

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

Report Author:

Angie Bowen

Investing in Homes Lead

AnBowen@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
(01554) 899292

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 |