

Love Where You Live

A Tenancy Sustainability Strategy for Powys






1. Introduction

It is not hard to love where you live if that place is safe and secure, clean and tidy and makes you proud to be part of the community. Powys County Council provides homes for just under one in ten of all households living in the county and is ideally placed to help people love where they live.

Love Where You Live is the Council's strategy for our estate and tenancy management services to help make the experience of living in a Council home something of which to be proud.

1.2 What is Love Where You Live?

Love Where You Live focuses on how tenancy and estate management can help people enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods

-  Understanding. To continually improve we need to continually know what to improve by understanding how our services and estates are experienced by tenants and residents.
-  People. To help people be able to enjoy their homes and communities, we can support, encourage and help people to play an active part in their communities and economy as well as improve their own personal well being
-  Place. To give people reasons to love where they live, we need to make sure that the environment is green and thriving, clean and tidy – in short, a pleasant place to be

'Love Where You Live' will make a substantial contribution to 'Powys 2025':

- Economy and Learning and Skills: 'there is significant investment in the development of affordable and sustainable housing and in the fabric of our estates, benefitting the local economy and creating employment and training opportunities'.
- Health & Care: 'there is an increasing supply of housing with care and support'.
- Residents and Communities: 'communities have access to a choice of both affordable and market housing and the improvements to the fabric of our estates will increase tenant and resident satisfaction with their communities'.

1.3 Next Steps

Love Where You Live brings together and recognises a lot of Housing Services work already under way, while at the same time suggesting challenge from an 'experience' perspective and offering proposals for different or new activity, which will enhance the way people experience our services and neighbourhoods.

It is divided into three sections – Understanding, People and Places. Each section outlines the current state of play and sets out ideas for the future.







There is an overall Action Plan, based on the outcomes desired. This Action Plan assumes no changes to the current structure of Housing Services. That does not mean that change should not be considered if upon further development of Love Where You Live, changes in the way we work are needed to improve the way our housing services are experienced.

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”. Maya Angelou (Poet and Civil Rights Activist)

2.0 Understanding

The concept of home is as much about emotion as it is about logic¹. This means our understanding of our services needs to reflect the experience people have of the Council and the work it does in providing them with a home. This means we need to gather and be able to understand a mix of objective and subjective intelligence and be able to use it wisely and effectively to shape services, so that people are better able to enjoy the experience of where they live. We also need to consider the future tenants of the Council which means finding out more about the needs and aspirations of younger people.

Understanding Action Plan – Overview

-  Review all current engagement and consultation using an agreed set of criteria, drawing on the expertise and knowledge of other Council services, most importantly Youth Services (to make sure we capture the views of the tenants and households of tomorrow) and Communications (to make sure we are exploiting effectively all avenues of communication and contributing to corporate intelligence gathering)
-  Use an understanding of best practice and the outcome of the review to identify options to increase the effectiveness of engagement and intelligence gathering
-  Introduce any necessary changes to our approach to engagement and gathering and using intelligence
-  Revise and amend our management and performance indicators (including how we understand the actual impact of our contractors and service providers on clients and tenants) to focus our attention on the client experience, when we shape and deliver services directly or indirectly
-  Develop and introduce simple and easy-to-access approaches to continually gain feedback on how our services are experienced
-  Improve our understanding the needs and desires of housing applicants and tenants when agreeing housing options and allocations, to drive forward as the way we let homes ‘right first time, every time’

3.0 People

For people to enjoy where they live, they need to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they can maintain and enjoy their home. Not everyone finds that easy to do, which is why we need to make sure we are able to help everyone sustain their tenancies. Understanding what we do will help us shape our services but there will be a need for more intensive and targeted support for some people who, because of their circumstances, life chances or background are at risk of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, economic dislocation and social isolation, may be at greater risk of tenancy failure or an unhappy experience in their home.

One of the most important aspects of sustaining a home is having the financial capacity to do so, a point recognised by the Welsh Government’s vision: ‘to provide affordable homes and sustainable communities with excellent services to tenants and customers’². Around four in ten adults in Wales do not manage their money day-to-day as well as they might and only a quarter of working-age







¹ The Idea of Home – Social Research, John Hopkins Press, 1991; Home – Blunt and Dowling, Routledge, 2006

² Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales - Welsh Government, 2016

adults in Wales have a savings buffer equivalent to three months income or more.³ Encouraging and supporting financial capacity and capability is therefore an important part of a landlord's role helping support people to retain and enjoy their homes.

