

Document Pack



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TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2018

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE **COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** WHICH WILL BE HELD IN THE **CHAMBER, 3 SPILMAN STREET, CARMARTHEN AT 10.00 AM ON TUESDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 2018** FOR THE TRANSACTION OF THE BUSINESS OUTLINED ON THE ATTACHED AGENDA.

Mark James CBE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE



PLEASE RECYCLE

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Ref:	AD016-001

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MEMBERS

PLAID CYMRU GROUP – 6 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Ann Davies |
| 2. | Councillor | Handel Davies |
| 3. | Councillor | Ken Howell (Vice Chair) |
| 4. | Councillor | Betsan Jones |
| 5. | Councillor | Gareth Thomas |
| 6 | Councillor | Aled Vaughan Owen |

LABOUR GROUP – 4 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Deryk Cundy |
| 2. | Councillor | Sharen Davies (Chair) |
| 3. | Councillor | Shirley Matthews |
| 4. | Councillor | Louvain Roberts |

INDEPENDENT GROUP – 3 MEMBERS

- | | | |
|----|------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Councillor | Anthony Davies |
| 2. | Councillor | Irfon Jones |
| 3. | Councillor | Hugh Shepardson |

AGENDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS
3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS
4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)
5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET AND HOUSING RENT SETTING FOR 2018/19 5 - 22
6. THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+) BUSINESS PLAN 2018-21 23 - 66
7. WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2017 67 - 76
8. STAFF SICKNESS LEVELS 77 - 82
9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS 83 - 84
10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT 85 - 86
11. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:
 - 11 .1 24TH NOVEMBER, 2017 87 - 98
 - 11 .2 14TH DECEMBER, 2017 99 - 108

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COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30TH JANUARY 2018

Housing Revenue Account Budget and Housing Rent Setting for 2018/19

To consider and comment on the following issues:

- That as part of the Budget Consultation process, the Scrutiny Committee considers the revenue and capital budgets of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and rent setting proposals for 2018/19. This will be considered by Executive Board 05/02/18 and subsequently County Council on 21/02/2018

REASONS:

- To enable the Authority to set its Housing Revenue Account Budget and the Housing Rent levels for 2018/19.
- To formulate views for submission to the Executive Board / Council for consideration.

To be referred to the Executive Board for decision: YES

Executive Board – 5th February 2018

Full Council – 21st February 2018

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:- Cllr David Jenkins

<p>Directorate: Corporate Services Name of Director: Chris Moore</p>	<p>Designations: Director of Corporate Services</p>	<p>Tel No's / E Mail Addresses: 01267 224160 CMoore@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author: Andrea Thomas</p>	<p>Group Accountant</p>	<p>01267 228742 AndThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30TH JANUARY 2018

**Housing Revenue Account Budget and Housing Rent
Setting for 2018/19**

This report has been prepared in conjunction with officers from the Communities Department and brings together the latest proposals for the Revenue and Capital Budgets for the Housing Revenue Account 2018/2021, which will be presented to the Executive Board on 5th February 2018.

The report is presented to the Community Scrutiny Committee as part of the budget consultation process and the Executive Board will consider any views expressed by this Committee when setting the Budget and Housing Rents for 2018/19.

The report has been prepared reflecting the latest proposals contained in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, which is the primary financial planning tool for delivering the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *Plus* (CHS+) for the future. The proposed investment within the current business plan delivered the CHS by 2015 (to those homes where tenants agreed to have work undertaken), provides investment to maintain CHS+ and continues investment for our Affordable Housing Commitment.

The report also details how rents will increase for 2018/19:

- Appendix A provides the proposed Capital Programme for 2018/21.
- Appendix B of this report provides the proposed Revenue Account Budget for 2018/21.

The HRA budget for 2018/19 is being set to reflect:

- Social Housing Rent Policy (set by WG)
- Proposals contained in the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *Plus* (CHS+)
- Affordable Homes Delivery Plan

The Social Housing Rents Policy aims to harmonise the rents within the social housing sector, every year the Welsh Government (WG) notifies LAs of the targeted rent increase. The increase in target rent for 2018/19 has been notified as CPI (3%) plus 1.5% totalling 4.5%, and for those properties below the target rent a maximum of £2 per week increase until the target rent is reached. **This equated to an average increase of 5.49% for our tenants.**

WG took the unusual step of informing Local Authorities that they may wish to consider lower increases than would normally result from full implementation of the Social Housing Rents Policy which was introduced by the WG for 2015/16. The flexibility outlined by WG has been utilised to ensure that increases are minimised to tenants during this current climate of rising inflation. Therefore rents are proposed to increase by 3.5% for all tenants with a reduced maximum progression of £1.62 giving an average increase of 4.34% or £3.55.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Chris Moore

Director of Corporate Services

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	YES	NONE	NONE	NONE	YES

FINANCE

The report details the HRA proposals to be considered by Executive Board. If the proposals are agreed the budget for the HRA will be set for 2018/19 with an expenditure level of £48M. The average rent will increase from £81.72 to £85.27 (4.34% or £3.55).

The proposed Capital Programme will be £19.7M for 2018/19, £18.6M for 2019/20 and £18.1M for 2020/21.

Physical Assets

The capital programme continues the works to maintain the Carmarthenshire Home Standard *Plus* and deliver the Affordable Homes programme as per the 30 year business plan.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Chris Moore

Director of Corporate Services

1. Local Member(s) - Not applicable

2. Community / Town Council – Not applicable

3. Relevant Partners - Not applicable

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – Not applicable

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Social Housing Rents Policy		Financial Services, County Hall, Carmarthen
30 year Housing Business Plan		Financial Services , County Hall, Carmarthen

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30th JANUARY 2018

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT AND HOUSING RENT SETTING 2018/19

- REVENUE AND CAPITAL

DIRECTOR & DESIGNATION.	DIRECTORATE	TELEPHONE NO.
C Moore Director of Corporate Services	Corporate Services	01267 224120
AUTHOR & DESIGNATION	DIRECTORATE	TELEPHONE NO
A Thomas Group Accountant	Corporate Services	01267 228742

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report explains the proposed 2018/19 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for both revenue and capital. It has been prepared in conjunction with officers from the Communities Department. This report is presented to this Community Scrutiny committee as part of the budget consultation process. The views expressed by this Committee will be fed back to Executive Board for their consideration when they set the 2018/19 HRA budget and Housing Rents.

1.2. The HRA budget for 2018/19 is being set to reflect:

- Social Housing Rent Policy (set by WG)
- Proposals contained in the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *Plus* (CHS+)
- Affordable Homes Delivery Plan

1.3. The HRA budget is prepared to maintain the CHS(+) Business Plan, deliver our affordable homes aspirations and manage and maintain our homes on a daily basis. As a ring fenced account this expenditure is

balanced by income primarily generated through rents charged to tenants. Supporting the CHS(+) Business Plan is a 30 years financial model which is submitted to and scrutinised/approved by WG (as part of the Major Repairs Allowance application).

Carmarthenshire County Council along with the other 10 local authorities (LAs) in Wales who retained their Housing Stock, exited the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy (HRAS) system on 1/4/15.

Part of the agreement to exit included LAs with retained stock were required to adopt the new Social Housing Rents Policy set by the Welsh Government (WG). It aimed to develop a coherent and consistent rent policy framework that would apply to all social landlords, reflect local variations in affordability and housing market values, providing for a more equitable distribution of rents for social sector tenants across Wales, while at the same time ensuring the viability of individual social landlords. County Council approved the implementation of the policy on 24/02/15.

1.4 Capital investment

A capital investment of £231m has been undertaken to deliver the CHS+ by 2015. This includes £117million of unsupported borrowing. This investment is being funded by Major Repairs Allowance received from the WG, capital receipts from the sales of land and dwellings, HRA revenue funding, external grants and borrowing. This ensured the delivery of work programmes to all our tenants homes (with the exception of where the work was declined by tenants). Since achieving the CHS, a further £21M will have been spent on maintaining the standard and £13M on providing additional affordable homes in the HRA by the end of 2017/18.

The (CHS+) Business Plan 2018-21 highlights the approach that will be taken over the next three years and will be presented by the Head of Homes and Safer Communities in this meeting. It includes further investment over the next 3 years of £30million to maintain the CHS+ and £26million for our affordable homes programme. This is supported by an on-going cost certainty exercise to ensure our investment is targeted to maintain the CHS+ and deliver our Affordable Homes targets.

The timing and method of sale of HRA land is being kept under review to ensure that receipts are maximised to support the Business Plan. It is recognised that CHS+ supports the building of new council homes and utilising existing Council land for future housing opportunities.

The profile of capital expenditure required to maintain the CHS+ and invest in affordable homes is detailed in appendix A. The plan is extremely sensitive to change and is currently being fully reviewed every 6 months, with ongoing monthly monitoring to identify any potential issues.

2. BUSINESS PLAN ASSUMPTIONS

2.1. There are many assumptions within the Business Plan, including future rental levels, interest rates, inflation etc. Business Plan guidance from the WG (received 21/12/17 for 2018/19) requires submission of a viable plan by 30/03/2018.

Underpinning the CHS(+) Business Plan is the 30 year financial model which has many assumptions including:

- **Rents** The WG Social Housing rents policy aims to harmonise the rents within the social housing sector and therefore every year the WG notifies LAs of the targeted rent increase. The increase in target rent for 2018/19 has been notified as CPI (3%) plus 1.5% totalling 4.5%, and for those properties below the target rent a maximum of £2 per week increase until the target rent is reached (this was the policy agreed by County Council for 2015/16). They will also review the locational indices which can vary the weighting between authorities in relation to the average increase of CPI plus 1.5%. **This equated to an average increase of 5.49% for our tenants.** However on 11/12/17 WG took the unusual step of informing Local Authorities that they may wish to consider lower increases than would normally result from full implementation of the Social Housing Rents Policy which was introduced by the Welsh Government (WG) for 2015/16.
- **Major Repairs Allowance (MRA)** is a grant from WG which is provided to support our works in maintaining the standard and is audited annually. This has not been increased for future years, but has been varied for changing stock numbers. Our MRA is estimated to be £6million for 2018/19.
- **Capital Receipts** We have suspended our Right to Buy for tenants so there are no planned receipts from sales of houses. We expect receipts from the sale of land in the current year to be £620k, which can be used to fund capital expenditure. The programme of land sales was re-profiled in 2016 with fewer sales planned and none from 2018/19 to 2020/21. This strategy allows us to consider what is required for our Affordable Homes ambitions.
- **Void Loss** incurred on dwellings currently set at 2.1% in line with current performance and is unchanged from 2017/18. In 2012/13 it was 3% but has been reducing over several years as a result of our investment in dealing with empty properties
- **Central Support Costs** are based on services received by departments, these have been validated accordingly.
- **Stock Numbers** have been updated based on affordable homes delivery plan.
- **Interest on Balances** is estimated to be £66k based on an interest rate of 0.6% (average interest earned).

2.2. Members will be aware that exiting the HRAS produced a borrowing cap for each LA. This was set at £228M for us and has not increased since its introduction. This is being managed within the financial model. Details of our proximity to the borrowing cap are detailed below:-

Year as at 31/3	Borrowing cap £'M	Capital Financing Requirement £'M
2018/19	228.3	217.3
2019/20	228.3	216.4
2020/21	228.3	218.9

Table 1: Proximity to Borrowing Cap

As most of the schemes delivering Housing projects have a significant lead in time, there will be an ongoing review of what is needed to maintain CHS+ and deliver our Affordable Housing ambitions, which will utilise the borrowing available as we develop our plans.

3. EXPENDITURE

The expenditure levels in the Business Plan have been set in anticipation of the Business Planning guidance

Maintenance and Stock Improvement

Revenue repairs and maintenance expenditure is forecast to be £9.5million in 2017/18. This is an increase on the 2017/18 budget (£9.28million) which reflects local building costs, forecast outturn for 2017/18 and changes in stock numbers.

The capital programme provides resources to:-

- maintain our stock to the CHS+ (including carrying out improvements to previously declined properties)
- deliver our Affordable Homes commitment

Maintain our Stock

For 2018/19 the capital programme to maintain the CHS(+) is £10.5million. This gives an overall spend of £20million on stock improvement and maintenance (the total for 2017/18 was £18.64million)

Affordable Housing Commitment

WG have indicated the availability of Housing Finance Grant (HFG2) funding for new affordable housing. This will provide £6.9million extra funding in the capital programme which is 58% funded by WG and 42% funded by the HRA, which is planned as part of the 5 year programme. The anticipated funding will be provided as a revenue source, requiring the authority to borrow the money and WG repaying the capital charges. Further clarification on how the resources will be given to LA's is outstanding from WG. We have set aside £26million over the next three years as part of the capital programme to increase the supply of affordable homes. Within 2018/19 £9.2million has been identified for the Delivery Plan (including development costs).

The capital programme and funding sources for this programme up to 2020/21 are detailed in Appendix A.

Validation

The proposed Business Plan includes the following validations for 2018/19, which is in line with the proposed budget strategy:

- general payroll costs are +2% with a greater up lift on the lower pay bands (as per the current national employers pay offer).
- general inflation has been accommodated at +2.3%
- Electricity, gas & oil at +5%
- Increased pension costs from 17.7% to 17.8%

Capital Financing and Subsidy

The capital financing costs reflect the borrowing requirement inclusive of the exit from HRAS.

Details of the budget for Housing Revenue Account for the period up to 2020/21 is shown in Appendix B

4. INCOME

4.1. Previously we have applied the WG Social Housing Rent Policy to progress to the mid-point target rent (County Council approved on 24/02/15). Rent policy has not changed but WG have indicated that LA's may wish to consider using a lower option.

Applying the policy as in previous years for 2018/19 at 4.5% rent increase plus £2 progression would produce an average rent of £86.21 (increase of 5.49% or £4.49).

- Carmarthenshire's current average rent is £81.72 per week, which leaves us between the low-end WG target rent level of £80.44 and the mid-point target £84.67. Housing Association rents in Carmarthenshire average £85.96 for 2017/18. In the private sector median rents for 2 bedrooms are £107 and 3 bedrooms are £118 as

at December 2017. At the present time there are about 248 homes above target rent, 3,760 homes below this level with the remainder at target rent. All these properties were required to progress towards the target rent set by WG. Notification of rent increases for 2018/19 was received on 11/12/17. WG took the unusual step of informing Local Authorities that they may wish to consider lower increases than would normally result from full implementation. This letter emphasised:

- Reduced rents of 1% for England and that CPI is currently high
- LA's need to consider affordability for all tenants.
- flexibility and freedom within the policy to implement an increase lower than maximum rent increase without penalty or criticism
- Freedom is constrained by policy requirement to set rents within the target rent band, however exceptional circumstances would be looked at on a case by case basis.

The proposed rent increases within the HRA budget for 2018/19 seeks to recognise the squeeze on household budgets as wage increases have not kept pace with rising price inflation. Rent increases are therefore minimised as far as possible, utilising the flexibility outlined by WG whilst still complying with WG policy target rent band.

For those properties at target rent the increase will be:-

Consumer Price Index (CPI for September 2017 @ +3%) + 0.5% = 3.5%.

For those properties where rent is below target the increase can be:

Consumer Price Index (CPI for September 2017 @ +3%) + 0.5% = 3.5%

plus a maximum of £1.62 progression in order to achieve an average rent at the low-end target set by WG of £85.27.

Those rents above target are **frozen** until such time that they meet the target. When a property becomes empty it is placed in the target rent band.

The above principles reduce the burden on all tenants from 4.5% to 3.5% average increase and limit the progression towards target to £1.62 compared with the maximum permissible of £2. **This is the lowest permissible average increase compliant with the current WG policy.**

Based on applying the above for 2018/19 at 3.5% rent increase plus £1.62 progression this would produce an average rent of £85.27 (increase of 4.34% or £3.55).

The target rents provided by WG, due to changes in the locational indices, allowed for Carmarthenshire's rents to increase by an average of 6%.

Details of the rent increases on individual households are:-

Receive an increase of :-	4.34% increase
No increase	248
up to £2.00	101
£2.00 to £2.99	1,785
£3.00 to £3.99	3,207
£4.00 to £4.99	2,786
£5+	931
	9,058

Table 2 : No .of Householders affected by average increases.

Currently 34% of tenants are on full Housing Benefit (HB), 31% are on partial HB and 35% in receipt of no HB.

The formula used for future annual rent increases has been set by the WG in the Social Housing Rents Policy which commenced in 2015/16 and is fixed for a 5 year period. However, WG have brought forward the review of this policy to late 2017 but no clarity has been received on when the review will be complete. From December 2017 most tenants under 21 years of age who are new Universal Credit claimants, they will not be eligible for housing costs to cover their rent. Further details of the impact on Carmarthenshire tenants will be brought to members as the situation is clarified.

4.2. Transitional Protection (as per WG policy)

The additional £1.62 maximum progression increase gives protection to tenants particularly if they are not in receipt of Housing Benefits. The maximum £1.62 per week has been included to restrict rent increases should some homes be significantly below target rent at the present time. If we need to increase average weekly rent so that it falls within the target rent band, transitional protection for tenants will apply. Legally, the rent for an individual tenant cannot be increased by more than £2 per week, in addition to the agreed annual rate of rent increases.

4.3. Target Rents for Carmarthenshire

Current targets and those for 2018/19 are set out overleaf:-

	Houses and Bungalows (£)					Flats (£)				Bedsits (£)
	1Bed	2Bed	3Bed	4Bed	5+Bed	1Bed	2Bed	3Bed	4+Bed	

Target Rent 2017/18	75.67	84.08	92.49	100.90	109.31	68.47	76.07	83.68	91.29	60.86
Target Rent 2018/19 as notified by WG	80.22	89.13	98.04	106.95	115.87	72.58	80.64	88.70	96.77	64.51

WG policy rent band, 2018-19		
Low end	Mid point	High end
(£ per week)	(£ per week)	(£ per week)
85.27	89.76	94.25

Table 3 : Comparison of Current Average Weekly Rents to Target Rents over 52 weeks and Rent Bands

For Carmarthenshire our average target rent for 2018/19 is £89.76 (mid point) with the all Wales average being £93.61 .Carmarthenshire's 2017/18 actual rent is the 3rd lowest of eleven stock retaining authorities.

The policy does give scope to amend rents in areas of high and low demand while remaining within the rent envelope.

