Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) is only guaranteed year on year so the risk is that MRA funding ceases.</p> <p>Mitigation Ensure delivery of the WHQS programme of work. Complete MRA returns to Welsh Government. Lobby Welsh Government on the need for MRA to continue so as to invest in the Housing stock. Continue to monitor at HRA Programme Board.</p> <p>Risk WHQS not delivered by 2020.</p> <p>Mitigation Effective contractor management, appoint sufficient resources within the delivery team, appoint tenant liaison officers, and post inspection of completed work, Stock Condition Survey in place monitor and review.</p> |
| 5.00 | APPENDICES |
| 5.01 | <p>Appendix A – WHQS geographical areas Appendix B – Environmental Work Decision Matrix Appendix C – Environmental Work Programme</p> |
| 6.00 | LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS |
| 6.01 | <p>Welsh Housing Quality Standard, July 2008.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Neal Cockerton, Chief Officer, Housing and Assets Telephone: 01352 - 703169 E-mail: neal.cockerton@flintshire.gov.uk</p> |
| 7.00 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS |
| 7.01 | <p>Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) – A capital grant which must be used to meet the WHQS by December 2020 and maintain it thereafter.</p> <p>Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) – Is a standard Welsh Government expects all Social housing to meet. It addresses the physical conditions of the property and also integrates social, environmental and economic concerns. The standard ensures that dwellings are of a good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents.</p> |