

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 18 December, 2017

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Achievement of Welsh Housing Quality Standards to Council Stock within the Vale of Glamorgan

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval of a revised date for the Vale of Glamorgan Council's housing stock to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS).

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approves a revised date of 31 March 2018 for achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS) for the Council's Housing stock.
2. That Cabinet note the contents of the letter issued to Welsh Government seeking formal approval to extend the achievement date.
3. That Cabinet approve the revised WHQS compliance policy.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To enable full compliance with the Welsh Housing Quality Standards.
2. To advise cabinet of the formal request to Welsh Government to extend the deadline.
3. To ensure the WHQS compliance policy remains valid and relevant to the Council's continued achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

Background

2. The Council based its initial WHQS Investment Programme on the stock condition survey completed during 2008.
3. Initially, delivery of the WHQS programme was based on the volume of work identified through this stock condition survey. The Asset management team within Housing and Building Services have been able to update the Council's Housing Asset Management database with more detailed information on individual attributes for each house and this has enabled improved monitoring of the Council's achievement of WHQS.

4. In June 2017 an exercise was undertaken to scrutinise the progress towards full achievement of the WHQS and it was found that for approximately 600 homes insufficient data was available to establish WHQS compliance. Subsequently, these 600 properties were surveyed with 500 properties identified for some form of additional work.

Relevant Issues and Options

5. It is now clear the Council will be unable to achieve full compliance with WHQS by the end of the calendar year. This is largely due to the additional work identified at the 500 properties notwithstanding the fact that the main body of work identified at the start of the WHQS investment programme will be completed before the end of this calendar year.
6. The additional work has been identified following detailed analysis of the stock condition data held within the Council's Asset Management Database (Keystone), which now holds comprehensive data on the major components of the Council's entire housing stock. This exercise was conducted to robustly demonstrate the Council's progress towards achieving WHQS compliance at the end of the investment programme.
7. The identified additional work has been discussed with the remaining framework contractors to establish a practical timescale for delivery and it was established that much of this work could be delivered within the contractor's current resource levels, although approximately 200 units could not be achieved before Christmas. It is therefore necessary to extend the WHQS compliance date to 31st March 2018.
8. The additional work has been costed and can be delivered within the existing budget structure available for WHQS delivery. Welsh Government has been verbally advised of the extended WHQS delivery date in October 2017 and no significant issues were raised.
9. During this meeting with Welsh Government officials responsible for monitoring WHQS delivery across Wales, the Council was however asked to formally request an extension the Vale of Glamorgan's delivery date in line with the monitoring submissions. This formal requirement is attached at [Appendix 1](#)
10. The delivery of the WHQS investment programme has suffered a number of setbacks in recent years including, the quality of workmanship, material supply problems, delays resulting from ecology surveys and access issues in some instances. These issues are set out in greater detail in the letter to Welsh Government as provided at Appendix 1 of this report.
11. As part of the Welsh Government's monitoring arrangements, all social landlords are required to produce and publish a document setting out the organisations interpretation and application of the WHQS guidance. As a consequence of the above, the 'Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing - Application of the WHQS' was adopted by Cabinet in April 2016. As the major delivery programme now reaches conclusion, this document has been reviewed to ensure it remains relevant for the maintenance phase of WHQS. A copy of the revised document (version 2) is attached at [appendix 2](#) of this report and sets out the Council's forward vision on interpretation of the WHQS standards.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

12. Contractors have confirmed they have sufficient labour resource to deliver the additional workload within the given timeframe.
13. The existing financial resources available are sufficient to finance the identified work associated with the additional properties.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

14. The provision of high quality homes has a major bearing on many social factors and whilst this report details a slight delay in the full delivery programme for WHQS, the fact that the Council's housing stock will be compliant with WHQS standards by 31st March 2018 still represents an extremely positive position in terms of this Council's housing provision.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

15. The existing framework contract is to be extended until March 2018 to enable all the work to be delivered.

Crime and Disorder Implications

16. No implications.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

17. Access to good quality housing is a major driver in achieving WHQS.

Corporate/Service Objectives

18. Wellbeing outcome 1: An inclusive and Safe Vale
Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities
Action: Increase the number of sustainable, affordable homes. (2019/20)

Policy Framework and Budget

19. This report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

20. The revision of the WHQS completion date and the Application of the WHQS v2.0 policy applies throughout the Vale of Glamorgan; therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

21. Homes and Safety Communities

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

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Officers Consulted

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Responsible Officer:

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