



## SPECIAL CABINET – 12TH MARCH 2025

**SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY HOMES WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD PROGRAMME BOARD**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report proposes the creation of a Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Programme Board. The report details the rationale for the establishment of the Board and sets out the governance arrangements that are required by Caerphilly Homes to facilitate the delivery of the core objectives of the new WHQS Programme.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The purpose of this Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) is to improve the quality of social homes in Wales. Welsh Government continues to drive up the Standard of existing social housing by setting a demanding Standard which all social landlords in Wales are legally obliged to meet. It is widely recognised that living in a quality home brings a wide range of benefits to health, learning and prosperity. This supports the Government's desire to improve outcomes in health and wellbeing and educational attainment as well as alleviating poverty and reducing carbon emissions.
- 2.2 WHQS sets the target for the condition of all social housing in Wales and its implementation started in April 2024. The Standard was originally introduced in 2002 and has been successful in raising the quality of social homes in Wales. This level of quality must be maintained and stretched further, taking account of changes and expectations in, and impacts from, the wider world such as climate change and technical advancements in building fabric.
- 2.3 The improved WHQS standard is a continuation of the original standard with additional areas of focus such as "affordable warmth and decarbonisation" and "biodiversity". These enhancements, particularly part 3 "affordable warmth and decarbonisation", will mean a renewed assessment of all Caerphilly Homes properties.
- 2.4 This will necessitate a significant level of preparatory work, surveying all properties, programming the refurbishment work in the most systematic and considerate way. Clearly communicating these processes and procedures to our tenants is paramount and setting up the correct governance structures and quality assurance is critical to the success of meeting Welsh Government's ambitious objective of all social housing properties becoming SAP92/EPC A by 2034.

- 2.5 The establishment of the WHQS Programme Board will ensure that all decisions respect the needs of Caerphilly Homes tenants, in parallel with Welsh Government ambitions for all social housing properties. Whilst having a view to the regulatory requirements, funding parameters and constraints, workforce and contractor performance. The Board will have the core function of reporting progress and providing the necessary updates to key stakeholders and Welsh Government.
- 2.6 The purpose of the Programme Board is therefore to provide strategic direction and overall governance to ensure the successful delivery of the WHQS. It will maintain compliance, monitor and report progress, to ensure continuous improvement.
- 2.7 The Board will have representation from senior officers and the Cabinet Member for Housing and other necessary officers to serve the Board and ensure it functions correctly.
- 2.8 The Board will make operational decisions that fall within the delegated responsibilities of the Head of Service and/or Director.
- 2.9 From time to time, there will be non-operational or strategic decisions regarding finance, resourcing, procurement and delivery that will require a report to Cabinet. Biannual reports on progress will be prepared for Scrutiny and Cabinet.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the establishment of the WHQS Programme Board to drive the efficient delivery of the WHQS programme.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To ensure quality assurance and a strong governance framework is established to drive the delivery objectives of WHQS a new Programme Board is required.

### **5. THE REPORT**

- 5.1 At its heart, WHQS is a tenant focused standard, designed to upgrade social homes in a way that contributes to positive health, education and wellbeing outcomes for tenants. The investment required to enable homes to meet the Standard, also provides a significant opportunity to generate and retain prosperity for local communities, through the creation of jobs, training and apprenticeships in the supply chain. The Welsh Government recognises that to foster pride, belonging and ownership, tenants should be encouraged to take the opportunity to be involved in making any decisions that affect their community and environment.
- 5.2 Whilst WHQS 2023 sets out the minimum quality Standards for existing social homes, Welsh Government encourages social landlords to aim for Standards beyond the minimum requirements specified here. It is expected that social landlords adopt a holistic view of quality, recognising the benefit that quality and culturally suitable homes will have on both physical and mental wellbeing for all. It is expected that all homes should be of high quality, be healthy to live in and meet community, family and individual needs of tenants.

