

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

CABINET

1st November 2016

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

**SUBJECT: Application to suspend the Right to Buy and related
rights across Powys**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 On the 6th October 2015 Cabinet approved a consultation exercise in respect of applying to Welsh Government to apply to suspend the Right to Buy for council tenants, for a period of 5 years and that the Portfolio Holder for Commissioning and Procurement using delegated authority to submit the application, subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise.
- 1.2 The application was submitted on the 4th April 2016 and the Welsh Government responded on the 24th June 2016 advising that there was missing information in the application.
- 1.3 The main piece of missing information was that the Council only applied to suspend the Right to Buy (RTB) for council housing. The Welsh Government stated "The Measure provides for the suspension of the right to buy and related rights, it does not provide for these rights to be split". Welsh Government confirmed that the Housing (Wales) Measure 2011 deals with the suspension of the Right to Buy, the Preserved Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire held by tenants of social housing providers in Wales.
- 1.4 The Housing Service wishes to re-submit the application providing all the information requested. As this includes the suspension of the RTB for all social housing in Powys another consultation exercise involving the tenants of Housing Associations in Powys is required. The Strategic Housing Partnership which includes the Housing Associations with stock in Powys has agreed and the Head of Housing has written to all the Chief Executives of the Housing Associations requesting that they confirm they are in favour.
- 1.5 It is interesting that none of the 8 housing associations who operate in Powys have sold any homes under the right to buy or the right to acquire during the last 5 years.

1.6 This report seeks the consent of the Cabinet :

- the Housing Service to commence a consultation exercise in respect of applying to the Welsh Government to apply to suspend the RTB and related rights, for a period of 5 years
- the Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing using delegated authority to re-submit the application, subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise.

2 Powys One Plan

2.1 Suspending the RTB will contribute to the aims of the One Powys Plan across a wide spectrum of the areas on which the Plan focuses. Most specifically it will contribute to the health and well-being agenda and the stronger safer communities in that we will be better able to address the housing needs of an ageing community with the recognised health benefits that brings, as well as addressing the needs of those less able to provide for themselves due to financial and other circumstances.

3 Options Considered/Available

3.1 Powys County Council has 2 options available.

1. Do nothing and continue to lose homes to the RTB over years to come.
2. Apply to suspend the RTB.

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

4.1 Option 2 is the preferred choice as it is the only option that gives the authority complete freedom to maintain, increase and improve the housing stock necessary to address a changing demand over coming years.

5. Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

5.1 Suspending the RTB across Powys would ensure that the supply of affordable housing in the County is preserved, reducing the loss of emerging households who are priced out of the housing market. It would also provide a more sustainable approach to the supply of social housing for rent.

6 Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

6.1 This is a service specific matter.

7 Local Member(s)

7.1 The proposal is to extend the suspension across all of Powys and therefore may affect any and all members.

8 Other Front Line Services

8.1.1 This is a service specific matter.

9 Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

9.1 Finance – “The Finance Business Partner notes the contents of the report and supports suspending the Right to Buy as this would contribute greatly to the sustainability and appropriateness of the housing provision across Powys whilst providing the HRA with certainty in respect of projected revenue income throughout the life of the HRA Business Plan”

9.2 Legal – “the Professional Lead-Legal supports the recommendation in this report and confirms that the legal service will assist where appropriate.”

10 Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

10.1 The views of the housing services key stakeholders including the Housing Associations affected have been sought via the Strategic Housing Forum and they are in favour of suspending the RTB and related rights.

11 Corporate Communications

11.1 A consultation exercise on the proposal to suspend the Right to Buy would be communicated to the public by the following means:

- issuing of press release to news agencies
- the placing of article on the Council’s website
- via the Housing Services FaceBook page.
- Housing Associations advising their own tenants.

11.2 It is proposed that all articles would contain a hyperlink to an online survey which would enable citizens to provide their views on the proposal. In addition consultation packs would also be available in hard copy format in each to the libraries.

12 Statutory Officers

- 12.1 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report.
- 12.2 The Strategic Director Resources (S151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance.

13 Members' Interests

- 13.1 The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
That Cabinet grants approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• for the Housing Service to commence a consultation exercise in respect a proposal to suspend the Right to Buy and related rights for a period of 5 years• for the Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing using delegated authority, to re-submit the application (if so advised) to suspend the Right to Buy and related rights for a period of 5 years to the Welsh Government, subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise.	To enable the Council and its Housing Association partners to better meet the housing needs of the citizens of Powys and to ensure that investment in the social housing stock is safeguarded.

Relevant Policy (ies):	None..		
Within Policy:	N	Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	All Members
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Affordable Housing Officer
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Dafydd Evans	01597 827464		Dafydd.evans@powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Cabinet report 6th October 2015.

Explanatory Memorandum to the Housing (Wales) Measure 2011.