The second part of the policy requires us to harmonise our rents. Though we will achieve target rent we still have a number of properties that do not fall within the rent harmonisation banding on property type. The proportion of dwellings below target rents is 41% as a result of the £2 progression implemented last year and the target rent being charged as a result of properties becoming vacant. This was over 85% when we began the harmonisation process.

4.5. Garage Rental Income

The HRA currently receives a net rental income of £125k per annum. This equates to a weekly charge of £9.00 per week. The average rental for garages in the private sector is about £8 per week, dependant on location. It is proposed that garage rents are unchanged for 2018/19. Garage bases will be also unchanged at £2.25 per week.

4.6. Service and Heating charges

Service charges are calculated in line with the policy adopted in 2011. These charges are made to cover the additional services we provide as a

landlord that are not covered within the rent and to ensure that all communal areas are kept in a good condition.

These charges will vary annually as they are based on actual expenditure from the previous financial year. By implementing the Service Charge Policy we are ensuring that tenants who receive additional services pay for them in a fair and transparent way.

As part of the calculations for 2018/19 over half our tenants (58%), who pay a service charge, will see an overall reduction in their service charges. This compares with around 46% last year.

The impact on tenants is outlined in the table below :-

Service Charge Weekly Increase	Number of Householders Affected	
	2017/18	2018/19
Capped at £3.30	68	5
Rise of between £2 and £3.30	92	98
Rise of between £1 and £2	93	73
Rise of less than £1	289	377
Properties added in year	13	5
No Change	157	5
Reduced by less than £1	401	306
Reduced by between £1 and £2	76	119
Reduced by greater than £2	130	336
Total	1,319	1,324

Table 4 : No .of Householders affected by service charge changes.

4.7 Sewerage Treatment Works

We have 15 pumping stations serving approx. 154 properties, the cost of running and maintaining the stations falls on the HRA. We also have 8 cesspits. It is proposed for 2018/19 that current charges are increased as per our rent increase. In the meantime Officers are reviewing the future use and running of the Works as part of the Asset Management Plan.

4.8 Commission on Collection of Water Rates

In addition to the rent collection process we act as an agent on behalf of Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water, which generates an income of £583k in the form of commission.

4.9 Universal Credit

The roll out of universal credit will impact on tenants and residents of Carmarthenshire. From a business plan point of view, evidence from the pilots has shown that rent arrears will increase in the short to medium term and we have allowed for this within this plan in terms of our bad debt provision. Currently there is a working group of officers from communities department, corporate resources as well as department of works & pensions and job centre plus mapping the potential impact and how to best support our tenants. Also officers are investigating the information technology solutions on the market to aid welfare reform impact analysis, poverty tracking and aiding front line staff to give best advice.

The CHS+ Business Plan presents more detail on this, including the actions that are being undertaken to mitigate the impact for Council tenants.

5. BALANCES

5.1. Based on an overall rental increase of 4.34%, the overall proposed budget will result in a deficit on the Housing Revenue Account of £5.8million for the year, in line with the 30 year HRA business plan. It should also be noted in Appendix B that balances are required to support the current strategy of funding our capital expenditure and continue to make our business plan affordable over a 30 year period.

6. PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE BOARD

- **To increase average housing rent as per WG Social Housing Rents Policy (low end target).**
 - Properties at target rents will increase by 3.5% (CPI + 0.5%) and
 - Properties where rent is below target rent, rent will increase by 3.5% (CPI + 0.5%) plus a maximum progression of £1.62
 - Those rents above target are frozen until such time that they meet the target.

This will produce an increase on the average housing rent of 4.34% or £3.55

- **This will produce a sustainable Business Plan, maintain CHS+, resource our Affordable Homes programme and is supported by DCHS Steering Group.**
- **To implement maximum progression of £1.62, for rents below target, until target rents are achieved.**
- **To apply the service charge policy to ensure tenants who receive the benefit from specific services pay for those services**
- **To increase charges for using our sewerage treatment works in line with rent increase.**

7. RECOMMENDATION

That as part of the budget consultation process, Community Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the Revenue and Capital Budget of the Housing Revenue Account and rent setting proposals 2018/19. This will be considered by Executive Board on 5th February 2018 and subsequently County Council on 21st February 2018.

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Department for Communities
 Homes and Safer Communities
 Housing Revenue Account 2018/19 - 2020/21
 Appendix B

REVENUE SPENDING TO:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Repair and maintain homes	9,495	9,842	10,223
Supervision and management	8,355	8,519	8,686
Support services e.g. legal and finance	1,560	1,560	1,560
Direct Revenue Financing - Capital projects	13,475	8,956	8,443
Provision for Bad debts	494	591	784
Capital charges	14,205	14,309	13,936
TOTAL	47,584	43,777	43,632
REVENUE FUNDING FROM:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Tenant rents	39,729	41,463	43,959
Service charges	750	774	798
Interest received	68	61	69
Income from other departments	340	347	354
Housing Finance Grant 2	0	246	246
Water rates commission	498	508	518
Grants / Other	356	356	357
TOTAL	41,741	43,755	46,301
HRA END OF YEAR POSITION:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Balance brought forward from last year	-16,299	-10,456	-10,434
HRA budgeted surplus (-)/ deficit (+)	5,843	22	-2,669
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD	-10,456	-10,434	-13,103

Department for Communities
 Homes and Safer Communities
 HRA Capital Programme Budget 2018/19 - 2020/21
 Appendix A

CAPITAL SPENDING TO:-	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Maintain the standard:			
Internal works - kitchens, bathrooms, electrics, heating etc.	1,030	1,183	1,000
EWI, Render and Fascia (inc. gardens)	2,096	1,775	2,739
Roofing	924	1,052	1,086
Boiler replacements	90	87	88
Declined Co & smoke detectors	600	0	0
Structural works - Estates and boundary walls (inc. identified structural works)	1,084	315	260
Voids and Major Works to homes	2,118	2,155	2,200
Support Tenant and Residents:			
Sheltered Scheme Investment(inc. boilers)	518	1,025	500
Adaptations	1,400	1,500	1,500
Environmental works	298	303	309
Provide more affordable homes:			
Housing Development Programme	9,162	8,905	8,104
Support the delivery of CHS+:			
Programme management	195	198	200
Stock condition information	150	100	100
TOTAL	19,665	18,598	18,086

CAPITAL FUNDING FROM:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Welsh Government Grant-MRA	6,190	6,190	6,190
Receipts which we can use from sales	0	0	0
Direct Revenue Financing	13,475	8,956	8,443
External Borrowing	0	3,452	3,453
TOTAL	19,665	18,598	18,086

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 30TH JANUARY, 2018

SUBJECT:

THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+) BUSINESS PLAN 2018-21

Purpose:

- To explain the vision and detail of the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus over the next three years, and what it means for tenants.
- To confirm the financial profile, based on current assumptions, for the delivery of the CHS+ over the next three years.
- To produce a business plan for the annual application to Welsh Government for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2018/19, equating to £6.1m

To consider and comment on the following issues:

- To confirm the vision of the CHS+ and the financial and delivery programme over the next three years.
- To confirm the submission of the plan to Welsh Government.

Reasons:

- To continue our CHS+ vision to deliver what really matters to tenants.
- To continue to support tenants by maintaining and further improving the CHS+, with an overall investment of £29m over the next three years.
- To continue to deliver our Affordable Homes Plan with a range of solutions, including council new build, with a further £26m investment over next three years.
- To make members' aware that the delivery of the Plan is dependent on an average rent increase of 4.34% for 2018/19.
- To enable submission to the WG to access £6.1m of MRA for 2018/19
- To formulate views for submission to the Executive Board/Council for consideration.

To be referred to the Executive Board/Council for decision:

Executive Board Decision Required: Yes- 5th February, 2018

Council Decision Required: Yes- 21st February, 2018

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. Linda Evans (Housing Portfolio Holder)

Cllr Hazel Evans (Environment Portfolio Holder)

Cllr David Jenkins (Resources Portfolio Holder)

Directorate: Communities	Designations:	Tel Nos./ E Mail Addresses:
Name of Head of Service: Robin Staines	Head of Homes and Safer Communities	RStaines@carmarthenshire.gov.uk (01267) 228960
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE: 30TH JANUARY, 2018

SUBJECT:
THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD *PLUS* (CHS+)
BUSINESS PLAN 2018-21

What is the purpose of the plan?

- To explain the vision and detail of the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus over the next three years, and what it means for tenants.
- To confirm the financial profile, based on current assumptions, for the delivery of the CHS+ over the next three years.
- To produce a business plan for the annual application to Welsh Government for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2018/19, equating to £6.1m.

What is the context?

Since 2006, we have been working to deliver the published work programmes to our tenants' homes. We called this the CHS+ and achieved this to homes where tenants agreed to have the work done during 2015. We fully acknowledge, however, that this is not the end of the journey and want to do more. This plan sets out how we will do this, confirming the financial and delivery programme over the next three years.

Our commitment to CHS+ remains firmly on track, building on what has already been achieved and trying to be as ambitious as we can.

We continue to challenge and review the stock information we hold and how it is collated. The importance we place on our strategic asset management arrangements enables us to provide the foundation for our investment plans. It also confirms the future expenditure needed to maintain the standard, and what money will be available for our affordable homes delivery programme. Through careful programme management we are able to spend in excess of £55m over the next three years on these projects.

This year, we are also proposing that we keep the rent increase for 2018/19 to the minimum allowed under the current Welsh Government's social housing rents policy i.e. 4.34%

Supporting Tenants and Residents

As part of the CHS+, we continue to support tenants and residents in everything we do. As a result we will:

- Develop our vision on Tenant Participation with TPAS Cymru. The vision will provide a

structure so that all tenants and residents within our communities have the opportunity to be involved and influence the service they wish to receive;

- Focus on providing more advice and support to tenants in managing their monthly budgets. We will deliver a range of support and services to help tenants cope with the cultural change of Universal Credit, and mitigate the impact as much as we are able.
- Create a pre-tenancy service to provide support and training to applicants and potential new tenants of Carmarthenshire County Council before a tenancy begins. We will focus on pre-tenancy work to minimise rent arrears, maximise income for both us and tenants and improve tenancy sustainability.
- Continue to work with tenants to see what improvements they would like to see to CHS+ in the future.

Two key themes have been identified in terms of future investment. These are:

THEME 1- Investing in our Homes' and the Environment.

This plan confirms work that will be undertaken to maintain the standard and what our key principles are to support our future approach to managing the homes and gardens, land, garage areas and the environment. Over £29m will be invested.

Included in this Plan is how we will:

- Make sure our stock information is as good as it can be, and fill in any existing gaps, in order that we know where we need to maintain and improve the CHS+;
- Make sure we update electrical systems e.g. hard wired smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in homes where tenants have previously refused works;
- Continue to review and update our annual work programmes based on evidence and need, only replacing components nearer to the time of failing and not time;
- Develop a specific investment plan, by working with a range of partners to install solar photo voltaic panels and other low energy home improvements on our housing stock;
- Continue to make void properties available for letting as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available, whilst striving to meet customers' expectations;
- Provide a customer focussed responsive repairs service, which achieves high levels of performance, customer satisfaction and good value for money;
- Continue to provide homes better suited to tenants needs by:
 - investing in adapting homes;
 - understanding the future investment needs for our sheltered housing stock, linking in with our Care Home development programme; and
 - completing options appraisals on sites that may need changing/ converting into homes that can better meet housing need.

THEME 2 - Providing more homes.

This Plan confirms how we plan to further increase the supply of affordable housing, building on what has already been achieved. This plan will deliver over 600 additional affordable homes with over £26m being invested. In addition the establishment of the housing company will deliver a mix of new affordable homes for sale or rent, and will offer families an alternative to social housing. It will also offer opportunities on a much wider scale, in terms of innovation, standards and specifications, geographically and the type of activities where it can bring major benefits.

Included in this Plan is how we will:

- Continue to provide a range of solutions to deliver more affordable homes, including purchasing private sector homes to increase the Council's housing stock in the areas of greatest housing need; and managing private sector homes through the 'Simple Lettings Agency'; and
- Align with the Housing Company in terms of future opportunities around new build homes

The plan also sets out some different approaches and new developments/opportunities. These include:

- Setting out our future approach to supporting prospective tenants;
- Developing a regular planned programme to estates in terms of painting and where lichen growth has become an issue; and
- Firming up our plans in terms of low energy improvements to homes and solar PV that will reduce bills for tenants and make them more energy efficient.

On a wider scale the opportunities that the Swansea Bay City Deal can offer in terms of housing investment and jobs is also highlighted.

Finally we set out what the key assumptions are to make sure the plan remains viable, what we will spend the money on and how it is funded. As part of this we will continue to be pro-active in identifying funding opportunities that further support the delivery of the plan.

To recommend to Executive Board:

1. To confirm the vision of the CHS+ and the financial and delivery programme over the next three years.
2. To confirm the submission of the Plan to Welsh Government for the 2018/19 MRA Application.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES – Carmarthenshire Homes Standard PLUS (CHS+)
Business Plan 2018/2021

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Robin Staines

Head of Homes and Safer Communities

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
YES	YES	YES	NONE	YES	NONE	YES

1. Policy, Crime and Disorder and Equalities

The CHS+ will act as the framework for policy development across housing services delivery and will contribute to wider agendas.

2. Legal

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 sets out our statutory duty to maintain the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (our version is the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard *PLUS*) in our existing stock.

3. Finance

Delivering the CHS+ will continue to present significant financial challenges and risks to the County Council.

We have spent over £230m to achieve the standard, with nearly £120m of this spend has been funded through a prudential borrowing programme.

Through careful management, the financial model remains viable to not only maintain the CHS+, but also deliver more affordable homes. A summary of costs to this over the next three years is included in the Plan.

A general rent increase of 4.34% for 2018/19 is also assumed in the plan.

4. Risk Management

The CHS+ programme is identified as moderate risk in the Council's Risk Management Plan. A risk management plan has been developed to mitigate and review all risks associated with the programme.

Failure to deliver a viable Business Plan to Welsh Government by the end of March 2018 will mean the MRA of £6.1m for 2018/19 being withdrawn.

5. Physical Assets

The CHS+ will involve the management, maintenance and improvement of the Council's housing stock. This will be carried out within the context of our asset management principles which are defined within the plan. Any decision to acquire, convert or dispose of homes, land and/or garage areas will be considered in line with these principles.

This plan will also result in an increase in the Council housing stock through the new build and purchasing homes in the private sector initiatives.

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Robin Staines

Head of Homes and Safer Communities

1. Local Member(s)

n/a

2. Community / Town Council

n/a

3. Relevant Partners

Engagement with stakeholders and partners has taken place in order to develop this Plan, including stakeholder events, 1-2-1 interviews and various meetings.

4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations

Engagement with tenants, has taken place in order to develop this Plan, including stakeholder events, 1-2-1 interviews, visits and events in communities, and various meetings.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of document	File Ref No.	Location that the file is available for public inspection
Carmarthenshire Homes Standard PLUS (CHS+) Business Plan 2018/2021	Housing General Files	Council website- Democratic Services

*Carmarthenshire
Homes Standard
PLUS (CHS+)
Business Plan
2018/2021*

4th January 2018

DRAFT

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Foreword by the Executive Board Members

The Carmarthenshire Homes Standard (CHS+) continues to move forward to deliver services and projects that really matter to our tenants, members and key partners.

We are all aware of our significant, and proud achievement, of delivering the CHS+ during 2015 - an investment of over £200m since 2007. We are sure that this investment has had a really positive impact on our tenants' health and well-being. This will be demonstrated shortly by the publication of our major Health Impact Study, in conjunction with Cardiff and Swansea Universities.

Through careful financial management we continue to make significant investments. During the last 12 months we have spent over £20m in maintaining these improvements as well as ensuring we delivered much needed additional affordable homes.

As everyone will be aware it is still a time of significant challenge. It is also, however, a time of optimism and opportunity, and our plans have been developed to reflect this. Firstly, we have been able to keep the rent increase for 2018/19 to the minimum allowed under the current Welsh Government's social housing rents policy.

We will continue to prioritise maintaining the CHS+ to existing council homes and plan to invest over £29m in the next three years to do this. We recognise, however, that it is not just about the physical improvements themselves, but also making sure the homes are affordable to run and have a positive impact on people's health and well-being.

The imminent introduction of Universal Credit will present a major challenge for us in terms of future income but, more importantly, for tenants across all tenures in managing their money. We will be pro-active in ensuring that we fully support our tenants with these new arrangements, reducing any impact by as much as possible.

Our Affordable Homes Delivery Plan has already delivered over 400 homes during the first two years, making sure we are well on target of achieving 1000 additional homes we promised. We want, however, to do more. The recent establishment of our Housing Company, will not only deliver even more new build homes across the County, but will also enable us to increase the range of housing options available, offering alternatives to social housing. Over £26m has been earmarked to support affordable home delivery in this plan.

We appreciate that our plans are ambitious, but we are very confident that by working together we can deliver these ambitions and continue to make a real difference in our communities.

Linda Davies Evans Executive Board Member for Housing	Cllr Hazel Evans Executive Board Member for Environment	Cllr David Jenkins Executive Board Member for Resources
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Introduction

Introduction

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is the Welsh Government (WG) standard of social housing quality. The WHQS was first introduced in 2002 and aimed to ensure that all homes are of good quality and suitable for the needs of existing and future residents. WG set a target for all social landlords to improve their housing stock to meet the WHQS as soon as possible, but in any event by 2020.

Carmarthenshire's tenants developed their own standard, called the CHS+, and this was successfully delivered in 2015, well in advance of the WG timescales.

Purpose of the CHS+ Plan

The purpose of this Plan is to explain the vision and detail of the CHS+, and what it means for tenants. It also confirms the financial profile, based on current assumptions, for the delivery of the CHS+ over the next three years. The approved Plan enables us to submit our annual application to WG for Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) for 2018/19, which amounts to £6.1m.

Development of the CHS+ Plan

Tenants and stakeholders have been consulted and their views taken into account in preparing this Plan. The Plan is updated annually taking into account these views, the latest stock condition information, updated financial information, WG Guidance and any revised Council policies.

All actions in this Plan will be monitored on a bi-monthly basis by the CHS+ Steering Group. This group provides strategic direction and corporate leadership to ensure appropriate progression on the initiatives included. The CHS+ Steering Group is also responsible for monitoring progress, reviewing and managing the overall 30 year financial plan that supports our planned investment.

