

# COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY, 2019

## THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+) Business Plan 2019-22

### 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 2019/20, 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 £45m over the next three years.
- To build on our successful Affordable Homes Plan by introducing a very ambitious Transformational Plan that will deliver over 900 Council homes within the next 10 years with a total investment of over £100m. The investment, already confirmed, over the three years of this plan will be nearly £44m.
- To make members' aware that the delivery of the Plan is dependent on an average rent increase of 2.4% for 2019/20.
- To enable submission to the WG to access £6.1m of MRA for 2019/20.

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

Executive Board Decision Required: Yes- 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

Council Decision Required: Yes- 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2019

### 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:
<b>Name of Head of Service:</b> Jonathan Morgan	Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities	JMorgan@carmarthenshire.gov.uk (01267) 227285
<b>Report Author:</b> Angie Bowen	Acting Investment and Income Manager	AnBowen@carmarthenshire.gov.uk (01554) 899292

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**COMMUNITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**DATE: 23<sup>RD</sup> JANUARY, 2019**

**THE CARMARTHENSHIRE HOMES STANDARD PLUS (CHS+)**  
**Business Plan 2019-22**

**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 2019/20, 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. Nearly £45m has been set aside to maintain the CHS+ for existing tenants over the next three years.

Additionally, through careful programme management and taking opportunities, we are able to spend nearly £44m over the next three years on building more council homes. This is part of our very ambitious 10 year transformational new build plans to deliver over 900 new Council homes, with a total investment of nearly £150m. This programme will align with our existing plans, Cartrefi Croeso delivery and wider regeneration initiatives across the County.

This year, we are also proposing that keep the average rent increase for 2019/20 to **2.4%**.

**Supporting Tenants and Residents**

As part of the CHS+, we continue to support tenants and residents in everything we do. We believe we should give our tenants the opportunity to influence decisions about their homes, the area they live in and ensure the services they receive are value for money. Tenants have told us that they would like us to focus on providing more advice and support for them with bills and benefits, which will help them to maintain their home. As a result:

- We will change the current structures of tenant involvement to encourage more involvement from under-represented groups. We will also improve systems for gathering and acting on tenant feedback, and continue to use 'Planning for Real' as a method of engagement and consultation on estate issues. We plan to increase the use of digital services, survey our tenants (STAR Survey) to establish baseline information, re-survey every three years and periodically on single issues;
- We will focus on providing more advice and support to tenants in managing their monthly budgets. We will also 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;
- We will continue to expand the pre-tenancy service to provide support and training to applicants and potential new tenants before a tenancy begins. We will also focus on pre-tenancy work to minimise rent arrears, maximise income for both us and tenants and improve tenancy sustainability; and
- We will 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 £45m will be invested.

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+;
- Continue to identify homes where tenants have refused part or all of the intended CHS+ works, and agree with them when works are to be programmed;
- 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;
- Install low carbon technologies on a small number of our homes, and analyse the results in terms of costs, benefits to tenants and ease of use. This will enable us to better understand the potential for helping tenants to reduce their energy bills, improve the comfort of their homes and reduce carbon emissions to levels set by Welsh Government;
- Continue to make void properties available for letting as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available, whilst striving to meet CHS+;
- Continue to 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; and
  - completing option appraisals on sites that may need changing/ converting into homes that can better meet housing need.

## THEME 2 - Providing more Homes.

We are well on our way to delivering our initial 1,000 additional affordable home target by 2021 through our current planning- but we want to do more!

We plan to further increase the supply of affordable housing, building on what has already been achieved. We have recently announced plans to build 900 Council homes over the next 10 years with a total investment of nearly £150m.

Over the next three years, an additional 250 Council homes will be built with an investment of nearly £44m. This programme will further support the current earmarked developments of the recently established housing company 'Cartrefi Croeso'. The Company will not only deliver a mix of new affordable homes for sale or rent, but will also offer families additional choices as alternatives to social housing.

Through careful financial planning in terms of borrowing we have been able to open up some exciting opportunities for Carmarthenshire in terms of building more Council homes. This will enable the Council and its housing stock to play a pivotal role in not only developing much needed social housing but also delivering wider Council priorities to grow the economy.

As a result, this plan will now be able to:

- Continue to provide a range of solutions to deliver more affordable homes, including building new homes, 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';
- Align our 10 year ambitious new build programme with Cartrefi Croeso plans to develop new build homes, in order to maximise future opportunities; and
- Use our new build programme to further support wider regeneration initiatives, including rural areas.

On a wider scale 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 the project will create a new industry in the region which will develop and build innovative energy technologies.

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.

### Recommendation 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 2019/20 MRA Application.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES – Carmarthenshire Homes Standard PLUS (CHS+)  
Business Plan 2019/2022

# 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: Jonathan Morgan

Acting Head of Homes and Safer Communities

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

## 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 and programmes.

## 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 £240m to achieve and maintain 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 over the next three years is included in the plan.

A general rent increase of 2.4% for 2019/20 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 2019 will mean the MRA of £6.1m for 2019/20 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.

## CONSULTATIONS

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

Signed: Jonathan Morgan Acting 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 2019/2022	Housing General Files	Council website- Democratic Services