

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

17th January 2017

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

**SUBJECT: Home Grown Homes Project and the adoption of a
Wood Encouragement Policy**

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks to inform Cabinet about progress made by the Housing Service and partners in respect of the Home Grown Homes project and to seek approval for the adoption of a corporate Wood Encouragement Policy.

2 Background

- 2.1 The vision of the Local Housing Strategy agreed by Cabinet on (date) is:

“Ensuring a secure future in suitable housing for everyone in Powys”

The Strategy’s three key strategic aims are:

- To identify and meet the housing needs of the citizens of Powys
 - To maximise the impact of housing expenditure on the economy of Powys
 - To ensure that housing contributes to the delivery of stronger communities in Powys
- 2.2 Objective 1 under the second strategic aim – to maximise the impact of housing expenditure on the economy of Powys, is the Home Grown Homes Project. The project, which is a collaboration between the council’s housing service and its partner housing associations’, seeks to increase the use of locally grown and home grown timber in the development of residential accommodation, for the benefit of the economy of rural Wales. To achieve this goal, the timber supply chain from planting, harvesting, processing and manufacture needs to be re-aligned, and that is the objective of the project.

- 2.3 Since approval of the Local Housing Strategy much work has taken place in respect of the Home Grown Homes project. Working with the project consultant, whose costs were met by the Housing Service and partner housing associations, a successful application for funding via ARWAIN has been made and Woodknowledge Wales has been appointed to maintain the projects momentum and assist in the development and submission of an application for RDP funding under the Co-operation and Supply Chain Development Programme.
- 2.4 The application for RDP funding, Part I of which has already been submitted and Part II will be submitted in the coming weeks, when approved will require the council to appoint a project manager for the project for three years. In addition the project will extend its focus beyond the boundaries of Powys. The project demonstrates that the county council and its partner housing associations are showing leadership in seeking to develop an alternative vision for rural Wales, one where the growth in the city regions and urban areas that surround us, is built using our rural resources of: local or home grown timber; local sawmills and processers ;and where possible local manufacturers. The aim of the project is to bring wealth and employment back into the heart of Wales. In addition, buildings constructed from timber are generally more thermally efficient reducing the use of fuels, and the use of home grown (UK grown) and locally grown timber in the construction process will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of newly constructed buildings.
- 2.5 The project is in the process of seeking nominees from the Welsh Local Government Association, Community Housing Cymru and Natural Resources Wales, to give the project an all Wales remit, in anticipation of the award of RDP funding.
- 2.6 To further demonstrate leadership the Cabinet is asked to approve the Wood Encouragement Policy, which is attached at Appendix 1. The policy sets out that the council will ensure that all briefs for new Council housing projects (subject to any grant constraints) include the Powys Wood Encouragement Policy. It will:
- identify wood as the preferred material for both construction and fit out purposes, where wood is deemed a suitable and cost effective material for the proposed application;
 - seek those who can find, practical, efficient, versatile and cost-effective building and design solutions using wood when sourcing design and architectural expertise for such projects;
 - ensure that all comparisons to the cost of building with other materials will take into account all long-term and life cycle benefits of using wood;
 - where possible, source locally and home produced wood products for construction and fit out purposes;
 - use development, planning and procurement processes to maximise opportunities for targeted recruitment and training in the timber industries;

- be a champion of the forest and wood products industry, by establishing a Wood Encouragement Policy and demonstrating commitment to the further development of the local forest and wood products industry;
 - actively seek demonstration projects that showcase the use of wood within the County and Wales;
 - actively work to support existing and attract new, innovative wood products manufacturers to Powys.
- 2.6 The adoption of such a policy will be a first for a UK local authority and will encourage other rural local authorities and the Welsh Government to adopt similar policies.

3 Powys One Plan

- 3.1 Adopting the Wood Encouragement Policy will contribute to the stronger safer communities in that it seeks to add value to a locally grown and harvested forestry product and by the use of more environmentally friendly building products.

4 Options Considered/Available

- 4.1 Powys County Council has 2 options available.
1. Adopt the Wood Encouragement Policy
 2. Not adopt the Wood Encouragement Policy.

5. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 5.1 Option 1 is the preferred choice as it demonstrates leadership from the Council in respect of the use of timber as a preferred construction material, and where possible and cost effective, home grown and locally grown timber.