How this plan links with our corporate priorities, together with the overall governance structure is set out in Appendix A.

Achievements and Priorities

The previous CHS+ Business Plan 2017-2020 has achieved a number of notable successes over the last 12 months:-

2017/18 main achievements:

- Over £29m spent to maintain the CHS+ in tenants homes;
- Over 200 additional affordable homes delivered during our second year of delivery;
- Over 500 adaptations completed, with over £1m being invested to ensure tenants homes suited to their needs;
- Over £240,000 spent on 37 Environmental Improvement Projects;
- Continuing our time credit initiative with over 50,000 of total volunteer hours being given and covering over 1500 members;
- Restructured our housing service to create a pre-tenancy team to work with tenants to minimise rent arrears, maximise income for both us and tenants and improve tenancy sustainability;
- Delivered a “Rent Matters” campaign that has resulted in a reduction of rent arrears;
- Housed over 70 households who have specific needs through our Accessible Housing Register (AHR);
- Gained support and agreement to introduce a Choice Based Letting approach that will give tenants more choice and make tenancies more sustainable; and
- Attained two national Energy Advice awards helping to promote fuel clubs. The average savings from all 17 fuel clubs amount to £1215 per month.

2018/19 priorities:

During 2017/18 we have continued to engage with tenants and other stakeholders in a number of ways. One of the key questions we asked throughout the year was

“What was important to you in terms of future priorities?”

The top six priorities were:

- Maintaining and improving the current standard;
- Advice with bills and benefits;
- Help and support to maintain a tenancy;
- Providing additional council homes;
- Grounds Maintenance and grass cutting; and
- Increase the energy efficiency of homes that have low energy performance ratings.

In terms of these specific priorities **we will be:**

- Making sure our stock information and analysis, and our approach to asset management, is as good as it can be in order that we know where we need to maintain and improve the CHS+;

- Developing and delivering real actions on the ground to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit;
- Providing more focus on pre-tenancy work through our housing service re-structure;
- Delivering additional affordable homes through a range of solutions, including the recently established Housing Company;
- Reviewing the grounds maintenance and grass cutting contract to ensure it offers better choice and meets tenants expectations; and
- Working with a range of partners to identify opportunities to install solar photo voltaic panels and other low energy home improvements in our housing stock.

During 2018/19 we will also publish the results of our major health impact study (in conjunction with Swansea and Cardiff Universities funded through Public Health Research programme). This study has tracked tenants' health and well-being through the period when we were carrying out the investment programmes to homes.

The following sections will provide the context to, and detail of, what we plan to deliver over the next three years, including how we intend paying for it, the community benefits and verifying what we have done.

The importance of strategic asset management in providing the foundation for our investment plans, as well as the central role of supporting tenants and residents in everything we do, is also highlighted. Leading on from this, we will cover two key themes that have been identified in terms of future investment. These are:

- 1. THEME 1- Investing in our Homes' and the Environment.**
- 2. THEME 2 - Providing more homes.**

Context

The CHS+ Business Plan

This Plan covers all housing services and assets contained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), and sets out the objectives of the CHS+ and what this means for tenants and leaseholders across a range of housing activities.

The Council has:

- Over 9,000 homes;
- Over 1,400 garages (including bases);
- Areas of land

Details of our housing assets and the profile of our tenants and applicants are provided in Appendix B.

This Plan confirms the delivery programmes of repair, maintenance and improvement, as well as setting the framework for the potential redevelopment of some of the most uneconomic stock. This is set in the context of maintaining its 100% compliance against WG's WHQS, and we will continue to do this through the CHS+.

This Plan demonstrates our commitment to sustained investment and shows how the investment in the existing stock is delivered, as well as a significant affordable homes programme. We have also ensured a balance of investment across the entire housing stock so that our capital and revenue spend is complementary, enabling tenants to receive best value services.

We will invest £29m in our existing homes over the next three years. This is based on current assumptions, together with a three year revenue provision of £9m for planned and responsive repairs and maintenance. We have also identified a further £26m to continue to deliver more affordable homes.

The delivery of the above investment, however, must be built on a robust approach to managing our housing assets.

Our approach to managing assets

Managing housing assets goes beyond just investing in good repair and improvements. Asset management is also about reviewing and potentially changing the asset base to end up with the right accommodation in the right location, supported by excellent, flexible services for our tenants. It must consider quality and value for money, particularly the whole life of a home and how running costs will affect tenants.

By applying an effective asset management strategy to our 9,000 plus homes, it will also enable us to meet our legal requirement of maintaining the CHS+ in the future.

Consequently our approach is underpinned by the following principles:

- Carrying out regular stock condition surveys to assess condition, use and required investment;
- A planned maintenance programme achieving economies by replacing components e.g. kitchen, bathrooms etc. based on need, not time;
- A regular cyclical maintenance programme for certain components in a home e.g. heating appliances, electrical upgrades and external painting;
- A continual programme of works to meet Health and Safety requirements e.g. asbestos removal and structural repairs ;
- A maintenance service to respond to unplanned failures in homes and to prevent deterioration in their condition e.g. boiler replacements;
- An efficient and effective voids repair service, helping to quicken the repairs process and save money by carrying out CHS+ works when a home becomes empty (or as soon afterwards), if the prospective tenant requests it;
- A programme of environmental estate improvements that is strategically targeted;
- A basic check to all homes on an annual basis through our existing visits;
- A more in-depth visit to homes where there are potential issues in terms of condition, tenancy or welfare issues;
- Continuing to invest in adapting homes to suit the needs of tenants;
- Understanding the future investment needs for our sheltered housing stock, linking in with our Care Home development programme;
- Completing individual options appraisals if homes are no longer fit for purpose to determine the best course of action, including considering demolishing homes, or disposing of them;
- Completing options appraisals on sites that may need changing/ converting into homes that can better meet housing need; and
- Delivering the targets within the Affordable Homes Delivery Plan.

When considering the above we will:

- Engage with tenants and Members;
- As far as is possible, meet tenants aspirations and priorities;
- Maximise our assets and minimise liabilities;
- Seek value for money in all investment decisions and contract procurement;
- Comply with current and future regulations;
- Create good neighbourhoods for council tenants and their neighbours; and
- Provide assurance to the council's auditors and regulators that its housing service is well managed.

We fully recognise that in order to achieve the above we must ensure that:

- The right structures, skills, resources and capacity are in place to manage future programmes, procurement and contract management effectively;

- Robust stock condition information, data and analysis is in place to produce programmes of investment that will appropriately maintain and improve standards, as well as services to tenants;
- Our data is further enhanced and regularly validated by feedback from all programmed and cyclical repairs, and maintenance activities; and
- We complete our cost certainty exercise for our overarching 30 year financial plan.

Over the next 12 months we will be specifically focusing on ensuring that asset management resources, both people and systems, are challenged to make sure they are in the right areas for the future. Our joined-up approach will enable us to:

- Commence a stock condition survey to verify our cost certainty business plan, identify gaps and provide independent verification;
- Understand why work has not been completed within the stock e.g. the tenant has requested that no work be carried out. These are called “Acceptable Fails” (see Appendix C); and
- Review our Asset Management Systems and Strategy to ensure all stock is fit for both current and emerging needs.

Ensuring our assets are economical to maintain and meet our strategic objectives

Homes

Every year there are a small number of homes that need major work. Generally these are homes where the previous tenants have declined the CHS+ works, or where structural works are identified in tenanted homes.

Before committing to do the work we need to ensure that the level of expenditure, and the housing need can be demonstrated. This is important to avoid major investment being made in a home that could remain empty longer than we would expect. It is necessary to have a consistent approach, and this is known as an MSCA (Most Satisfactory Course of Action).

Similarly, when we identify a number of similar repair issues in homes, in a particular area, we will consider whole site appraisals. This enables us to gather whole life costs for our homes in a defined area so that we can consider longer term solutions. Where high investment is required and there is low demand for homes in the area, tenants, leaseholders and stakeholders will be involved in the option appraisal process.

Garages

We will continue to actively gather information on the types of agreements used and the condition of garages, in order to:

- Deal with garages that are unsafe and need demolishing on health and Safety grounds;
- Establish who uses garages and bases;
- Standardise agreements; and
- Consult on future options for garage sites.

Land

We have areas of land across the County. As part of our commitment to Affordable Housing we have identified areas of land that could be used for development, prioritising the ones in areas of greatest need.

Where we have identified areas, however, which have no use and cost us to maintain we shall include them in a programme for sale. The receipts from sale contribute to maintaining the CHS+.

Sewer Treatment Works

We currently have 15 sewer treatment works and 8 septic tanks. Over the next 12 months we will be reviewing the charging arrangements and the condition of these facilities in order to consider future options and arrangements for all tenures.

Supporting Tenants and Residents

The commitment and support of our tenants' and Members' continues to be important to us to ensure that we maintain and improve on the CHS+ going forward.

Tenant and residents' engagement and communication

Tenant and community engagement has always underpinned the delivery of the CHS+, but we want to do more. We want to get better by engaging as widely as possible and maximising opportunities to help build stronger communities.

For the development of this year's plan we have engaged via meetings, forums and surveys, together with fun days and fashion shows, environmental projects, Time Credits and Fuel Clubs. This has allowed us to gather information on what really matters to our tenants and key stakeholders in terms of **"What a good housing service looks like?"**.

We believe that this approach is helping to broaden engagement, and is showing improvements for both individuals and the community, on a social and economic level. We know, however, that we are not attracting a wider range of people, particularly younger tenants on a consistent basis, and those involved tend to be unrepresentative of our tenants as a whole. As a result, **we will:**

- Develop our vision on Tenant Participation with TPAS Cymru. The vision will provide a structure so that all tenants and residents within our communities have the opportunity to be involved and influence the service they wish to receive;
- Continue to provide feedback via our regular Tenants to Tenants (T2T) newsletters;
- Liaise with residents to develop a more targeted programme of environmental estate improvements;
- Provide updated annual information about the CHS+ improvement programmes to tenants; and
- Introduce a pilot scheme targeting those in fuel poverty by installing energy efficient LED lighting to tenants' homes.

As well as giving their views on general engagement activities, tenants and residents have also highlighted other priorities in terms of supporting them. They have told us that they would like us to focus on providing more advice and support for them with bills and benefits that will help them to maintain their accommodation. We will be addressing these priorities in a number of areas.

Responding to Universal Credit

Universal Credit (UC) is a new monthly payment for people who are either unemployed, or working, but on a low income. It will eventually replace six legacy benefits, including Housing Benefit.

In June 2018 Carmarthenshire will become a full service UC area. Currently we have 3,284 tenants below pensionable age in receipt of Housing Benefit that would naturally migrate to UC if they have a qualifying change of circumstances. A managed migration programme will then begin to move all remaining claimants over to UC by 2022. This will mean that for any tenant claiming UC, payments for their housing support will be paid directly to them as opposed to it automatically being paid into their rent accounts.

All claims for UC must be done electronically and all tenants will need to have access to a bank account and an e-mail address.

Experience from the UC pilots has identified it is a huge cultural change for many tenants in managing their monthly budgets and we must support as much as we are able. We know that our tenants have a negative view of UC, and the current 4-8 week delays in processing and receiving payments can cause significant anxiety.

Private sector tenants who go onto UC are also likely to require support and may face issues with their landlords due to length of time taken to assess claims.

From a business point of view, evidence from the pilots has shown that rent arrears will increase in the short to medium term and we have allowed for this within this plan in terms of our bad debt provision.

In order to mitigate the impact we will:

- Regularly update our communication plan, ensuring that tenants are aware of what help we, or our partner organisations can offer;
- Visit all of the tenants we believe may be affected;
- Continue to work with floating support providers to ensure that they are ready to provide support to our tenants;
- Increase the range of Direct Debit (DD) payment dates available to tenants. Tenants will be able to choose any date within the month between 1 and 28;
- Enable tenants to use the new 'My Account' facility to view their rent balance and recent rent transactions. It will also allow them to pay their rent, order a new payment card and request a direct debit form;
- Work closely with Welsh Water to encourage tenants to make an application under the 'HelpU' tariff which helps low income households to reduce their water bill;
- Target our prevention fund to help the most vulnerable tenants;
- Map the UC application process, and identifying triggers and interventions;
- Develop guidance documents and procedures to assist in staff training;
- Change the rent letters to inform tenants of the changes;
- Introduce payment reminder e-mails and Texts for individual tenants; and
- Build close partnerships with Housing Benefit, Job Centre Plus and DWP staff.

Focusing on Pre tenancy work

A review carried out by the Housing Quality Network (HQN) recommended that more detailed pre – tenancy work should be carried out with tenants to minimise rent arrears, maximise

income for both us and tenants and improve tenancy sustainability. We have supported this recommendation by creating a pre-tenancy service as part of our Homes and Safer Communities realignment.

We know that at present tenants are allocated homes with no prior insight into what a tenancy actually involves. Many are young, with no previous experience of running a home, living on a small budget. Unsurprisingly many end up going into rent arrears, cause noise or disturbance to their neighbours and ultimately lose or end their tenancy within the first year or two.

We have set up 'The Home Ready' project which provides support and training to applicants and potential new tenants of the Council before a tenancy begins. The project aims to:

- Provide applicants with the most relevant and tailor made training to make them more confident and knowledgeable in gaining and sustaining their tenancy;
- Ensure that applicants will be more financially aware in their future day to day lives such as learning how to live on a budget, understand the benefits of their local credit unions, be more aware of what running and maintain a home and tenancy involves and the benefits of saving; and
- Provide applicants with training that will focus on understanding the terms of their tenancy, being a good neighbour and the importance of paying their rent.

This will enable us to:

- Identify Support needs earlier and make referrals to the appropriate agencies;
- Reduce the level of rent arrears and the number of tenancies that fail within the first 12 months;
- Reduce the level of Tenancy Management issues such as anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), and property condition for new tenants; and
- Have a greater understanding of what matters to new tenants and promote tenant engagement and personal development.

Our approach to this year's rent increase

For 2018/19, through careful financial planning we have been able to keep the rent increase to the minimum allowed under the current WG's social housing rents policy. We believe this is the right thing to do this year. At the same time, we have also been able to maintain our significant investment in existing homes as well as providing much needed, additional affordable homes.

Theme 1 – Investing in Homes’ and the Environment

Maintaining the Carmarthenshire Homes Standard Plus (CHS+)

In 2015 we achieved the CHS+ to homes where tenants have agreed to have work completed - well before WG’s target of 2020. This is in line with our agreed assumptions that the standard of our homes will be to the CHS+; and replacement programmes will be based on condition, not time.

Tenants tell us that getting repairs done on time and maintaining homes to a good standard is important to them. Maintaining the standard is now a statutory duty, and the Council has made a commitment to achieve and maintain the CHS, which states that all homes will be:

- in a good state of repair;
- free from damp;
- free from significant condensation;
- structurally stable;
- in safe and attractive environments;
- suitable for the household; and
- managed to the CHS+

Our on-going consultation with tenants has identified five key themes in this area in terms of **“What a good housing service looks like?”**:

- **Repairs and Maintenance** - proper and timely maintenance, consistent service, maintain homes to a high standard, continue to improve the housing stock;
- **Internal Works and Servicing** – heating, bathroom and kitchens, soundproofing in flats, remove old plumbing and electrics, option of newer kitchen;
- **External Works and the Environment** - roofs, removal of moss, rendering, dampness, paths, solar panels; responding to requests for paths, provide a home that is secure, , fencing, painting of outside of houses, garden walls, improve communal areas;
- **Voids** - standards to be applied to every home, finish the CHS programme;
- **Improving Standards** - improvements which result in tenants maximising their income/saving money on utilities, a standard that doesn't stand still, service improvement.

The actions identified to address these themes are set out below. The resultant investment requirements have been built into the HRA Capital Programme 2018/2021.

Repairs and Maintenance: The objective of the repairs service is to provide a customer focussed responsive repairs service, which achieves high levels of performance, customer satisfaction and good value for money. The priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Making appointments for all repairs;
- Getting the job done right first time as quickly as possible;

- Using tenant views to shape the service; and
- Carrying out as many repairs in a pre-planned way as possible.

The responsive repairs service has more contact with tenants and customers than any other maintenance service, and is therefore used as an important measure of how effective, both the Housing and Property services are, by the majority of customers.

We will achieve this by:

- Advising tenants when they report minor repairs how quickly we can carry out the repairs. We will always prioritise emergency and urgent repairs. For larger repair requests, we will often assess the problem first before letting tenants know how long the works will take.
- Carrying out repairs in the timescales we have set out or at a time that is more convenient for the tenant. Sometimes, however, there may be delays because we cannot get materials, or we need to carry out further investigations or the work is weather dependent.
- Continuing to develop our responsive repairs service, using mobile technology, to make appointments with tenants at a time convenient for them, including online and text services.
- Monitoring trends in reported repairs to identify works where it is prudent to take a planned approach for a larger number of properties using a condition-based programme.

Internal Works and Servicing - The objective of the CHS+ is to maintain the standard on a condition-based programme. For internal components such as kitchens, bathrooms, electrical upgrading and central heating, by replacing components nearer to the time of failing, the challenge is in assessing the condition both correctly and consistently. Cyclical maintenance can assist this assessment. The priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Cyclical servicing based on statutory requirements;
- Continue to identify properties where tenants have refused part or all of the intended CHS+ works.

We will achieve this by:

- Contacting tenants who have previously declined CHS+ works to discuss any issues they have and agree with them when works are to be programmed;
- Continuing our annual programme of safety checks on gas fires, and gas or oil boilers, and only replace boilers with energy-efficient condensing boilers, when defective and no longer economical to run; and
- Checking homes have the appropriate smoke alarms, heat detectors or carbon monoxide devices, and discuss with tenants how we can upgrade these to improve the fire safety within their homes.

External Works and the Environment: - whilst it is known that our homes are generally in good condition and meet the CHS+, our objective is to achieve economies of scale by only

replacing components nearer to the time of failing; and thus saving tenants money. The priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Identify programmes suitable for a planned approach;
- Identify opportunities for low energy home improvements on our housing stock.