- 5.3 The delivery of the improved Welsh Housing Quality Standard is a core priority for the council over the coming years and into the future as the standard is established as the benchmark for quality across all social housing stock.
- 5.4 Given the significance of the programme of works it will require the establishment of a dedicated Programme Board to drive compliance with the standard across its entire housing portfolio. This strategic Board, comprising of senior management, officers, and from time-to-time key stakeholders, functions as a central hub for decision making, planning, and resource allocation to meet WHQS targets and deadlines.
- 5.5 The WHQS Programme Board's mission is to ensure every aspect of compliance is rigorously managed, from structural safety and tenant wellbeing to energy efficiency and environmental impact. By bringing together a diverse range of expertise, the Board is well positioned to identify and address challenges proactively, ensuring that all properties meet or exceed the WHQS elements, such as safety, accessibility, and modern facilities.
- 5.6 The Board also establishes clear reporting protocols to provide stakeholders, including the Welsh Government, with regular updates on compliance progress and any significant challenges. This is detailed in the Terms of Reference at Appendix 1. This coordinated approach enables Caerphilly Homes to prioritise health, safety and sustainability in its properties, while adapting the compliance strategy to meet local resource constraints and community needs. By managing each project phase with meticulous oversight, the WHQS Programme Board ensures Caerphilly Homes not only delivers but also enhances the overall quality and satisfaction of the housing provided.
- 5.7 Regular Board meetings will be held to review progress, evaluate the outcome of stock assessments, and monitor budget allocation to ensure high priority upgrades, like structural repairs or energy improvements, are promptly addressed. In addition, the WHQS Programme Board will actively collaborate with the tenant engagement team to incorporate tenant feedback and preferences into the upgrade schedule, aligning project milestones with tenant needs and fostering transparency throughout the compliance journey.
- 5.8 Caerphilly Homes will approach decision-making for WHQS through a structured, data-driven process that prioritises tenant safety, resource efficiency, and long-term sustainability. To guide these decisions, Caerphilly Homes will utilise a comprehensive Whole Stock Assessment and data from the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- 5.9 Decisions will be informed by input from the WHQS Programme Board, ensuring that each decision reflects both regulatory requirements and tenant needs. Properties are prioritised based on health and safety risks, energy efficiency gaps, and tenant comfort, with urgent health-related improvements taking precedence.
- 5.10 The Board will have ultimate oversight of the financial requirements for delivery of the standard and will establish the investment strategy required to be submitted to Welsh Government setting out how the revised standard will be funded.

- 5.11 The Board will therefore recommend the level of HRA expenditure and ultimate borrowing required for the delivery of the standard for approval by Cabinet and Welsh Government, in the annual HRA Business Plan report.
- 5.12 It is therefore proposed that the Board is created to oversee Caerphilly Homes programme of WHQS delivery and to receive updates on decisions that fall, within the framework of Council Financial Regulations and Standing Orders for Contracts, , thereby ensuring that decisions can still be thoroughly considered and discussed but also expedited.
- 5.13 Key decisions that may have otherwise required additional scrutiny will be dealt with by the Board. There will be other areas that will be discussed at Board that may need to be presented through scrutiny and Cabinet and potentially full Council for decision and these will be determined at Programme Board.
- 5.14 The Board will comprise the Cabinet Member for Housing, Chair of Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Director of Economy and Environment, Head of Financial Services & Section 151 Officer, Head of Legal Services, Head of Housing, Head of Asset Maintenance and Repairs. There will be other attendees as and when required such as Head of Customer and Digital Services, Head of Housing Solutions etc.
- 5.15 It is proposed that the Board be chaired by the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment, with the vice chair being the Head of Housing.

### **Conclusion**

- 5.16 Ensuring Caerphilly Homes housing stock is maintaining and meeting the revised enhanced requirements of the WHQS is a high priority for the council.
- 5.17 The establishment of the Board will give assurance to WG, tenants and politicians that the programme is being governed well and provides the necessary level of scrutiny to ensure the standard is achieved.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 At the time of writing this paper the core assumptions are that the delivery expectation of Welsh Government will remain as published and therefore necessitate this governance arrangement.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the WHQS23 Compliance Policy report which fundamentally drives the WHQS Programme, therefore a further IIA is not necessary.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications as a direct impact of the establishment of WHQS Programme Board. However, the associated wider WHQS programme and conforming to elements of the standard will carry significant costs

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no direct personnel implications as a direct impact of the establishment of the Programme Board. However, there may be additional staffing requirements or changes to the focus of parts of the team in being able to deliver on WHQS23.
- 9.2 The secretariat for the Board will be provided by the Asset Management Team and wider administrative support across Caerphilly Homes.

## **10. CONSULTATIONS**

- 10.1 All comments received from the consultees listed below have been noted and, where appropriate, incorporated within the report.

