

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 25 April, 2016**

### **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Building Maintenance and Community Safety**

### **Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing - Policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider a policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standards, as required by Welsh Government.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the draft; 'Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing – Policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard', attached at [Appendix 1](#).
2. That the report be referred to Scrutiny Committee (Housing and Public Protection) for consideration and comment.
3. That the matter be referred back to Cabinet for approval on completion of recommendation 2 above.

#### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

1. To review the draft 'Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing – Policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard' as required by the Welsh Government, to enable the matter to be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.
2. To permit the matter to be considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.
3. To allow Cabinet to agree the policy with the benefit of all relevant Scrutiny Committee comments.

#### **Background**

2. The 'Welsh Housing Quality Standards' (WHQS), were produced by Welsh Government in 2002 with a requirement for all Welsh Authorities to reach the prescribed standard by 2012. Further guidance relating to the application of the standards was issued in 2008.
3. The revised guidance produced in 2008 has seen social landlords interpret the guidance in different ways. As a consequence of these different interpretations,

Welsh Government has asked all landlords to provide a policy on the application and interpretation of the standards as applied by each organisation.

4. The Vale of Glamorgan recognises the WHQS, as a strategic document produced by Welsh Government aimed at improving the standards of social housing across Wales. To ensure the needs of this Council's tenants were taken into account; tenants were consulted and engaged through a focus group, with the feedback from this group informing interpretation of the standards.

### **Relevant Issues and Options**

5. As a housing landlord the Council has a statutory duty to meet WHQS and has set a target to achieve the standard in 2017. To achieve this standard, the Council is following the guidance set out in comprehensive documents produced by the Welsh Government.
6. There is potential within the guidance for a difference of interpretation by social landlords in meeting the requirements of WHQS. The Welsh Government has requested each social landlord to provide a policy on its application of the standard. This policy must be agreed by Cabinet.
7. A consultation event has been held with tenants to obtain feedback on how tenants would wish the guidance to be interpreted. This feedback has been used to develop the policy attached to this report.
8. The policy provides the Council's application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard as it will be applied to all its own housing stock and this should be read in conjunction with the guidance provided by Welsh Government on application of the standard. A copy of the standard is provided at [Appendix'2'](#).
9. Within the policy is a 'Certificate of Compliance' which must be provided to each tenant when they commence a new tenancy. This certificate provides confirmation the property meets WHQS and where this is not possible, the certificate provides details of all 'acceptable fails' recorded at the property.

### **Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)**

10. The financial resources for the delivery of WHQS have been set out annually in the Council's HRA Business Plan. This policy does not change the levels of investment required but provides a degree of clarification on the standards the Council will achieve through WHQS.
11. The potential to extend the life of certain attributes through this policy for example, kitchens and bathrooms, could assist the Housing Investment Programme by smoothing out expenditure over a number of years and avoiding significant peaks in investment.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

12. Certain aspects of the WHQS and the associated attached policy seek to ensure fuel efficient heating systems, combined with a good standard of thermal efficiency to the building structure. Adoption of the policy will not improve the sustainability, or fuel efficiency of the Council's housing stock above that currently required by the WHQS.

### **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

13. The achievement of WHQS assists the Council in managing its duties under the Housing Act 1985 and subsequent amendments.

14. Achievement of WHQS also addresses category 1 HHSRS (Home Health and Safety Rating System) issues.
15. The WHQS provides for appropriate adaptations to be made to each property to meet the specific needs of individual tenants.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

16. As a result of the application of these standards, crime and disorder issues will be considered and addressed by individual schemes through consultation with local residents. A specific section of the WHQS is associated with the safety and security of the home.

### **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

17. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to consider any equality issues that arise from the policies.

### **Corporate/Service Objectives**

18. This report is consistent with Well Being Outcome 1: 'An inclusive and Safe Vale' and Objective 2; 'Providing decent homes and safe communities. Specifically this report relates to the following Corporate Plan action:

Complete the delivery of the Council House Improvement Programme by 2017.

### **Policy Framework and Budget**

19. This is a matter for Executive decision.

### **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

20. The draft 'Vale of Glamorgan Council Housing – Policy on Application of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard' is applicable to all Council owned housing throughout the Vale of Glamorgan; therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.

### **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

21. Housing and Public Protection.

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Contact Officer**

Andrew Treweek - Operational Manager - Housing Services

### **Officers Consulted**

Accountant - Housing  
Head of Housing and Building Services  
Legal Services - Committee Reports

**Responsible Officer:**

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services.