We will achieve this by:

- Continuing to review and update our annual programme of roof and render component replacement including providing exterior wall insulation (EWI), based on evidence and need, and not time;
- Working with a range of partners to identify opportunities to install solar photo voltaic panels and other low energy home improvements on our housing stock to try to save tenants money on their energy bills, improve the comfort tenants' homes and reduce pollution in the environment;
- Developing a painting and maintenance planned programme including rectifying the impact of estate wide Lichen growth on homes; and
- Developing a garden and outhouse planned programme to ensure sheds and outhouses, gardens, paths and fencing are safe.

Empty homes (Voids): The objective of the void process is to make void homes available for letting as quickly as possible, striving to meet customers' expectations. The priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Provide a safe and secure home;
- Improve re-let timescales;
- Provide a re-let standard that meets customers' expectations; and
- Introduce a Choice Based Letting approach that will give tenants more choice and make tenancies more sustainable.

We will achieve this by:

- Completing individual options appraisals if homes are no longer fit for purpose to determine best course of action, including considering demolishing homes, or disposing of them;
- Making sure that homes are maintained to our standards and any repairs from previous tenants have been carried out before a new tenant moves in, together with making sure gardens are clear of rubbish and safe to use;
- Bringing all homes up to the CHS+ where the tenant wishes the work to be carried out. When a tenant is happy to move into a property without all the works being completed, tenants will be provided with an indicative timescale for completing the outstanding works; and
- Enhancing Home Information packs for all new tenants, to include information on boiler inspections, Asbestos advice, Energy Performance Certificates, electrical tests and an indication of when any outstanding CHS+ work will be carried out.

Improving Standards - Tenants have told us they do not want a standard that stands still. Our priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Involving tenants in setting future standards;
- Improving the energy performance of homes; and
- Ensure homes are suitable for the household.

We will achieve this by:

- Asking tenants how they would like to be part of the process.
- Developing a programme of energy saving measures based on the information obtained from EPC surveys, including those where tenants have previously declined works to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Continuing our programme of providing adaptations for our tenants to ensure that our homes meet their needs. Adaptations range from a simple grab rail at the side of a doorway to a bathroom converted into a wet room to a purpose built bedroom and wet room extension.
- Continuing to utilise our stock in an efficient manner through the Accessible Housing Register (AHR), where a void property with existing adaptations is matched to a client on the AHR whose needs will be met.

Type of work to be completed in 2018/19

We know the following work may be required to maintain the standard in 2018/19.

Type of work/components	Target homes to be completed in the full year 2018-19
Kitchens	83
Bathrooms	85
Central heating Systems	49
Electrical Systems	79
Mains Powered Smoke Detectors	79
Adaptations	250 (small < £1,000) 190 (>£1,000)
Roofs	110
Render and Fascia	439
Windows	0
External Doors	0
Gardens and outhouse planned programme	New Programme
Painting and maintenance planned programme	New Programme
Energy Rating (SAP=65)	40+

The above figures represent target homes to be completed through the planned programme of works. Additional works to homes will also be completed throughout the year as part of void and major works delivery.

Further Development and new opportunities

Health and Safety - Servicing & compliance

We have recently reviewed our approach to fire safety across all our stock, and our approach to when tenants have requested not to have work carried out. We believe that it is in the best interest of tenants, and to protect our investment, that tenants will no longer have the option to decline electrical works including the installation of hard wired smoke detectors and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors.

For homes where we believe the above work has not been upgraded, we will:

- Check homes have the appropriate smoke alarms, heat detectors or carbon monoxide devices, and discuss with tenants how we can upgrade these;
- Gain access to ensure that the necessary works are completed; and
- Install servicing timers when we gain access (where a tenant repeatedly does not give us access), to help tenants understand and manage their responsibilities under their tenancy agreement and help us to protect the lives of tenants.

Health & Safety - Approach to Fire Management

We have now further reviewed the Fire Risk Assessments on all of our purpose built blocks of Flats, including sheltered schemes. Our approach has been to assess the likelihood of fires occurring, and any person(s) who may be put at risk from a fire. When carrying out the assessment we have also taken into consideration that fires can be started accidentally, through carelessness or started deliberately.

For each block of flats, where we have identified improvements to be made, an action plan has been developed. This provides a record of present risks, together with an indication of the scope of the changes and/or improvements which need to be provided to minimise the risks present. The risk assessments are monitored by the 'Investing in our Homes' Group, as set out in our Governance Structure.

Investing in Sheltered Housing

Demand for our Sheltered Housing remains high generally, but we need to ensure that the right type of support is in the right schemes. Some schemes are very popular whilst others less so because of things like their location and/or access to amenities.

We will be clearly defining the purpose of each Sheltered Scheme and will tailor our approach to future needs. We will be assessing current standards and challenging whether they will meet the expectations of future residents over the next 10 to 20 years.

We will align this approach with our investment programme for the Council's existing Care Homes, making sure the accommodation meets future needs and standards.

Potential for Solar photovoltaic (PV) systems

Our Property division have been working with WF as part of the Green Growth Wales programme, to explore opportunities and models for a housing-based solar and battery storage project on the Council's housing stock.

This could be a no-cost community 'rent-a-roof' model with the provision of roof mounted solar PV, combined with a battery storage system, and may be exclusive to a single property (e.g. solar PV on the roof and small battery system for the property). It could also be a community based system where the solar PV and/or battery is on a community basis to help maximise benefits and direct use of energy generated.

We have run a market information exercise to help understand the range of offers available for Carmarthenshire and on behalf of the wider Swansea Bay City Deal area. We shall be analysing the feedback received, and consulting with tenants on any schemes that we feel are viable. If successful this will helping tenants to reduce their energy bills.

Low energy home improvements

As part of the programme of works to refurbish housing we are assessing the potential benefits of including works that will help tenants to further reduce their energy bills, improve the comfort of their homes and reduce pollution in the environment.

We are working with the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University as part of its Low Carbon Built Environment (LCBE) project. Consultation has commenced with tenants on determining the level of interest. If we are able to identify a scheme, tenants will be asked to participate by completing a questionnaire to find out a little bit about them and their family, their home and how they use it. We will also install some discreet monitoring equipment to measure the environmental conditions and energy use in the home before and after the work has been carried out.

Assisting with regeneration plans

The Council would like to work with local residents, and other key stakeholders, to develop a masterplan for the potential regeneration of the Station Road area in the Tyisha ward, Llanelli. Our approach would be to firstly carry out co-ordinated, extensive engagement and consultation with residents. This will involve all relevant services across the Council.

Station Road is located between Llanelli Town Centre and the proposed Well-Being village in Machynys. There are ambitious and exciting plans for both areas and we want to make sure that the Station Road area benefits from sustainable change that will have an impact over the next 10-20 years.

We also want to maximise the impact of the ***Swansea Bay City Region Deal*** "Delivering Homes as Power Stations" project. We see this as a huge opportunity for Carmarthenshire as it will target both new build projects and the retro-fit of existing homes and buildings. Whilst initially targeting the public sector it will, over the next five years, roll out to private sector landlords and owner occupiers. The delivery will not only reduce fuel poverty and have a positive impact on people's health and well-being, but will kick start a major construction programme and the associated benefits in terms of jobs.

Theme 2 – Providing more homes

Affordable Homes

In March 2016, Carmarthenshire produced its first Affordable Homes Delivery Plan. The plan aims to deliver over 1,000 affordable homes by 2021, investing nearly £100m into our communities, with over £31m coming directly from the HRA.

Tenants told us then that delivering a wide range of housing to meet demands, and us buying and building new suitable homes is important to them. This is also in line with the feedback we received from tenants again this year.

As a result we will continue to:

- Deliver new build council homes directly through the HRA;
- Develop a wider range of homes and regeneration options through our recently established Housing Company;
- Purchase private sector homes to increase the Council's housing stock in the areas of greatest housing need;
- Continue to manage private sector homes, for Private Landlords, through the 'Simple Lettings Agency'; and
- Bring empty homes back into use to increase choice and accessibility of homes in the areas of greatest housing need;

Current affordable homes delivery

In our first year of delivery (2016/17) we exceeded our target, and delivered 173 additional affordable homes. We are on course again to exceed our target in our second year of delivery, by delivering a further 235 homes in 2017/18.

The following graphs show the accumulative targets for the five years of our plan, and our progress to date.

Affordable Homes 5 Year Delivery Plan 2016-21



2017/18 Affordable Homes Quarterly Performance



Housing Company

We also recently announced plans for hundreds of new homes through the establishment of a Housing Company. The Company will deliver a mix of homes including homes for rent, low cost home ownership, rent to own and open market sales, as an alternative to social rented housing. This will be across the County, based on housing need.

It will support local developers who are set to benefit from a further boost in the construction industry, with new jobs and training opportunities on the horizon.

The establishment of the Housing Company will not only ensure that we continue to maximise our ability to build more homes but will offer opportunities on a wider scale, in terms of innovation, standards and specifications, geographically and the type of activities where it can bring major benefits.

It is important to note, however, that the Housing Company **is not** stock transfer in any form. All 9,000 current council homes will continue to be managed by the Council.

The detailed business plan for the Company will be confirmed in Spring 2018, confirming the planned programme of activity over the next five years.

Plans for the future

As a result of the above activity we will, over the next three years:

- Deliver over 630 affordable homes throughout the county and achieve the targets set in the Delivery Plan, through:
 - Delivering over 50 two and four bedroom homes in phase 1 of our Council new build programme (Dylan in Bynea and Garreglwyd in Pembrey);
 - Purchasing over 100 private sector homes and continuing to increase the Council's housing stock in the areas of greatest housing need;
 - Managing an additional 150 private sector homes through the Simple Lettings Agency;
 - Bringing over 160 empty homes back into use;
 - Working with our Housing Association (HA) partners to deliver over 200 new build HA homes, maximising the use of Housing Finance Grant, Social Housing Grant and HA private finance; and
 - Maximising developer contributions through the planning system and creating over 50 homes for rent and low cost home ownership.
- Continue to maximise the use of external funding opportunities including Affordable Housing Grant and Innovative Housing Programme Funding and ensure that we have schemes on the shelf ready to go when additional funding becomes available;
- Align with the Housing Company to deliver additional affordable homes; and
- Develop a new Affordable Homes Delivery Plan which will continue to create affordable homes in the areas of greatest need post 2021.

Community Benefits and Procurement

Community Benefits

The Council is committed to:

- Contributing to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the wider community;
- Asking tenderers to deliver Community Benefits in our tendering activities through the delivery of the contracts or frameworks awarded;
- Maximising the value for every pound we spend, applying a Community Benefits approach to any tender valued over £1million; and
- Capturing and recording Community Benefits utilising WG's Community Benefits Measurement Tool.

For contracts completed in 2016/17, three contractors were used through the South West Wales Contractors Framework. Over £2million of CHS+ works were called collectively, achieving the following:

- For every £1 spent, £1.80 was reinvested into the Welsh economy;
- 11 people were hired during this period who were previously unemployed, and who will continue to be employed;
- Over 84 weeks of training was provided, including:
 - 12 Apprenticeships started and over 50 weeks carried out; and
 - 10 Traineeships completed amounting to over 30 weeks in total.

Since June 2017, Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council entered into a Joint Procurement Shared Service for a period of two years. The aim of the Shared Service is to deliver regional benefits and efficiencies through shared use of resources.

Funding and Risk Management

Major Repairs Allowance

Every year we receive £6 million from Welsh Government to support our capital investment. The grant comes with clear guidance on what it can and cannot be used for. The main condition is that it must be spent on property within the HRA. It cannot be used for repairs or maintenance, demolishing costs, repayment of borrowing etc. A full breakdown can be found in our MRA Acceptance issued by Welsh Government.

The MRA makes a significant contribution towards achieving and maintaining the CHS. It is currently reviewed annually by Welsh Government and, as such, it is regularly under scrutiny. A reduction or end of the MRA could have a significant impact on our future investment plans.

Planning Assumptions

To help us plan our investments, we must make certain assumptions. Changes to our assumptions may mean that we have to re-visit the objectives included in this plan.

INCOME

Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) <i>i.e. the amount of capital funding we get from the Welsh Government</i>	£6m each year. This is on the basis that we receive £673 for each home.
Rent increase 2017/18	4.34% average
Future rent increase levels <i>Based on Welsh Government Policy</i>	Rent increases continue in line with current policy.
Borrowing i.e. the amount we need to borrow to support our investment	Additional £7m over next 3 years

OTHER

Expenditure/income inflation	Employees' pay at 1% per year for the next three years (as per assumptions for Council Fund).
Right to Buy receipts i.e. Money we get from tenants' buying their home	No receipts from 1 st April 2015 following suspension of Right to Buy
Balances on the revenue account <i>i.e. the amount of money we need to keep in reserve</i>	Minimum of £1.359m (based on £150 per property)

SPENDING

Assumed Borrowing costs <i>i.e. the amount it costs to borrow money</i>	Cost of existing and new debt: 2018/19: 4.60% 2019/20: 4.57% 2020/21: 4.41	Cost of exiting HRAS: Average of 4.57%
Provision for Bad debt i.e. debt that we will be unable to recover	2018/19: £494k 2019/20: £591k 2020/21: £784k	

Delivering efficiencies

This current business plan is supported by a drive to improve value for money over the next three years and enhance service delivery.

Over the next 12 months we will develop measures to ensure that value for money can be demonstrated in terms of cost and quality, whilst striving to meet tenants' expectations on service improvements.

CAPITAL SPENDING TO:

	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Maintain the standard:			
Internal works - kitchens, bathrooms, electrics, heating etc.	1,030	1,183	1,000
EWI, Render and Fascia (inc. gardens)	2,096	1,775	2,739
Roofing	924	1,052	1,086
Boiler replacements	90	87	88
Declined CO & smoke detectors	600	0	0
Structural works - Estates and boundary walls (inc. identified structural works)	1,084	315	260
Voids and Major Works to homes	2,118	2,155	2,200
Support Tenant and Residents:			
Sheltered Scheme Investment (inc. boilers)	518	1,025	500
Adaptations	1,400	1,500	1,500
Environmental works	298	303	309
Provide more affordable homes:			
Housing Development Programme	9,162	8,905	8,104
Support the delivery of CHS+:			
Programme management	195	198	200
Stock condition information	150	100	100
TOTAL	19,665	18,598	18,086

CAPITAL FUNDING FROM:

	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Welsh Government Grant-MRA	6,190	6,190	6,190
Receipts which we can use from sales	0	0	0
Direct Revenue Financing	13,475	8,956	8,443
External Borrowing	0	3,452	3,453
TOTAL	19,665	18,598	18,086

REVENUE SPENDING TO:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Repair and maintain homes	9,495	9,842	10,223
Supervision and management	8,355	8,519	8,686
Support services e.g. legal and finance	1,560	1,560	1,560
Direct Revenue Financing - Capital projects	13,475	8,956	8,443
Provision for Bad debts	494	591	784
Capital charges	14,205	14,309	13,936
TOTAL	47,584	43,777	43,632

REVENUE FUNDING FROM:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Tenant rents	39,736	41,470	43,966
Service charges	750	774	798
Interest received	68	61	69
Income from other departments	340	347	354
Housing Finance Grant 2	0	246	246
Water rates commission	498	508	518
Grants / Other	356	356	357
TOTAL	41,748	43,762	46,308

HRA END OF YEAR POSITION:	Budget 2018/19 (£000s)	Budget 2019/20 (£000s)	Budget 2020/21 (£000s)
Balance brought forward from last year	-16,299	-10,463	-10,448
HRA budgeted surplus (-)/ deficit (+)	5,836	15	-2,676
BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD	-10,463	-10,448	-13,124

Risk Management

Each year, as part of the HRA Business Planning process, we identify, assess and prioritise potential risks and consider the likelihood and impact of each. This exercise is undertaken by each service delivery area. Once this has been done, we identify ways in which we can reduce or manage the potential risk and impact. These are recorded corporately and monitored regularly.

Three of the greatest risks identified in delivering this plan are:

- Maintaining up to date asset information with regards to our stock;
- Uncertainty of the impact of market conditions with regard to inflation, pricing and availability of workforce, to inform the 30 year cost certainty exercise; and
- The impact of Universal Credit on tenants' ability to maintain their responsibilities and obligations to pay their total rent in advance for the week ahead.

All risks will be monitored by the CHS+ Steering Group on a regular basis.

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Compliance, Verification and Monitoring

Compliance and Acceptable Fails

Recording compliance and acceptable fails is not a simple collection of condition information for things like kitchens, bathrooms, electrics etc. It is a combination of occupancy and property condition information. Surveying of homes, collating of information, how we manage our data, and the ability to report 100% accurate information, are all data-hungry activities. The details of our compliance and acceptable fails are set out in Appendix C.

Acceptable Fails

An acceptable fail occurs when an individual component e.g. a kitchen or bathroom, has not been completed for one or more of the following reasons:

- Cost of remedy;
- Timing of remedy;
- Residents' choice; and
- Physical constraint"

Energy Efficiency

We have had a number of different programmes running to improve the energy efficiency of homes. These programmes have helped save tenants money on their heating costs and improve the SAP rating of our homes. The average SAP across our stock is 65 out of 100.

Independent Verification

Whilst we believe that we are, and will continue to, accurately report compliance in achieving and maintaining the CHS+, we will also back this up with further verification by:

- Demonstrating compliance by ensuring there is a clear separation of duties between CCC staff reporting compliance and those staff responsible for delivering the CHS+;
- Using internal staff in conjunction with Internal Audit to undertake desktop reviews;
- Agreeing and commencing a sample programme of stock condition visits every year, carried out by an independent verifier;
- Asking tenants how they would like to be part of the process of verification;
- Continuing to use service reviews to assess compliance. Some data is already independently collected, e.g. boiler inspections, EPC's and electrical tests; and
- Introducing Home Information packs for all new tenants, informing them of boiler inspections, Asbestos advice, Energy Performance Certificates, electrical tests and when any outstanding CHS+ work will be carried out.

Appendices

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Carmarthenshire Homes Standard+ (CHS+) HRA Business Plan

Appendices

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Appendix A: *The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*

We are committed to delivering the CHS+ in a sustainable way as outlined in the Well-being Act. We do this by:



Looking at the long term so that we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- The Business Plan contributes to this by planning for the next 3 years and also over the longer term of 30 years. We do this by analysing our asset data and market conditions to enable us to maintain our existing stock, and plan our affordable housing delivery. We set out our plans to deliver a pre-tenancy service to enable tenants to sustain their tenancies as long as possible.