## **11. STATUTORY POWER**

- 11.1 Housing (Wales) Act 2014

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Appendices: Appendix 1 - WHQS Programme Board Terms of Reference March 25

Background  
Papers: N/A

## Caerphilly Homes WHQS Programme Board 2025

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Context

- 1.1 The Welsh Housing Quality Standard sets the target for the condition of all social housing in Wales and its implementation started in April 2024. The Standard was originally introduced in 2002 and has been successful in raising the quality of social homes in Wales. This level of quality must be maintained and stretched further, taking account of changes and expectations in, and impacts from, the wider world such as climate change and technical advancements in building fabric.
- 1.2 The purpose of the revised Welsh Housing Quality Standard is to improve the quality of social homes in Wales. Welsh Government continues to drive up the standard of existing social housing by setting a demanding standard which all social landlords in Wales are legally obliged to meet.
- 1.3 At its heart, WHQS 2023 is a tenant focused Standard, designed to upgrade social homes in a way that contributes to positive health, education and wellbeing outcomes for tenants. The investment required to enable homes to meet the Standard, also provides a significant opportunity to generate and retain prosperity for local communities, through the creation of jobs, training and apprenticeships in the supply chain. The Welsh Government recognises that to foster pride, belonging and ownership, tenants should be encouraged to take the opportunity to be involved in making any decisions that affect their community and environment.
- 1.4 It is expected that social landlords adopt a holistic view of quality, recognising the benefit that quality and culturally suitable homes will have on both physical and mental wellbeing for all. It is expected that all homes should be of high quality, be healthy to live in and meet community, family and individual needs of tenants.
- 1.5 Part 3 of the standard introduced Affordable Warmth and Decarbonisation as the core updated area of focus to increase the carbon efficiency of all social housing and drive down the fuel bills for all social housing tenants as a dual outcome of the decarbonisation works to properties.
- 1.6 This Programme Board will be responsible for the governance of the WHQS programme becoming the benchmark for quality. It will direct the delivery to meet the Welsh Government targets of decarbonisation and set an annual delivery strategy which will become the planned asset maintenance strategy.

#### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 To establish and manage the governance and assurance framework for the delivery of the WHQS programme, including the annual delivery strategy.
- 2.2 In conjunction with the annual HRA Business planning process, to assess and recommend the level of HRA capital and revenue expenditure revenue borrowing to be invested in meeting the WHQS. From time to time as and when required to seek approval for additional capital investment for approval by Cabinet and Welsh Government outside of the annual HRA Business planning process.

- 2.3 To oversee the completion of the Whole Stock Assessment in line with agreed Welsh Government targets.
- 2.4 Scrutinise and agree the submission of the WHQS Investment Strategy in line with Welsh Government guidelines and targets.
- 2.5 Ensure the WHQS Compliance Policy is adhered to, reviewed, and updated where appropriate on an annual basis, paying specific attention to continuous review of how tenants are engaged in the planning and delivery process.
- 2.7 To oversee, monitor and approve completion of the delivery of specific workstreams of maintenance, aligned to the improved standard.
- 2.8 As and when appropriate agree with HR where additional personnel may be required to support WHQS delivery.
- 2.9 The Project Board will ensure the necessary reports are prepared and added to the forward work plan for the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet where decision is required.
- 2.10 To approve all regular reporting and monitoring required by Welsh Government

### **3. Term**

- 3.1 These Terms of Reference will be effective from 01.04.25 and will be ongoing until terminated by agreement between the members of the WHQSPB.

### **4. Membership**

- 4.1 The DGPB will consist of the following:

The core members of the WHQS Caerphilly Homes Project Board are:

Mark S Williams	Corporate Director for Economy and Environment (Chair)
Cllr Shayne Cook	Cabinet Member for Housing
Cllr Andrew Whitcombe	Chair Housing & Environment Scrutiny Committee
Nick Taylor Williams	Head of Housing (Vice Chair)
Rob Tranter	Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen R Harris	Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Lesley Allen	Housing Finance Manager
Chris Adams	Head of Assets Maintenance and Repairs
Michael Williams	Planned Asset Maintenance Manager
Lloyd Smythe	Asset Manager
TBC	Compliance Manager/ Principal Compliance Officer
Fiona Wilkins	Housing Services Manager
Mandy Betts	Tenant and Community Involvement Manager

Other officers will attend by invitation.



## **5. Meetings**

- 5.1 All meetings will be chaired by the Corporate Director of Economy and Environment. In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be led by the Vice-Chair.
- 5.2 The WHQSPB will initially meet every other month but regularity will be kept under review as the programme evolves.
- 5.3 Meetings will be held in-person, and if necessary hybrid, as agreed on a meeting-by-meeting basis by the Chair and/or Vice-Chair.
- 5.4 The WHQSPB secretariat function will be provided by the Asset Management team. This will include the production of agendas and minutes and collation of reports.
- 5.5 The minutes of each meeting will be formally recorded to capture discussions, decisions and action points.
- 5.6 The minutes of the previous meeting must be accepted as a true and accurate record before each meeting can proceed. Such acceptance must be proposed and seconded by two members who were present.
- 5.7 The quorum will be 4 members (30%).

## **6. Amendment, Modification or Variation**

- 6.1 These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation with, and agreement by the WHQSPB members.

**12 March 2025**