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

- 6.1 The Wood Encouragement Policy promotes the use of sustainable local materials for construction and decreased carbon production because of close proximity of materials to manufacturing and construction sites. In addition, the policy promotes carbon sequestration through capturing the carbon locked within timber and then retaining it within a built form.

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

- 7.1 By promoting the use of local and home grown timber, locally processed timber products and the local manufacture of timber framed homes in Powys the Policy will increase employment in the county, having a beneficial impact on families and creating employment opportunities for young people.

8 Local Member(s)

- 8.1 The proposal will affect all members.

9 Other Front Line Services

- 9.1 The draft Wood Encouragement Policy was shared with other Heads of Service and comments received were incorporated into the version presented to Cabinet for approval.
- 9.2 Professional Lead – Property Project Delivery states “The policy will help to encourage increased use of timber and develop local supply chains, it also recognises that there are currently limitations to its application for all the areas of building commissioned by the Council.”

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

- 10.1 Finance – “The Finance Business Partner notes the content of this report. The Project Officer is only affordable, if the funding application to RDP is successful.”
- 10.2 Legal – “The Professional Lead – Legal has no comment to make on the recommendation in this report“.

11 Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

- 11.1 The views of the Homes Grown Homes project partners have been incorporated into the version of the policy presented to Cabinet for approval.

12 Corporate Communications

- 12.1 Once the policy has been approved by council, it is proposed that the adoption of the policy is disseminated via press release to a range of media outlets.

13 Statutory Officers

- 13.1 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: “ I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report save that good governance requires that a written record is made of the decision whether or not wood is a suitable material and the reasons for coming to the conclusion.”
- 13.2 The Strategic Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) notes the comments made by finance and that if we receive RDP funding we will need to appoint a partner to project manage delivery of the scheme.

14 Members' Interests

- 14.1 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 approves the Wood Encouragement Policy attached to the report as Appendix 1	To demonstrate the council's: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for the Home Grown Homes project, • leadership in the promotion of local and home grown timber as a sustainable building product, • recognition of the value of the forestry and timber industry to the economy of Powys.

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:	Head of Housing
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	1st February 2017

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Simon Inkson	01597 827464		simon.inkson@powys.gov.uk

Powys County Council Wood Encouragement Policy

Powys County Council recognises the importance of forest and wood products industry to rural and regional employment and economic development.

This Policy seeks to:

- help stimulate sustainable economic development within the timber/wood products industry and encourage development of added value products;
- encourage services to consider the use of wood in the construction and fit out of council buildings, development and infrastructure (within any grant constraints);
- encourage developers, particularly those creating social and affordable housing to consider the use of wood in the construction and fit out of homes;
- recognise the benefits that make wood a smart choice for council buildings, development and infrastructure;
- encourage education, best practise, knowledge-transfer and take up of careers in the timber supply chain;
- encourage the use of wood in demonstration projects across Powys;
- demonstrate local and national leadership by adopting this policy.

Implementation:

Powys County Council will;

- ensure that all briefs for new Council housing projects (subject to any grant constraints) incorporate the requirement to use wood as the preferred material for both construction and fit out purposes, where wood is deemed a suitable and cost effective material for the proposed application;
- seek those who can find, practical, efficient, versatile and cost-effective building and design solutions using wood when sourcing design and architectural expertise for such projects;
- ensure that all comparisons to the cost of building with other materials will take into account all long-term and life cycle benefits of using wood;
- where possible, source locally and home produced wood products for construction and fit out purposes;
- use development, planning and procurement processes to maximise opportunities for targeted recruitment and training in the timber industries;
- record all instances where wood was not the preferred material for construction or fit out purposes and the reasons for coming to this decision. The council will publish this information annually;
- be a champion of the forest and wood products industry, by establishing a Wood Encouragement Policy and demonstrating commitment to the further development of the local forest and wood products industry;

- actively seek demonstration projects that showcase the use of wood within the County and Wales;
- actively work to support existing and attract new, innovative wood products manufacturers to Powys.

In using wood as a preferred construction material for council infrastructure, we advocate:

- the utilisation of wood products that are certified by: Forest Stewardship Council (FSC); PEFC; Grown in Britain(GiB), or are from local well managed sources;
- using wood only when it is the right material for the selected application.