Understanding the root causes of the issues to prevent them reoccurring

- The Business Plan identifies the key issues that tenants have highlighted to us. We also monitor the demand for reactive repairs. All this information enables us to plan programmed works to resolve issues and prevent them reoccurring.



Taking an intergrated approach so that we look at all well-being goals and objectives of other services and partners

- The Business Plan highlights how we contribute to the well-being of our tenants. Examples of this include delivering adaptations to meet the needs of tenants, re-housing tenants through the adapted home register to more suitable accommodation, working with Swansea and Cardiff University to carry out a health impact study, and carrying out estate improvement works to the local environment.



Collaboration - Working with others in a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions

- The Business Plan is delivered in a Partnership approach between Housing and Property Services. It sets out our ambition to work with partners locally and regionally to deliver energy efficiency measures to existing and new homes to reduce fuel poverty for our tenants. Our procurement process is delivered through a collaborative approach ensuring community benefits are maximised.



Involving a diversity of population in decisions that affect them

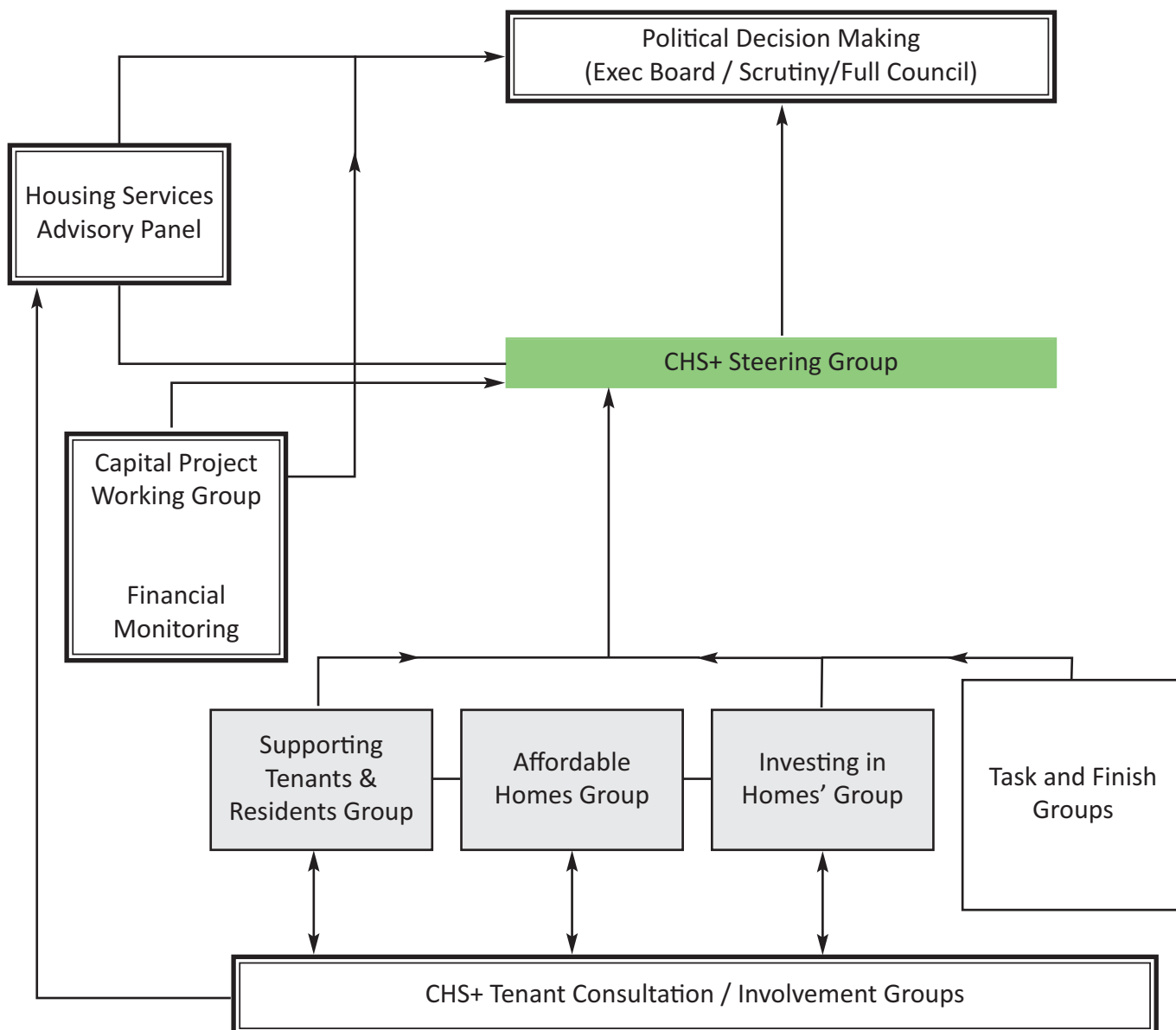
- Tenant involvement in the delivery of the Business Plan is an overarching principle. We have set out our plans to produce a tenant engagement strategy and widen our support and advice services for both preventative services and to mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform. Tenants will continue to contribute to the development of both the CHS+ and the Environmental Improvement Programme.

The CHS+ business plan contributes to the seven Well-being goals under the sustainable development principles in the following way:

<p>A more prosperous Wales</p>	<p><i>A Prosperous Wales</i> Carmarthenshire has a stronger and more prosperous economy:</p> <p>We will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring long-term economic and social benefits for Carmarthenshire through the Swansea Bay City Region and future European and external funding avenues.
<p>1</p>	
<p>A resilient Wales</p>	
<p>2</p>	
<p>A healthier Wales</p>	<p><i>A Healthier Wales</i> People in Carmarthenshire are healthier:</p> <p>We will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the availability of rented and affordable homes to support the needs of local people by building new homes, bringing empty homes back into use and ensuring an allocation of affordable homes on new developments; • Mitigating the local impacts of welfare reform by supporting affected residents through the changes; • Supporting residents suffering from fuel poverty and introducing renewable energy technology to our tenants' homes in order to save them money on energy costs.
<p>3</p>	
<p>A more equal Wales</p>	
<p>4</p>	
<p>A Wales of cohesive communities</p>	<p><i>A Wales of Cohesive Communities</i> People who live, work and visit Carmarthenshire are safe and feel safer:</p> <p>We will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing anti-social behaviour by working in partnership with other agencies and communities to tackle local problems.
<p>5</p>	
<p>A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language</p>	
<p>6</p>	
<p>A globally responsible Wales</p>	
<p>7</p>	

Governance Structure

All actions in this Plan will be monitored on a bi-monthly basis by the CHS+ Steering Group. This group provides strategic direction and corporate leadership to ensure appropriate progression on the initiatives included.



Appendix B: Stock, Tenant and Housing Choice Register Profile

Stock 30/11/17 Stock Return

Type	No. of Homes	Sheltered Homes
House	4913	
Bungalows	2169	
Flats	1923	508
Maisonettes	41	
Bedsit	22	
Total	9068	

Stock Make Up

Carmarthenshire County Council's HRA stock (as set out below) comprises 9,068 homes, including 508 sheltered homes, and an additional 229 leasehold homes.

The following table sets out the HRA housing stock by Ward:

Ward	Homes	Ward	Homes
Abergwili	40	Llandybie	209
Ammanford	143	Llanegwad	43
Betws	72	Llanfihangel Aberbythych	20
Bigyn	385	Llanfihangel Ar Arth	123
Burry Port	161	Llangadog	46
Bynea	260	Llanger	180
Carmarthen Town North	403	Llangennech	243
Carmarthen Town South	175	Llangunnor	172
Carmarthen Town West	120	Llangyndeyrn	193
Cenarth	59	Llannon	263
Cilycwm	26	Llansteffan	46
Cynwyl Elfed	62	Llanybydder	138
Cynwyl Gaeo	13	Lliedi	272
Dafen	223	Llwynhendy	614
Elli	56	Manordeilo & Salem	22
Felinfoel	254	Pembrey	223
Garnant	140	Penygroes	73
Glanamman	151	Pontaman	141
Glanymor	515	Pontyberem	185
Glyn	105	Quarter Bach	204
Gorslas	240	Saron, Ammanford	257
Hendy	101	St Clears	101
Hengoed	225	St Ishmael	48
Kidwelly	198	Swiss Valley	16
Laugharne	90	Trelech	29
Llanboidy	19	Trimsaran	207
Llanddarog	80	Tycroes	84
Llandeilo	103	Tyisha	291
Llandovery	122	Whitland	84

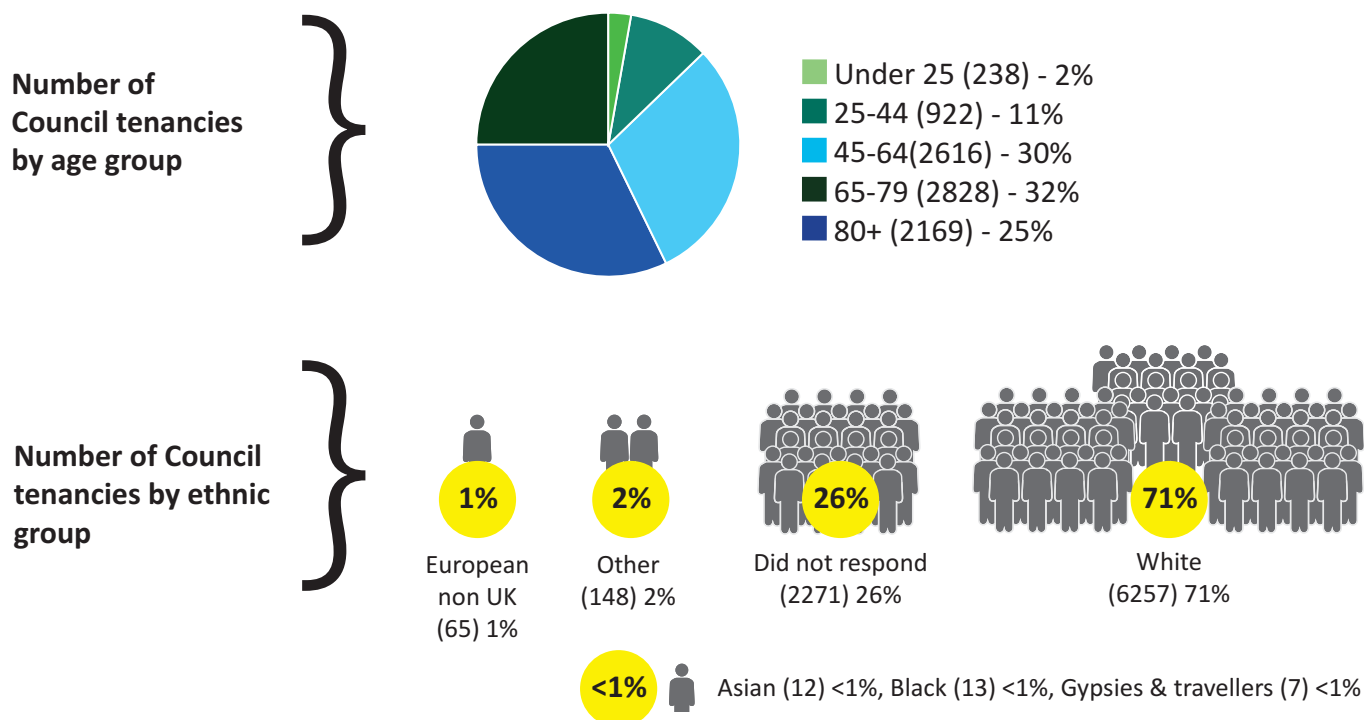
The housing stock comprises 4,913 houses and 2,169 bungalows, with the remainder made up of 1,478 flats, bedsits and maisonettes. The majority of the stock is 2 and 3 bedroom homes. 90 of the homes have 4 bedrooms, and only two, are 5 and 6 bedrooms.

Type of Home	Bedrooms							Total
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6+	
Flats		639	769	7				1415
Bedsits	21	1						22
Maisonettes			10	31				41
Bungalows		362	1776	30	1			2169
House	3	19	1098	3703	88	1	1	4913
Sheltered flats	1	462	38	6	1			508
Total	25	1483	3691	3777	90	1	1	9068

Tenant Profile

We know that 25% of our lead tenants are aged 80 or over and a further 32% are aged 65 to 80. As a result, 57% of our lead tenants are 65 or above. Only 3% of our lead tenants are under 25, the remaining 40% are aged 45 to 65.

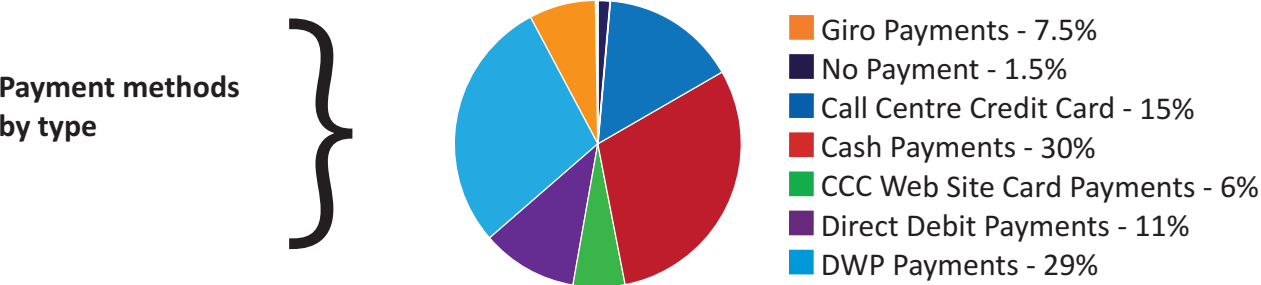
We know that 71% of our lead tenants are white British. A further 26% did not provide information about their ethnic group.



Universal Credit Tenant Payment Profile

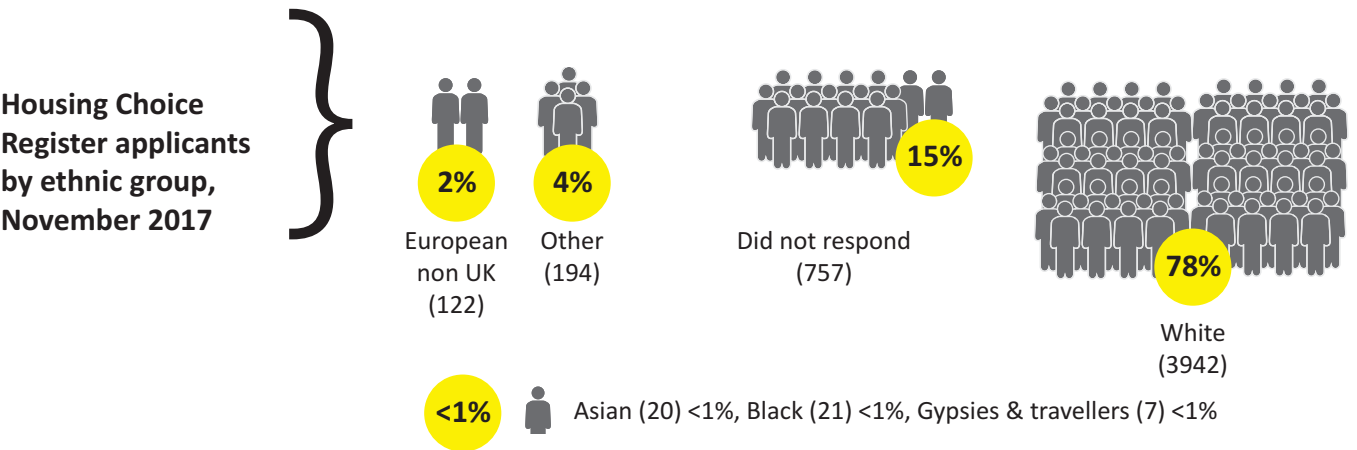
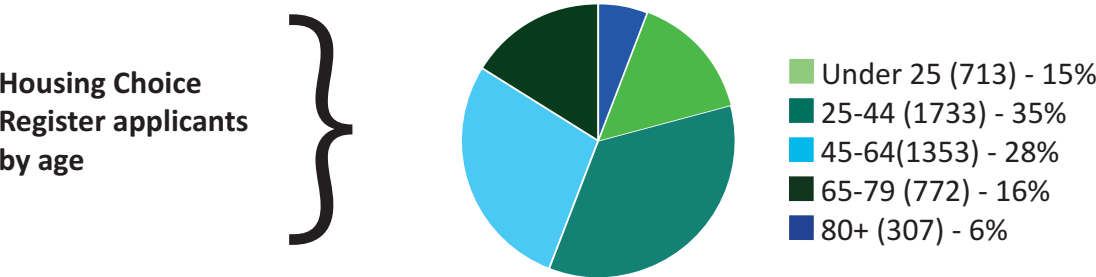
For tenants currently claiming Universal Credit, we know that only 11% are paying their rent by direct debit. A further 29% are still receiving DWP direct payments, and 1.5% are making no payments.

Universal Credit Accounts
TENANT Payment METHODS



Housing Choice Applicants Profile

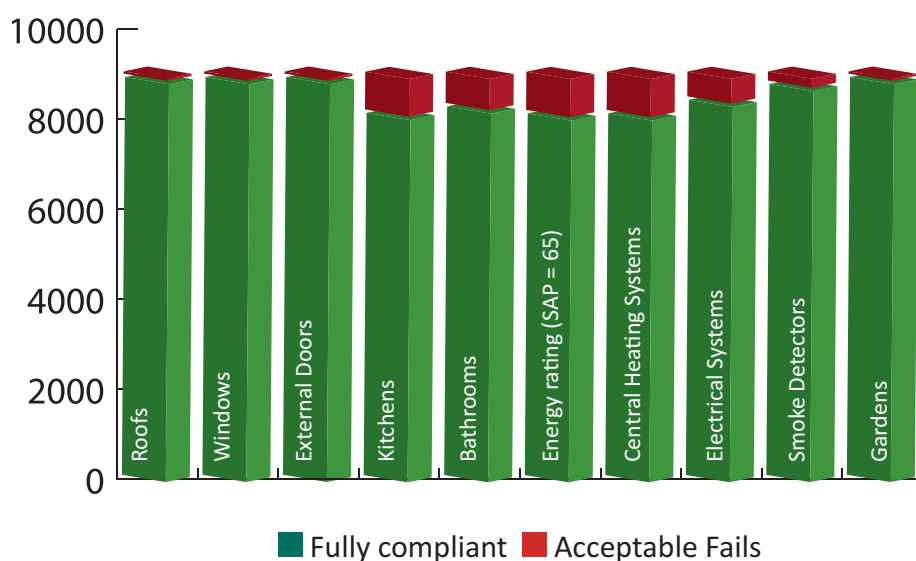
We know that 35% of our lead applicants are aged 25 to 44. 6% are aged 80+ and the remaining 44% are aged 45 to 79. We know that 78% are white British and a further 15% of our lead applicants did not provide information about their ethnic group.