People Action Plan – Overview

There are a number of initiatives already underway, as part of current tenancy management and the preparations for the introduction to Powys of Full Service Universal Credit. These will be further developed and supplemented by new services and changes to policy and practice to improve the way we help people be better able to take advantage of opportunities to enjoy a better life. Continue to make sure the information, support and guidance to all CHR applicants helps them make informed choices to improve the likelihood of a successful tenancy.

-  Make greater use of Personal Housing Plans to create more personalised and relevant tenancy management
-  A robust 'Financial Well-being Assessment' will be used to help not only housing applicants but existing tenants who face financial disruption or difficulties matching income and expenditure
-  Tri-Annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT will allow for closer relationships between the Council and our tenants, helping us to work together to respond promptly to any requests for help and support to sustain tenancies and encourage financial independence
-  Encourage early intervention to prevent breaches of tenancy around home and garden condition and anti-social behaviour.
-  Housing officers will be able to spot signs of fuel poverty and offer or signpost basic energy saving advice (including wiping debt from meters, accessing low-income tariffs and reducing energy needs)
-  Develop a comprehensive and locally sensitive Housing Services 'Highways to Work' Action Plan

4.0 Places

Clean and tidy places encourage pride by individuals and communities in where they live and have been proven to reduce anti-social behaviour crime, encourage community interaction and support self-help and reliance by individual households. That is why effective estate management is critically important to giving people reasons to love where they live. Encouraging people to take part, either collectively or as individuals in maintaining and improving their environment can also help develop stronger and more sustainable communities. The Council's 'Health and Care Strategy' makes a commitment to: "make best use of community strengths and the physical environment to support people to maintain their health and wellbeing"⁴.










Now that the Council is once again building new homes, the design and layout of both homes and communities needs to take into account what will give people a sense of social ownership. Appropriate emphasis should be given to reducing the opportunities for anti-social behaviour, discontent amongst and between members of communities and high cost or complex maintenance and management liabilities. The desires and preference of current and future residents should influence design and appearance – homes last for a lot longer than even architectural fashions and mistakes have been made in the past in the way social housing has been designed⁵.

³ Financial Capability in Wales - Money Advice Service, 2015

⁴ The Health and Care Strategy for Powys - Powys County Council, June 2017

⁵ Never Again: Avoiding the Mistakes of the Past - Young Foundation, March 2012

Places Action Plan – Overview

-  To encourage neighbourhood pride, community events and activity that bring together people in pursuit of a common and widely recognisable outcome, will be promoted.
-  Wherever possible, localised, dedicated teams will be deployed for work in housing estates on in villages to encourage a focus on quality through local pride and ownership.
-  Environmental activity, such as gardening, will be encouraged with the back-up of tenancy condition enforcement in respect of gardens
-  Community activity will be promoted by piloting a resident reward scheme
-  Play areas will be focused on areas where there is clear demand and where they can be managed with the involvement of or directly by the community, to avoid being focal points for anti-social and criminal behaviour and to provide the most opportunities for children to play and enjoy their time outdoors. There will be a Play Area Strategy to guide investment in play areas on housing estates
-  Greenery (grassed areas, trees, planted areas, shrubberies, hedges), footpaths and car parks should be managed and maintained so that they are not overgrown, unsightly, in poor condition or present risks to the health, safety and well-being of communities. This includes individual gardens and as well as shared areas. Gardens, Open Spaces and Boundaries guidance will be introduced to improve our work in these critical areas of activity
-  To make roads and pavements safer and less congested, wherever possible off-street in-curtilage car parking will be encouraged and facilitated.
-  Unsightly non-residential structures, such as garages, will be removed to create space for new activity, including new homes or areas for play, and to improve the appearance of neighbourhoods. There will be a Garage Strategy to guide investment in garage areas on housing estates.
-  To make sure that Anti-social Behaviour is dealt with quickly by the agency best equipped to resolve the problem, a rapid referral system will be introduced.

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