

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
19th October 2016**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Portfolio Holder
for Property, Buildings and Housing**

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

I've raised a number of concerns with the Cabinet Member for Housing and senior officers about the management of the Council's housing stock and estates in St John Ward and received assurances that improvements will be made and concerns addressed.

Will the Cabinet Member now give a detailed breakdown of the improvements I can expect to see, the concerns she will address and by when?

I write further to Cllr Matthew Dorrance's question relating to his concerns about the management of the council's housing stock in his ward. I, and a number of senior council officers, have visited St John's ward to discuss his concerns and identify areas for improvement.

I would like to start by stating that over the last 4 financial years over £3.9 million of capital investment has been made in the fabric of council owned homes in St John's ward. This investment has seen the following works completed to homes in the ward:

- rewiring
- new windows and doors
- external wall insulation and re-rendering works
- re-roofing works
- new timber cladding scheme
- new heating systems
- new kitchens
- new bathrooms

These works have ensured that tenants in the ward live in modernised, more energy efficient homes, which meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. These works have also done much to improve the visual appearance of the estates.

However, whilst the works have brought much needed improvement to the homes on the estate, their completion has caused some disruption to the residents, in particular the use of some of the car parks as site compounds by the council's contractors. I will ensure that the timeline for the completion of the works on the estates are

communicated to tenants and residents, to provide clarity about when all car parks will revert to their usual function.

On my visit to the St John's ward with Councillor Matthew we noted areas which require further improvements to areas such as car parks, garages and pathways on the estate. Senior Officers and I recognise that there are improvements to be made to the environment of the estate, as there are across the rest of the council's housing stock, and these improvements will be programmed once the works to improve the fabric of the housing stock have been completed in March 2018. The Housing Service will produce a programme for environmental works across our housing estates by September 2017.

In terms of the quality of estate management services I am aware that some of the issues raised by Councillor Matthew have been caused as a consequence of new contractual arrangements in respect of grounds maintenance, in particular the spraying of weeds on pathways around the estate, and these have now been addressed. However, myself and Senior Officers are keen to see improvement in the quality of estate management services across all council estates in Powys and are currently considering ways of improving our service delivery in this aspect of the management of our housing stock. We are currently considering ways of increasing staff presence on our estates, possibly through the employment of estate caretakers. We bring forward proposals in this respect in December 2016.

In addition it is our intention that every estate in the council's ownership will have an estate action plan. These actions plans will be developed and delivered in partnership with tenants, residents and local members identifying the key issues for improvement on the estates and how the housing service will work with a range of other agencies and the local community to address them. Work will commence on the development of action plans in January 2017, after the Housing Service has recruited additional staff in leadership positions in January 2017. We will prioritise the development and completion of action plans for the larger estates in our ownership and I anticipate that the estate action plan for Maesyfynnon, Bron y Crug and Uplands will be produced by completed by May 2017.