Appendix C: WHQS Compliance

The following tables set out our achievement of meeting the CHS+ in 2015 by components, together with the annual programme to maintain compliance of the CHS+.

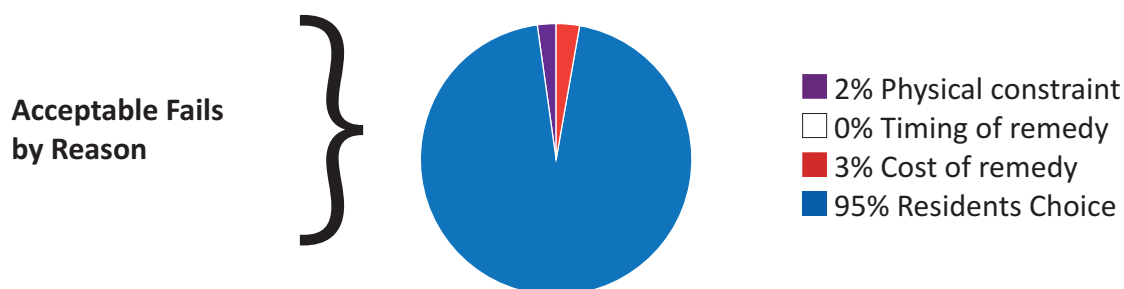
WHQS Compliance by Component



Acceptable Fails

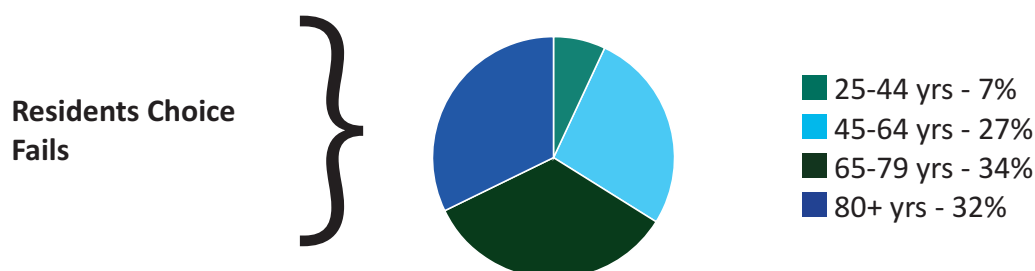
The Welsh Government Outlines 'acceptable fails' as a home which meets the standard but has not had all works carried out to make it fully compliant. There are different reasons for why these acceptable fails would occur.

Some tenants have chosen not to have the work done (Residents' choice) because they were happy with their homes, have made their own improvements or some, particularly older tenants, do not want the disruption. This is, by far, the main reason why homes do not currently meet the standard.



We know that 95% of our acceptable fails are as a result of residents' choice. The remaining 5% being the cost of the remedy or physical constraints.

We also know that 32% of the residents who chose not to have the CHS+ works completed are aged 80 or over and a further 34% are between the age of 65 and 79.



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COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 30TH JANUARY, 2018

SUBJECT:

WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2017

Purpose:

Carmarthenshire Libraries / Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

To consider and comment on the following issues:

To monitor performance of the Library Service against the 5th Quality Assessment Framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards as contained in the Annual Return for 2016/17.

Reasons:

To enable members to exercise their scrutiny role in relation to monitoring performance of Carmarthenshire library services.

To be referred to the Executive Board / Council for decision: NO

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:-

Cllr. P. Hughes-Griffiths (Culture, Sport & Tourism Portfolio Holder)

Directorate

Communities

Name of Head of Service:

Ian Jones

Report Author:

Mark Jewell

Designations:

Head of Leisure

Library Services Manager

Tel Nos.

01267 228309 / 01554 744328

E Mail Addresses:

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MJewell@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 30TH JANUARY, 2018

SUBJECT: WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS 2017

1. BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT.

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of public library authorities to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service” and makes it a duty of the Welsh Ministers “to superintend and promote the improvement” of public library services in Wales. In accordance with these statutory requirements the Welsh Government has completed its assessment of Carmarthenshire’s Library Services Annual Return for 2016/17.

This is the third and final year of assessment under the fifth framework.

Carmarthenshire Libraries have performed exceptionally well against the criteria set in the Welsh Public Libraries Standards during 2016/17 with the service making headline news broadcasts as it continues to demonstrate positive impact for Carmarthenshire’s residents, bucking national trends.

Carmarthenshire meets all 18 core entitlements in full, an improvement on last year. Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire achieved 6 in full, and one in part.

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in a number of areas in the course of this framework, against the wider trend. However, overall staffing levels have dropped below the target set for this year. The service is well used with evidence of strategic planning and investment.

Carmarthenshire has achieved all three quality indicators in Learning for Life for up-to-date and appropriate reading materials and online access, one of only five authorities to do so this year. Spending on Welsh material has maintained the levels achieved last year and remains above the median for Wales overall. Investment in the book stock is reflected in the proportion of customers who rate the choice of books as good or very good.

Carmarthenshire conducted a customer impact survey in October/November 2016, with good results. 98% of attendees at training sessions said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals this year.

Both physical and virtual visits continue to increase compared to last year, and the per capita levels are among the highest in Wales. Issues of audio-visual and electronic issues/downloads have increased significantly and they are now the highest per capita level in Wales and the increase is against the trend in Wales.

Expenditure per capita is the second highest in Wales, but high levels of visits bring the net cost per visit below the median for Wales as a whole, suggesting a service which is operating in an efficient way.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED :

YES

IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report :

Signed: Ian Jones

Head of Leisure

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below

Signed: Ian Jones

Head of Leisure

- 1.Local Member(s) - N/A**
- 2.Community / Town Council – N/A**
- 3.Relevant Partners - N/A**
- 4.Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations - N/A**

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
Annual Assessment Report 2016-17		As attached.

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Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Carmarthenshire County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Carmarthenshire's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

1) Executive summary

Carmarthenshire now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, an improvement since last year.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire achieved 6 in full and one in part -compared to last year where all 7 targets were achieved in full.

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in a number of areas in the course of this framework, against the wider trend. However, overall staffing levels have dropped below the target set for this year. The service is well used with evidence of strategic planning and investment, and in this context, customer satisfaction, which is below the median for Wales, is disappointing. The service is to be commended for providing an excellent narrative in its return.

- Carmarthenshire conducted a customer impact survey in October/November 2016, with good results. 98% of attendees at training sessions said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals this year. The impact case studies provided give clear descriptions of the activities offered, but evidence of the difference these activities made to the individuals taking part could be better articulated.
- Customer satisfaction has increased since the previous survey in 2013/14, but remains below the median for Wales as a whole.
- Levels of informal training have decreased compared to last year, however they remain the highest in Wales. The rate of attendances at events and activities organised by the library has increased compared to last year and is now above the median for Wales.
- Both physical and virtual visits continue to increase compared to last year, and the per capita levels are among the highest in Wales. Issues of audio-visual and electronic issues/downloads have increased significantly and they are now the highest per capita level in Wales and the increase is against the trend in Wales.
- Investment in ICT provision continues, and a 22% increase in the number of networked public access computers has resulted in the fourth highest provision of computers per capita in Wales.
- The overall number of staff has fallen in 2016-17 so that the target is no longer met. The number of professional staff has been maintained, however, and remains above the median for Wales.
- Expenditure per capita is the second highest in Wales, but high levels of visits

bring the net cost per visit below the median for Wales as a whole, suggesting a service which is operating in an efficient way.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Carmarthenshire shows strength in all areas. It performs relatively poorly on customer satisfaction, however.

Compared to previous years, Carmarthenshire has continued to build on previous successes, and plans for further investment are welcomed. Evidence of the impact of the service has improved, but there remains scope to do more in this area.

2) Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Carmarthenshire now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, following the completion of the library strategy.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Carmarthenshire fully met 6 and partially met 1 – down on last year when all seven quality indicators with targets were met in full:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✓	
c) Information literacy	✓	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✓	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✓	
or Materials spend per capita	✓	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Met in full
a) % of material budget on children	✓	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	✓	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✓	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Carmarthenshire undertook a customer satisfaction survey of adults in October/November 2016 and an impact survey of children in January/February 2015.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	92%	11/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	92%	6/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	3/17	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	5/19	80%	97%	100%

Carmarthenshire provided three impact case studies:

- Workshops in association with the Summer Reading Challenge to design a t-shirt, one winner of which has been inspired to take up drawing and has aspirations to become an artist.
- Work with schools themed around the First World War which received excellent feedback from participating schools.
- A description of the Transparent language online system and its use to promote learning of the Welsh language in particular.

All three projects were very well described, but all would have benefited from additional direct evidence of impact and quotes from users.

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared

between authorities. The following table summarises Carmarthenshire's position for 2016-17. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of the first two years of the framework for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference									
a) new skills	86%	5	19	23%	71%	93%			
c) health and well-being	85%	4	20	26%	56%	94%			
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	8	19	93%	98%	100%			
QI 2 Customer satisfaction									
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	8	20	74%	90%	98%			
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	17	20	90%	99%	100%			
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall	95%	15	20	92%	97%	100%			
d) child rating out of ten	8.7	16	19	8.6	9.1	10.0			
QI 4 User training									
a) attendances per capita	54	8	3	34	248	35	8	48	4
c) informal training per capita	712	1	20	1	156	712	1,017	1/ 19	318 5 / 21
QI 6 Library use									
a) visits per capita	6,171	2	2,453	4,033	6,751	5,939	2	5,341	3
b) virtual visits per capita	1,476	3	21	341	922	2,299	1,264	5	212 22
c) active borrowers per capita	190	6	77	153	235	191	5	133	15
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	218	11	62	214	496	138	16	55	20
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public									
a) equipment	22%	18	21	16%	32%	69%	21%	21	23% 22
QI 12 Supply of requests									
a) % available within 7 days	67%	17	21	48%	70%	82%	67%	19	66% 19
b) % available within 15 days	96%	1	21	65%	85%	96%	96%	1	84% 16
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications									
(v) a) total volunteers	23	13	0	24	209	27	7	17	8
b) total volunteer hours	1,398	9	0	798	5,156	1,662	5	650	10
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£16,271	2	21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£16,586	5 / 21	£15,971 6
b) % on staff	47%	20	21	46%	58%	75%	44%	20 / 21	46% 21
% on information resources	15%	5	21	4%	13%	25%	16%	7 / 21	13% 12
% on equipment and buildings	2%	17	21	0%	4%	20%	2%	17 / 21	7% 8
% on other operational costs	36%	3	21	9%	22%	37%	39%	1 / 21	35% 3
c) capital expenditure per	£0.00	15	21	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	14 / 21	£0 16

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
capita								
Q1 15 Net cost per visit	£2.07	15/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.18	15 / 21	*
Q1 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)								
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.16%	7	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.13%	19	0.52% 22
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.99%	8 / 19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	1.04%	14/19	1.5% 13/19

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

** Income data for 2014-15 not available to calculate this figure.*

Data on Wi-Fi usage has only been provided by three authorities for 2016-17 and so is not included in the table above.

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first two years of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Carmarthenshire conducted a customer satisfaction survey in October/November 2016 which saw reductions on the previous survey (conducted in 2013-14) in the areas of new skills and health and well-being, although they remain above the median for Wales.

Customer satisfaction has increased since the previous survey, but the percentage of adults who rate both customer care and the library overall as very good or good remains below the median for Wales. Levels of formal training have increased this year, with 98% of attendees saying they had been helped to meet their goals – a similar level to last year. Following a large increase in 2015-16, the rate of informal training has reduced by 30% in 2016-17; however, Carmarthenshire maintains the highest level of informal training in Wales. All static service points open for 10 hours or more per week offer the full range of services in support of individual development.

b) Access for all

Carmarthenshire is a sparsely populated county, but meets the target for access to service points. Both physical and virtual visits continue to rise, with Carmarthenshire currently reporting the second highest levels of visits in Wales. Following a marketing initiative to promote Carmarthenshire's wide range of online resources, the number of audio-visual and electronic issues/downloads almost tripled and is now the highest level per capita in Wales. The rate of attendances at events and activities organised by the library has increased by 58% compared to last year and is now above the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life

Carmarthenshire has achieved all three quality indicators with targets in this area, for up-to date and appropriate reading materials and online access, one of only five authorities to do so this year. Spending on the Welsh language has maintained the levels achieved last year and remains above the median for Wales overall. Investment in the book stock is reflected in the proportion of customers who rate the choice of books as good or very good.

All libraries continue to offer public access computers and Wi-Fi. Continued investment in IT equipment has resulted in a 22% increase in the number of networked open access computers, so that Carmarthenshire currently has the fourth highest provision of PC's per capita in Wales. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of time for which public access ICT facilities are used, however, it remains one of the lowest usage rates in Wales, partly as a result of higher availability. The 2016-17 usage rate for public access Wi-Fi was 71%.

The number of request for specific items has tripled since last year, with the percentage of requests satisfied within 15 days the highest reported in Wales.

d) Leadership and development

Total staff has fallen again this year, and Carmarthenshire has failed to meet the staff per capita target. The number of professional staff has been maintained, however, and the per capita level remains above the median for Wales. Carmarthenshire has also experienced a reduction in the number of volunteers, with 23 each giving an average of 61 hours to the service. The percentage of staff time spent training has increased slightly and is the second highest in Wales.

There has been a slight decrease in total revenue expenditure compared to last year, however, only one authority spent more per capita in 2016-17. The net average cost per visit is £2.07, down from £2.18 last year, largely as a result of increased visitor numbers.

4) Strategic context

Carmarthenshire is to develop its service around the five universal offers which promote core messages linking with government policy, library strategies and frameworks, adapted to local needs and priorities.

5) Future direction

A number of service investments are described. A new mobile library fleet will address issues of rural deprivation, digital inclusion, poverty and literacy in rural areas. Funding has been received to develop and enhance Ammanford library. Consultation is taking place to develop a new Archives and Reference Service.

6) Conclusion

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in a number of areas in the course of this framework, against the wider trend. However, overall staffing levels have dropped below the target set for this year. The service is well used with evidence of strategic planning and investment, and in this context, customer satisfaction, which is below the median for Wales, is disappointing. The service is to be commended for providing an excellent narrative in its return.

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30TH JANUARY 2018

STAFF SICKNESS LEVELS

To receive a report on the following issue:

- To receive the response of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee to a referral from the Community Scrutiny Committee in relation to concerns over the increase in sickness absence levels within the authority

Reasons:

- To apprise members of the Committee of the outcome of its referral to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

To be referred to the Executive Board / Council for decision: NO

Executive Board Member Portfolio Holder(s): Cllr. L.M. Stephens – Deputy Leader

Directorate: Chief Executive's Name of Head of Service: Linda Rees Jones Report Author: Kevin Thomas	Designations: Head of Administration & Law Democratic Services Officer	Tel Nos. / E-Mail Addresses: 01267 224010 lrjones@carmarthenshire.gov.uk 01267 224027 kjthomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30th JANUARY 2018**

STAFF SICKNESS LEVELS

Committee may recall considering at its meeting held on the 5th October 2017, the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2016/17 where it raised the following concern in relation to staff sickness levels.

"During consideration of the report references were made to the 0.7% increase in sickness absence levels within the authority from 10.1% to 10.8% and views expressed that the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee, which had the remit for staff absence levels, should take urgent action to examine the reasons for that increase possibly, by re-visiting the work of its previous task and finish group on staff sickness levels.

The Community Scrutiny Committee therefore resolved that:

"the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be requested to give consideration to the increase in staff sickness levels within the Authority, possibly, by revisiting the work of its previous task and finish group thereon."

The Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee Members considered the referral at it's a meeting held on 6th December and appended to this report are the minutes of that meeting together with a copy of a report on sickness absence

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	Yes
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IMPLICATIONS

I confirm that other than those implications which have been agreed with the appropriate Directors / Heads of Service and are referred to in detail below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Signed: Linda Rees Jones

Head of Administration & Law

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	ICT	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications	Physical Assets
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

CONSULTATIONS

I confirm that the appropriate consultations have taken in place and the outcomes are as detailed below:

Signed: Linda Rees Jones

Head of Administration & Law

- 1. Local Member(s) – N/A**
- 2. Community / Town Council – N/A**
- 3. Relevant Partners – N/A**
- 4. Staff Side Representatives and other Organisations – N/A**

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THERE ARE NONE



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EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6 December 2017

12. REFERRAL FROM COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE- STAFF SICKNESS LEVELS

The Committee was advised that the Community Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 5th October 2017, had, following consideration of the Draft Carmarthenshire County Council's Annual Report for 2016/17, resolved that "the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee be requested to give consideration to the increase in staff sickness levels within the Authority, possibly, by revisiting the work of its previous task and finish group thereon."

Members were reminded that the same concerns had been raised at the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee held on the 11th October 2017 [Minute 8 thereof refers] during its consideration of the '2017/18 Well-Being Objectives and Governance & Resources - Departmental Performance Monitoring Report'. It had subsequently resolved that 'a report on sickness absence be submitted to the next meeting'. The report is referred to in minute 13 below.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Community Scrutiny Committee be advised that the Policy and Resources Committee has considered a report on attendance management incorporating sickness management.

13. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT MONITORING REPORT APRIL 2017 TO SEPTEMBER 2017

Further to minute 8 [resolution 8.2] of the last meeting the Committee considered a report on Attendance Management Performance for the period April 2017 to September 2017 which detailed sickness absence figures for the Departments for quarter 2 (April to September) along with benchmarking and performance ranking tables. The report also included a breakdown of the key causes for absence to enable the Committee to scrutinise the council's performance in relation to managing attendance. The Committee was advised that departments were presented with the data on a regular basis and challenged to address any issues of concern.

The Chair thanked officers for arranging the recent informal visit by the committee members to the occupational health unit following which there had been excellent feedback.

The following issues / observations were raised on the report:

- It was noted that improvements in sickness absence figures were being seen in most departments and these were likely to be reflected in the data for quarter 3. An important factor in reducing days lost through sickness was ensuring that appropriate interventions were made in a timely manner. Increased flexible working was also viewed as a contributory factor in reducing staff absence levels. The recently relaunched Employee Wellbeing Service was able to offer a range of therapies to support employees;
- It was noted that all new staff were apprised of the sickness policy, which took a supportive stance, as part of their induction and all managers had responsibility for monitoring absence. The Authority also liaised with colleagues from Hywel Dda University Health Board with regard to the

provision of flu vaccination for employees who were carers or worked in the care sector;

- Members were informed that a recent half day session had been held with headteachers focussing on sickness absence following which there had been a number of queries regarding stress and it was considered that the openness of such approaches was to be welcomed so that the relevant support and intervention could be offered;
- Whilst the report was welcomed it was considered that more in depth data would enable the Committee to better scrutinise sickness absence and, for instance, ascertain non-financial implications such as the effect the employment of a supply teacher due to staff sickness might have on a child's education. Members were advised that more detailed data was available which could be provided;
- Schools had been provided with benchmarking information and a quarterly hr newsletter was also despatched. A schools staff absence scheme had also been launched.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED

13.1 that the report be received;

13.2 that arrangements be made for a development session for members of the Policy and Resources Committee focussing on the issues raised above with a view to enabling members to gain a greater understanding of sickness management within the authority and schools and agreeing the type of data it wishes to see in future reports.

COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30TH JANUARY 2018

FORTHCOMING ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING 16TH FEBRUARY, 2018

Discussion Topic	Background
Quarter 3 – Performance Management Report for the Council's 2017/18 Well-Being Objectives	This item will provide a report on the progress against the actions and measures in the 2017/18 Well-being Objectives Delivery Plan relevant to the Committee's remit, up to the 31 st December, 2017
Budget Monitoring 2017/18	This standard quarterly item enables members to undertake their monitoring role of the Community and Environment Department which fall within its remit
Actions and Referral Update	These quarterly updates provide details on progress made in relation to actions and requests from previous meetings.
Local Resilience Forum Business Plan	This item will provide members with details of the Local Resilience Forum and Business Plan
Counter Terrorism Update	This item will provide members with an update on work undertaken in relation to Counter Terrorism

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COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30TH JANUARY 2018

Explanation for non-submission of scrutiny report

ITEM	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	EXPLANATION	REVISED SUBMISSION DATE
Theatre and Arts Strategy 2018-2022	J. Davies – Senior Cultural Services Manager	Further work is required on the draft strategy	29 th March, 2018

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Friday, 24 November 2017

PRESENT: Councillor S.L. Davies (Chair)

Councillors:

D.M. Cundy, C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.K. Howell, B.W. Jones, H.I. Jones, S. Matthews, H.B. Shepardson, G.B. Thomas and A.Vaughan Owen

Also in attendance:

Councillor C.A. Campbell, Executive Board Member for Communities and Rural Affairs
L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing

The following Officers were in attendance:

R. Staines, Head of Housing and Public Protection
I. Jones, Head of Leisure
H. Morgan, Economic Development Manager
J. Morgan, Housing Services Manager - Investment and Support
J. Willis, Housing Services Manager (Advice & Options)
A. Thomas, Group Accountant
G. Williams, Team Leader
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen - 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES AND OTHER MATTERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor B.A.L. Roberts

The Chair referred to the recent actions of 10 year old Tia Hughes from Llanelli for her quick response in raising the alarm after witnessing smoke emanating from the Granby Flats in Llanelli. She advised that the Housing Department was now liaising with any affected tenants.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
S. Matthews	7 – National Licensing of Landlords and Agents	Landlord
H. Shepardson	7 – National Licensing of Landlords and Agents	Secretary of Social Club in Burry Port that rents out properties
A Davies	7 – National Licensing of Landlords and Agents	Landlord
S.L. Davies	7 – National Licensing of Landlords and Agents	Mother is a landlord

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

No public questions had been received.

5. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COUNCIL OWNED HOUSING COMPANY

The Committee considered a report on proposals by the Council for the establishment of a Council Owned Local Housing Company (The Company) as a development vehicle to accelerate house building within Carmarthenshire and increase the supply of much needed additional homes, whilst also creating jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities, supporting the supply chain and delivering the Council's regeneration ambitions. The Company, if established, would complement the continuing use of the Housing Revenue Account's resources to commission new homes (where it was appropriate to do so) and would also support the Council's Affordable Housing Commitment of March 2016 for alternative housing delivery options to increase the number of homes within the County.

The Committee was advised that The Company would be wholly owned by the Council, would not involve the transfer of any of the Council's existing housing stock (which would continue to be managed and maintained by the Council) or the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employees) of existing staff.

The Committee noted that the report detailed the arrangements for establishing the Company and contained seven recommendations for its consideration and endorsement, if appropriate, to the Executive Board. Those arrangements would include the appointment of five company directors, the preparation of a business plan for approval by the Council together with initial set up costs.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- In response to a question on the development role of the proposed company, the Head of Housing and Public Protection advised it would act as a development vehicle to facilitate the construction of good quality housing within Carmarthenshire via a variety of means/tenure to enable local people to access the housing ladder and could, for example, include homes for sale, rent, sharehold, leasehold and rent to buy. The Company itself would be separate from the Council, operated by five directors, and would not involve the transfer of any council staff.

The Company prior to becoming operational would initially be required to produce a development procedure detailing a range of procedures to ensure the delivery of quality homes through contracting arrangements with local builders and adopting its own 'Quality Assurance'. Secondly, it would need to develop a formal Business Plan, for Council's approval, detailing the initial start-up arrangements in relation to any land/ loans/staff it may receive from the council and payback arrangements.

- Reference was made to page 7 of the report and point 5 thereof relating to the wage to house price ratio of 5:1 in some parts of the county, with the Council's Housing Choice Register recording a significant amount of unmet

housing need, especially so in the rural areas where property values were high with limited supply. Clarification was sought on how the new company could address that inequality.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection confirmed that housing shortages in the rural sector were particularly acute, the reasons for which were varied and could include the past sale of council properties, the lack of affordable homes or the wrong types of tenure. As part of discussions on how that shortfall could be addressed, work had been undertaken in conjunction with five rural communities to assess local need in their areas, how that could be quantified and peoples aspirations for different types of tenure.

Having regard to those assessments, he reminded the Committee of the Council's limitations in addressing housing difficulties throughout the County, not just in the rural areas, but that it had, in an attempt to alleviate those difficulties, suspended the right to buy legislation. The new company, by operating outside of the limitations placed upon local authorities, would be able to provide low cost housing solely for local people.

- In response to a question on whether any new homes would be of innovative low carbon design and build, the Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that the new company would have the opportunity to both look at alternative types of provision and have the freedom to work with local companies/builders to offer a range of different products based on local requirements, planning considerations and market values. It would also be able to work with local builders to create apprenticeships, thereby extending the local skill base.
- Reference was made to the Council's endeavours to participate in, and encourage private property owners to return some of the estimated 2,000 empty residential properties in the County to habitable use, and whether the new company would undertake a similar role.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that, typically, the new company would not be venturing into that field as that was, primarily, a housing function. He re-affirmed that the purpose of the new company would be to act as a development vehicle to facilitate the provision of new low cost homes, as detailed within its business plan

- Section 106 Agreements were used throughout the County as a means of raising additional finance towards the provision of affordable homes. Would the new company have access to those funds to assist in kick starting housing development?

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that any decision on the allocation of Section 106 funding to the company would be a matter for the Council to determine. Currently, funding derived from those agreements in most wards was generally small and had been utilised to buy back properties for social rent. To date, those funds had assisted in the purchase of 60 properties, 13 of which had been in the rural areas.

- Whilst an expression of support was received for the principle of the company's establishment, clarification was sought on whether the company would also be building for social housing. If so, how would that operate and would those properties be maintained by the Housing Revenue Account?

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that the intent of the company would be to provide a balanced portfolio of properties, as detailed within its business plan, and should any rented properties be provided they could be managed and allocated by the Housing Department under agency arrangements. Those properties could also be sold to the HRA, but with the proviso any sale would be dependent upon grant funding, and the properties complying with the CHS standards. As the company's intent was to build homes for sale to supplement social housing provision, the council would need to determine whether any profit made by the company should be re-invested in building more homes or, returned to the Council.

- The Committee's attention was drawn to a recent advertisement for the sale of council owned land for development purposes and whether that could be considered short sighted having regard to the current proposal.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection reminded the committee of his earlier comment on the development of a business plan for the company, and reported that a member of the Council's Property Division would be involved in its development when consideration would be given to identifying land in the Council's ownership which could be made available to the company to develop.

- References were made to the importance of the company being profitable and to whether the Council or the Executive Board would make the final decision on its establishment.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection reported that he understood establishment of the Company was an Executive Decision and fell within the remit of the Executive Board. However, acceptance of the Business Plan was a Council Function.

- Reference was made to the proposal for the company's Board of Directors to have 5 directors, comprising one member, two officers and two independents and to whether consideration should be given to increasing the level of member representation.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection reported that legal advice obtained on the Board's composition stated the more elected members appointed, the less independent it would become, have less freedom and the appearance of being a council body. As such, the more direct control the council exercised over the company, the more it would have to abide by its rules and the regulations and legislation governing public bodies including adherence to procurement policies thereby, affecting its ability to operate locally and employ local builders.

The appointment of the proposed 5 directors mirrored the establishment of similar local authority owned companies. Those appointed would need to have the appropriate knowledge and skills to be directors and also have construction skills. There would be limitations on the type of director appointed for example, the staff representative could not be the Section 151 Officer due to a conflict of interest. If the Committee felt a different board make up was appropriate, that would need to be referred to the Executive Board for determination.

Arising from the above, a view was expressed supporting the appointment of 5 directors on the basis increasing that number could make the Board

unwieldy and potentially impact on its ability to meet its core objectives and remain viable.

- As the company would be independent of the Council, clarification was sought on what level of control could be exercised over it if it was considered to be operating not in accordance with its principles/not delivering its established aims.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection reminded the Committee that Council, as the sole shareholder, had responsibility for appointing the company Directors who, in turn, had a legal responsibility to the company. The Council had the power to appoint and change those Directors if that was considered to be appropriate for example if the company was not achieving its delivery targets, as identified within the performance reports submitted to the shareholder. The key underpinning document in that regard was the Shareholders Agreement reflecting the relationship between the company and the Council. The company would only be allowed to operate in a certain way and would require the shareholders consent to operate outside of its stated parameters for example, it would not be allowed to borrow large sums of money or purchase land outside of the County without the shareholders consent.

- Reference was made to the use of the Council's staff in the company's initial establishment and to whether that would be ongoing or, if their participation could be considered to be a conflict of interest.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that it was imperative the establishment of the company was financially viable/operationally sustainable and in that regard, use would be made of existing council staff with the relevant skills and expertise during the initial set-up period. Where those skills were not available in-house, external services would be commissioned. If, however, after the initial operating period, it became evident the company would need to employ staff that would need to be referred to the Council for consideration. He re-affirmed the position that the establishment of the company would not involve the transfer of any of the council's employees' and they would remain in the Council's employ.

- In response to a question relating to secure tenancies, the Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that the council's tenants had secure tenancies detailing their rights and responsibilities which were greater than that provided by the private sector. As the proposed company was not a public body, it would not be able to provide secure tenancies. However, if it were to develop properties for rent that were subsequently sold back to the Council, the tenancy agreement would convert to a secure tenancy.
- Arising from the above, a question was asked on whether the company could establish its own lettings company and introduce control measures to protect tenants from eviction and their subsequent presentation to the Council as homeless

The Head of Housing and Public Protection reminded the Committee that the Council currently operated a lettings agency which it was trying to further develop. There had been no discussion on the company being involved in lettings, with its primary function being to develop sites for the provision of affordable housing. If at some time properties were developed for let it was anticipated they would be channelled through the council's lettings agency.

Arising from the above, clarification was sought on whether the Business Plan would be sufficiently robust to ensure the company's primary role was to develop properties and not compete with the Council's lettings role.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection in response referred the Committee to point 17 on Page 67 of the report in relation to the production of an annual business plan that prohibited any amendment thereto without the Council's prior consent.

- Reference was made to the assumption the Council would make some of its landholdings available to the company to develop. Clarification was sought on whether the company would have to purchase land privately if council land was not made available.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection confirmed that initially the company would not be seeking to follow that route, with the emphasis being on developing council land. However, that would not preclude liaison/partnerships with the private sector in the long term.

- In response to a question as to where the final decision would be made on which sites would be developed and any priority listing accorded thereto the Committee was advised those would be made by the Directors, according to the development potential and viability of each site.
- Reference was made to the submission of the Business Plan to the Council, as part of the budget proposals and a view expressed the Council should receive a presentation on that plan.
- Reference was made to the proposals for the company to invest approximately £50m in developing homes within the County and clarification sought on how it would raise that level of funding.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that whilst the money would be expended over a period of time an assumption had been made it would be raised by the County Council via the Public Works Loan Board under a formal loan agreement with the Company.

- In response to a question on the remuneration of the 5 Directors, the Head of Housing and Public Protection believed the elected member and staff directors would not receive any remuneration, but that the two external directors may.
- In response to a question, the Head of Housing and Public Protection confirmed that as the company would not be bound by the Council's procurement rules, it would be able to appoint local builders to undertake developments on a site specific basis, subject to compliance with its procurement strategy

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD THAT:-

- 5.1 The report on the proposed establishment of a Council Owned Housing Company and the seven recommendations incorporated therein be adopted**
- 5.2 It be requested to give consideration to a presentation being made to the Council on the Company's Business Plan**

6. INTRODUCTION OF A 'CHOICE BASED LETTINGS' PROCESS FOR COUNCIL HOUSING IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

The Committee received for consideration a report on proposals for the introduction of a 'Choice Based Lettings' process for Council Housing in Carmarthenshire whereby the Council would openly advertise vacant properties and invite people on the Housing Choice Register to bid for the tenancy of those properties, as opposed to the current policy of offering properties to prospective tenants. The new process, if adopted, was considered to be beneficial to both tenants and the Council in that it:

- Was open and transparent in relation to vacancies;
- Ensured applicants who expressed an interest in a particular property wanted the home rather than accepted it on the basis there was a penalty if they refused,
- Was more likely the successful applicant would accept the property and stay longer (making for more sustainable tenancies and communities)
- Provided the authority with real time planning data regarding the popularity/desirability of its homes, which should influence the asset management strategy and affordable homes commitment,
- Reduced staff time spent identifying applicants,
- Reduced property refusals
- Complemented the Council's 'do it on-line' programme.

The report also identified how the new service would be delivered, primarily on a digital basis via the Council's on-line services whilst also making provision for the most vulnerable and others without digital services to access the system and submit bids for a property.

The Following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- It was confirmed that local members would receive a weekly list of available properties on a similar basis to the weekly planning lists they currently received.
- In response to a question on how a property was to be allocated in light of multiple bids being received, the Housing Services Manager (Advice and Options), confirmed all allocations would be made in accordance with the Council's Allocations Policy.
- Reference was made to the statement in the report that 83% of households in Carmarthenshire had internet access. Clarification was sought on how the Council intended making the weekly vacancy lists available to the remaining 17%.

The Housing Services Manager referred the Committee to the written report which detailed a range of options being pursued including, advertising the list in the Councils libraries, customer service centres and other public buildings. The Council would also work with third sector organisations and local business to gauge their interest in helping to promote the available homes e.g. local shops and post offices. Homeless persons would have assistance via the Council's Housing Advice Service. Additionally, the system would enable vulnerable persons, or those without internet access, to nominate someone to submit a bid on their behalf.

- Whilst the proposals to be put in place to assist non internet users to bid for properties were welcomed, an assurance was sought on whether the Council would be able to continue to provide support to those people.

The Committee was assured that support was provided to prospective tenants seeking inclusion on the Housing Choice Register whereby a significant amount of pre-tenancy information was obtained on their ability to meet their obligations as council tenants.

- Reference was made to the suggested 3-5 day time period for applicants to bid for a property and to whether that was too restrictive, given the fact people did not always access the internet daily.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised that a longer time period would result in a longer void period. One of the advantages of the proposed new system was that it was considered tenants who applied for a property did so on the basis they liked the house and its locality thereby potentially living in the property longer and achieving a long term reduction in the number of void properties.

- The Head of Housing and Public Protection referred to comments expressed on the need to ensure the weekly availability lists were advertised as widely as possible. He advised that should the Council endorse the proposal to move to a Choice Based Lettings Process, the next step in that process required the development of a communication plan detailing how those lists could be communicated/made available to prospective tenants.
- Reference was made to one of the stated advantages of the proposed new system being that the Council would have real time planning data available on the popularity/desirability of its homes to influence its asset management strategy and affordable homes commitment. In circumstances whereby properties had been identified as being hard to let, a question was asked on the courses of action available for their future.

The Head of Housing and Public Protection advised if a property remained un-let for a period of six months an assessment would be made on its future which could include sale and the resultant income being utilised to invest in or build properties elsewhere.

- It was confirmed that if the Council were to approve the new lettings process, it was projected to be introduced in April 2018, subject to the appropriate I.T. systems being fully tested and operational.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD THAT the Council's process for lettings homes be changed in favour of a 'Choice Based Lettings' approach.

7. NATIONAL LICENSING OF LANDLORDS AND AGENTS

(NOTE: Councillors A. Davies, S.L. Davies, S. Matthews and H.B. Shepardson had earlier declared an interest in this item but remained in the meeting during its consideration)

The Committee, further to its meeting held in September 2016, received a progress report on the national licensing of landlords and agents under the Provisions of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 that made it a legal requirement for all

landlords and agents who managed or let private sector homes in Wales to obtain a licence.

The Committee noted that with regard to Carmarthenshire the progress was:

1. 5,043 landlords had registered 9,261 properties representing 82% of the private rented stock,
2. 1,280 landlords had obtained a licence with a further 922 currently being processed by Rent Smart Wales.
3. 189 agents had obtained a licence
4. 43 warning letters had been issued and one fixed penalty notice issued.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- It was confirmed that owners of second homes in Wales did not fall within the requirements of the Legislation and were not required to register their properties with Rent Smart Wales.
- Reference was made to the aims and aspirations of the legislation to improve the quality of landlords and to whether those were being met.

It was confirmed that the scheme was aimed at improving or eradicating bad landlords with a view to having well managed properties within the rented housing sector. However, with that aim in mind, it had to be accepted a majority of those landlords were accidental landlords who may not be aware of their responsibilities. The new legislation was also aimed at raising their awareness and understanding of those responsibilities.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

8. REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18

The Committee considered the 2017/18 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring reports for the Housing, Regeneration, Planning and Leisure and Recreation Services for the period up to the 31st August, 2017. It was noted that the revenue budget was forecasting a £389k overspend, the capital budget a £1,407k underspend, whilst the Housing Revenue Account was forecasting a £21k underspend.

The following issues were raised during consideration of the report:-

- Reference was made to the projected £482k overspend within the Planning Division representing a £40k increase on that previously reported to the Committee at its October Meeting. Clarification was sought on the reason for that increase.

The Committee was advised that as the Head of Planning was not in attendance at the meeting, arrangements would be made to e-mail the information direct to the Committee Members.

- In response to a question on the projected £19k underspend on homelessness, the Housing Services Manager (advice and options) advised that was attributable to a number of factors. Firstly, the Department's pro-active prevention arrangements on homelessness had resulted in a 50% reduction over the previous five years. Secondly, the Authority received additional Welsh Government funding to support the provision of housing for the homeless.

- In response to concerns expressed on the introduction of Universal Credit and the potential that had for tenants unable to pay their rent being evicted, the Housing Services Manager advised that a report was currently being prepared on Universal Credit for submission to a future meeting of the Committee.
- In response to a question on the £56k overspend in Rent Payments, it was reported that related to an overcharge of water charges for some people living in sheltered housing as a consequence of their water meters having been connected by Welsh Water to the incorrect properties.
- In response to a question on the £45k overspend on UN Sir Gar, the Committee was advised it related to unrealised rental income from vacant accommodation and that efforts were being made to let the vacant space.
- In response to a question relating to the £393k overspend on Adaptations and DDA works, the committee was advised it had resulted from an increased demand for services, some of which involved the provision of extensions to properties. As a result of that increase, an assessment was being made on whether additional provision for such works should be made in the HRA Business Account.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18 be received.

9. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its meeting to be held on the 14th December, 2017, and its attention drawn to the high number of agenda items to be presented to that meeting. As a result, it was requested to approve the following suggested amendments to that schedule:

- The Reports on both the Local Resilience Forum – Business Plan and the Counter Terrorism Update being re-scheduled for consideration at the February 2018 meeting;
- The withdrawal of the report on the Commons Act 2006, which would now be considered as part of the budget setting process for the setting of fees and charges.

In addition to the above report, the Committee noted that appended thereto for its information was a copy of both its, and the Executive Board's, Forward Work Programmes

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that subject to the above amendments the list of forthcoming items for the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 14th December, 2017 be received.

10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee considered the explanation provided for the non-submission of a report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the non-submission report be noted.

11. SCRUTINY ACTION UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the progress achieved in relation to actions, requests or referrals emerging from previous meetings.

It was noted that subsequent to the despatch of the Agenda for the meeting the information requested in Action CS006-17/18 on energy consumption data had been conveyed to members of the Committee and that action was now completed

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report be received.

12. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THE 5TH OCTOBER 2017

The Committee received for adoption as a correct record the minutes of its meeting held on the 5th October, 2017 and its attention drawn to the erroneous inclusion of Councillor Betsan Jones in the list of apologies.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that, subject to the above, the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 5th October, 2017 be signed as a correct record.

CHAIR

DATE

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Thursday, 14 December 2017

PRESENT: Councillor S.L. Davies (Chair)

Councillors:

D.M. Cundy, C.A. Davies, W.R.A. Davies, H.L. Davies, J.K. Howell, B.W. Jones, H.I. Jones, S. Matthews, H.B. Shepardson, A.Vaughan Owen, S.J.G. Gilasbey (In place of G.B. Thomas) and J.G. Prosser (In place of B.A.L. Roberts)

Also in attendance:

Councillor L.D. Evans, Executive Board Member for Housing
P. Hughes-Griffiths, Executive Board Member for Culture, Sport and Tourism

The following Officers were in attendance:

C. Moore, Director of Corporate Services
W. Walters, Director of Regeneration & Policy
R. Staines, Head of Housing and Public Protection
I. Jones, Head of Leisure
L. Quelch, Head of Planning
S. Walters, Economic Development Manager
J. Fearn, Head of Property
I.R. Llewelyn, Forward Planning Manager
S. Jones, Senior Accountant
S. Sauro, Performance Review Officer
R. Phillips, European Programmes Manager
K. Thomas, Democratic Services Officer

Chamber, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen - 2.00 - 4.05 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B.A.L. Roberts and G.B. Thomas.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

Councillor	Minute Number	Nature of Interest
Aled Vaughan Owen	5 - Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2018/19 – 2020/21	Licence Holder – Gwendraeth Sports Hall
Hugh Shepardson	5 - Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2018/19 – 2020/21	Season Ticket Holder for Pembrey Country Park
Shirley Matthews	5 - Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation 2018/19 – 2020/21	Season Ticket Holder for Pembrey Country Park
Ann Davies	6 - Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021	Towy Valley Path affects land she farms

3. DECLARATION OF PROHIBITED PARTY WHIPS

There were no declarations of prohibited party whips.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (NONE RECEIVED)

No public questions had been received.

5. REVENUE BUDGET STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2018/19 to 2020/21

(NOTE: Councillors S. Matthews, H. Shepardson and A. Vaughan-Owen had earlier declared interests in this item)

The Committee considered the Revenue Budget Strategy 2018/19 to 2020/21 (Appendix A) which had been endorsed by the Executive Board for consultation purposes at its meeting on 27th November 2017. The report provided Members with the current view of the Revenue Budget for 2018/2019 together with indicative figures for the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 financial years. The report was based on officers' projections of spending need and took into account the provisional settlement issued by Welsh Government on 10th October 2017.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that although the announced provisional settlement of -0.5% was significantly better than the anticipated -2%, it still meant the authority had to identify efficiency savings for 2018/19 of £8.544m, compared to the initial £12.527m, and would continue to have a negative impact on the Council's resources.

In summary, the budget proposals would assume full delivery of the £25.6m identified savings over the plan period. Furthermore, the budget proposals assumed a Council tax increase of 4.12% for 2018/19 and that a 1% movement in council tax levels equated to +/-£820k.

The Committee considered the following detailed budget information appended to the Strategy relevant to its remit:

- **Appendix A(i)** – Efficiency summary for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix A(ii)** – Growth Pressures summary for the Planning Service (none for the Regeneration, Leisure and Non HRA Services);
- **Appendix B** – Budget extracts for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;
- **Appendix C** – Charging Digest for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Housing Services;

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the impact on the budget of school based Early Voluntary Retirement and redundancy costs and what measures were being taken to address those.

The Director of Corporate Services confirmed they were being examined as part of the Council's Human Resources Policies and included the possibility

of staff facing redundancy being relocated to an alternative school seeking to employ staff.

- The Director of Regeneration and Policy in response to a question on the Physical Regeneration Budget, advised that the increased budget was, in part, attributable to the inclusion within the accounts of the asset value of the Council's properties, including recent acquisitions within Llanelli Town Centre.
- Reference was made to a past proposal for introduction of a Universal Pass for residents of the County to access the councils' country parks and other attractions and information was requested on the current position.

The Head of Leisure confirmed discussions were continuing on the proposal, specifically the I.T requirements. He also advised that consideration was being afforded to introducing a 5-7 day pass to the Council's country parks which, if realised, would be included within the Charging Digest at a later date.

- The Head of Leisure referred to a question on the proposed reductions in the fees and charges levied by the Council for the hire of equipment at its theatres, and confirmed they were being suggested as a means of making the service more cost effective and, hopefully, increase hire rates.
- In response to a question on cross linking the council's leisure and tourism destinations with the public sector, it was confirmed that was undertaken wherever possible and included publication of a hotel brochure and working with the private sector on introducing discounts.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:

- 5.1 The 2018/19 – 2020/21 Revenue Budget Strategy Consultation be received.**
- 5.2 The Charging Digest for the Regeneration, Leisure, Planning and Non HRA Services, as detailed in Appendix C to the report be endorsed.**

6. COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENTAL DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - 2021

(NOTE: Councillor A. Davies had earlier declared an interest in this item).

The Committee considered the Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Housing Services and Leisure Services. It was noted that further work would be undertaken on the draft following comments and engagement by the Committee and Executive Board Members.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the increased popularity of cycling and whether the Authority had/could produce maps of cycle routes within the county for placing within Tourist Information Centres and other appropriate venues.

The Head of Leisure advised that whilst responsibility for the promotion of those routes lay with the Environment Department, in association with Sustrans, the Leisure Services Division was currently preparing a report on a new cycling strategy for submission to Council in the New Year.

The Director of Regeneration and Policy advised that she would ascertain what information was currently available on cycling routes within the County and arrange for that to be displayed on the Council's website, if possible.

- In response to a question on the development timescale for the Towy Valley Path, the Committee was advised that whilst it had initially been programmed for development within the Council's Five Year Capital Programme, it was now programmed for completion in three years subject to a number of factors including land acquisition negotiations and funding.
- Clarification was sought on the proposal to celebrate Carmarthenshire's Culture through the establishment of an Annual Culture Award event.

It was confirmed the event would be held on the 6th April, 2018 in the Ffwrnes Theatre and was aimed at providing an opportunity of celebrating Carmarthenshire's culture. The event would include honouring individuals together with an Awards Ceremony spread over six categories.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Communities Departmental Draft Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 be received.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - 2021

The Committee considered the report on the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Economic Development and Property and Major Projects.

The Director of Regeneration and Policy provided an overview of the work undertaken during 2017/18 and proposals over the plan period including responsibility for the governance of £476m of funding from the City Deal , development of the Wellness Centre, job creation, Phase 2 of the Cross Hands Development and evaluating the potential impact of Brexit on the County.

The following issues/questions were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the future of the Council's Parc Amanwy Offices and it was confirmed that, as a consequence of an expression of interest by the private sector in occupying the property, consideration was being afforded to the options available to the Council to accommodate staff currently based in the building including, relocation and agile working. It was confirmed the property was not closing.
- Concern was expressed at the impact of bank closures, particularly in attracting people to rural towns and villages within the county. The Director of Regeneration and Policy advised that the point was recognised, and such impacts were being considered as part of a future Rural Towns Initiative to support communities affected by such closures. A similar position had occurred with the closure of rural post offices whereby, the post office was encouraged to provide its services in partnership with other businesses and perhaps an opportunity existed for the banks to pursue a similar course of action. However, such closures were ultimately a commercial decision taken by the banks, and the Council, as a local authority had little, or no, influence over their decisions.
- In response to a question on the proposals for the further development of Un Sir Gar via the use of 'outreach vans', the Director of Regeneration and

Policy confirmed proposals were advanced for their introduction in 2018 in the three main town centres by utilising the existing mobile library vehicles.

- Reference was made to the promotion of the Welsh Language on strategic development sites and to what influence the Council had on encouraging those businesses to promote the Language.

The Director of Regeneration and Policy advised that although the Council had little influence over private business, any business grant aid awarded by the Council was conditional upon the recipient complying with its Welsh Language Policy.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Chief Executive's Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 be received

8. ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENTAL BUSINESS PLAN 2018/19 - 2021

The Committee considered the report on the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 in relation to those services falling within its remit i.e. Planning Services and Property and outlining the priorities for the department over the Plan's timeframe.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- The Forward Planning Manager in response to a question on the importance of linking planning with the Council's Well Being Objectives confirmed the issues of sustainability and sustainable development were embedded within the planning processes.
- Concern was expressed on the impact large developments planned within the Llanelli area could/were having on the local infrastructure and services. The Forward Planning Manager acknowledged past difficulties had occurred with such developments and confirmed the planning division now placed an emphasis on drawing various parties together at the outset of a development e.g. Local Health Board, Education and Highways to discuss potential infrastructure implications.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Environment Departmental Business Plan 2018/19 – 2021 be received.

9. CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2006 - 2021 REVIEW REPORT

The Committee considered a report on proposals for a review to be undertaken of the Local Development Plan in accordance with Council's decision at its meeting held on the 20th September, 2017 (minute 10.3 refers). It was noted that the Review Report detailed the extent of the changes required to the LDP together with the review procedure to be followed in preparing a replacement LDP for a plan period up to 31st March 2033. The Review Report had been informed by the findings of previous Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) (including feedback on the implementation of the current LDP) and on- going surveys. It was recommended a full revision of the plan be undertaken for the following principal reasons:-

- To ensure the revised plan was adopted prior to the expiration of the Current LDP at the end of 2021;

- To recognise the outcomes of the AMR's, notable where it indicated failures in the delivery of the LDP strategy, the settlement framework and the spatial distribution of growth. In that respect both the level and spatial distribution of growth needed to be considered in order to establish whether the current strategy was the most appropriate for delivering growth up to 31st March 2033;
- To ensure the implications of the 2014 based Local Authority Population and Household Sub-National Projections and the significant variance in population change and household requirements which were indicated were robustly considered. There was a need to understand the implications of those revised projections, and to consider them within the context of Carmarthenshire and of job creation, growth and inward investment, (including regeneration through the City Deal). To achieve that would require a review of the strategic approach set out within the LDP.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:-

- Reference was made to the importance of the LDP revision and a view expressed that the Executive Board should be requested to arrange for members to receive a presentation on the proposals
- The Committee's attention was drawn to the 15,187 Housing Provision within the existing LDP and to the Welsh Government's projection for that to reduce to 3,000. Concern was expressed at the level of reduction and whether the WG's projections were accurate, having regard to the level of development proposed for the county, especially in the Llanelli area with the creation of the Wellness Centre and other planned developments which, together, totalled in excess of 1800 units.

The Forward Planning Manager advised that whilst the WG's projections were trend based and took no account of policy interventions by the Council, the Council was able to challenge those and formulate figures more appropriate for the county

The Head of Housing and Public Protection referred to the projected allocation, and advised that whilst based on demographics, it did not represent need within the county for residential/retirement homes and different types of tenure. As a local housing authority, the Council undertook regular local housing market assessments to obtain a better understanding of the types of homes required which, was then reflected in strategic plans.

The Forward Planning Manager expressed the view that the projected allocation understated demand within the County and a figure in the region of 8,000 residential units, spread across the county, would be more appropriate. Any allocation in the region of the revised projection could hinder development.

The Director of Regeneration and Policy reminded the Committee that a significant degree of regeneration and development occurred as a consequence of housing developments which, in turn, was re-invested within the County. It was unlikely the revised housing projection did not take account of all the regeneration projects currently proposed for the

county, or the fact housebuilders were actively targeting Carmarthenshire for development.

- Reference was made to the Council's hierarchy for development across the county set out in four clear 'tiers'. Whilst evidence supported the fact tiers 1 and 4 were delivering development expectations, tiers 2 and 3 were not. A view was expressed that the revised LDP should enable development to occur within all four tiers.

The Forward Planning Manager reminded the Committee that in developing the Plan the Council would need to have regard to the National Planning Policy Framework. However, the way the Plan provided for settlements and supported communities was equally important.

- In response to a question on the proposed development master plan for Llanelli Town Centre, the Director of Regeneration and Policy advised that work was continuing on its development with a view to it being presented to the Town Forum. If the Forum's support was forthcoming, the masterplan would be submitted to the Council for consideration.

Arising from the above, reference was made to the significant development proposals for the Wellness Centre and other developments within the area. A view was expressed that as those developments could impact on the town centre, and its infrastructure, it was imperative all elements of the masterplan dovetailed.

The Director of Regeneration and Policy advised that a Transport Strategy had been developed to assess the potential impact of such developments on the Town Centre which would be taken into consideration as part of the masterplan's formulation and ensure the viability of any future regeneration proposals for Llanelli Town centre.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD/COUNCIL:

- 9.1 That the Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2006-2021 Review Report be accepted and a full review of the Plan be undertaken**
- 9.2 That a Members Seminar be arranged on the Review Report.**

10. EXPLANATION FOR NON-SUBMISSION OF SCRUTINY REPORT

The Committee considered the explanation provided for the non-submission of a report.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the non-submission report be received.

11. REVISED CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018 - 2033 - DRAFT DELIVERY AGREEMENT AND DRAFT SITE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The Committee received the revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018-2033 Draft Delivery Agreement and Site Methodology produced as part of

the Council's decision in September 2017 to undertake a full or partial review of the Existing LDP. It was noted the Draft Delivery Agreement detailed the timetable for the Plan's preparation and the Community Involvement Scheme in relation to consultation and engagement.

The following questions/issues were raised on the report:

- Reference was made to the fact allocated housing sites within the existing LDP would not automatically be included within the revised Plan, with landowners having to re-apply for their inclusion. Clarification was requested on whether those land owners had been advised accordingly.

The Forward Planning Manager confirmed all land owners/developers had been advised of the requirement to re-register their sites 12 months previously. Notices would also be issued shortly advising them of the need to examine the Review Report, be aware of the site candidate process and what information would be required as part of any application for a site's inclusion within the Plan.

- The Forward Planning Manager confirmed preparation of the Draft Agreement/Site Methodology were required to be produced as part of the Plan's processes for submission to the Welsh Government for approval to commence the Review. It was anticipated the revised plan would be subject to formal inspection by a Welsh Government appointed inspector in 2020.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT IT BE RECOMMENDED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD/COUNCIL THAT the Revised Carmarthenshire Local Development Plan 2018- 2033 Draft Delivery Agreement and Draft Site Assessment Methodology reports be adopted.

12. FORTHCOMING ITEMS

The Committee received a list of forthcoming items to be considered at its next meeting to be held on the revised date of the 30th January, 2018 and noted that the proposed report on the New Vision Theatre Services Report had been deferred to its February meeting.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that, subject to the above amendment, the list of forthcoming items for the meeting of the Committee to be held on the 30th January, 2018 be received.

CHAIR

DATE