

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL
PORTFOLIO HOLDER DELEGATED DECISION
by
COUNTY COUNCILLOR JAMES EVANS
(PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, HOUSING
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION)
February 2020

REPORT AUTHOR: Dafydd Evans - Service Manager – Housing Solutions
Andy Thompson – Service manager – Tenancy Services

SUBJECT: Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Compliance
Policy review

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the reviewed WHQS Compliance Policy for Council Housing, 2019/2020. The review relates to a previous policy approved in 2016, which has been reviewed annually.
- 1.2 The Welsh Government requires that an annual review is carried out.
- 1.3 The proposed reviewed WHQS compliance policy meets Welsh Government requirements. The policy has been updated and now includes reference to the damp and thermal and fuel poverty strategies, as well as evaluation of level access works. The Council will now verify itself if properties meet WHQS by aiming to visit every property at least once every five years.
- 1.4 The report is supported by the following appendices:
 - A The 2019/20 WHQS Compliance policy
 - B Impact Assessment

2. Proposal

Welsh Government requires that the Council as social housing landlord has a Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) Compliance Policy which is reviewed annually. The policy commenced on 1 April 2016. This impact assessment only looks at the changes as part of the current annual review.

The review has resulted in updating figures, reflecting changes in practice and making the policy clearer, where this has been suggested. The review has not resulted in change of objective or budget saving.

After achieving the WHQS, the focus will now change to addressing acceptable fails, especially where tenants have opted out of improvements. There will also be focus on addressing damp and cold properties. Cyclical maintenance / replacement programmes remain in place to ensure elements are checked towards the end of their life and monitored or replaced.

There is now reference to the audit carried out by the Wales Audit Office. Subsequently a damp strategy and a thermal comfort and fuel poverty strategy have been approved.

The Council will train staff to verify properties. The verification ensures any shortcomings are addressed.

3. Options Considered / Available

No other options are considered.

4. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 4.1. The preferred choice is to approve the policy to ensure consistency across the County and compliance with Welsh Housing Quality Standards.
- 4.2. The second choice is not to approve the policy. This would mean that the current policy remains in force. If the policy is not reviewed annually, the Welsh Government will not process financial claims relating to WHQS.

5. Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Is an impact assessment required? Yes
- 5.2 If yes is it attached? Yes.

6. Corporate Improvement Plan

- 6.1 This policy supports the priority: "We will develop a vibrant economy."
- 6.2 There are no risks for the Council identified.

7. Local Member(s)

This policy applies to all Council Housing accommodation in Powys.

8. Other Front Line Services

Does the recommendation impact on other services run by the Council or on behalf of the Council? No

9. Communications

Have Communications seen a copy of this report? No

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, Corporate Property, HR, ICT, Business Services)

10.1 Legal

The Professional Lead-Legal states: The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 allows the Welsh Ministers to ensure that the Welsh Housing Quality Standard is placed on a statutory footing for all local authorities.

The receipt of the Council's Major Repair Allowance (MRA) is conditional upon meeting WHQS within timescales agreed with the Welsh Government.

Whilst the Welsh Housing Quality Standard has been reached in Powys, the additional works that are being carried out will maintain and improve the housing stock further.

10.2 Finance

The Capital & Financial Planning Accountant states that the works for the WHQS are included in the Capital Programme for 2019/20. The subsequent years needs to be updated when the Capital Programme is reviewed.

The Finance Business Partner also confirms that there is revenue budget for these works in 2019/20.

10.3 Corporate Property (if appropriate) N/A

10.4 HR (if appropriate) N/A

10.5 ICT (if appropriate) N/A

11. Scrutiny

Has this report been scrutinised? No

12. Data Protection

No personal data is processed.

13. Statutory Officers

13.1 The Head of Finance (S151 Officer) notes the comments from Finance.

13.2 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) commented as follows: "I note the legal comments and have nothing to add to the report."

14. **Members' Interests**

The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If the Portfolio Holder has an interest, he/she should declare it, complete the relevant notification for and refer the matter to Cabinet for decision.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
To approve the reviewed Welsh Housing Quality Standard compliance policy as set out in Appendix A to the report	To meet Welsh Government requirements

Relevant Policy (ies):	
Within Policy:	Y
Within Budget:	Y

Relevant Local Member(s):	All
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Andy Thompson (Service Manager – Tenancy Services) and Dafydd Evans (Service Manager – Housing Solutions)
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	

Is a review of the impact of the decision required?	N

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:

- The Welsh Housing Quality Standard Revised Guidance for Social Landlords on Interpretation and Achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard; Welsh Government and HouseMark Cymru; July 2008.
- Welsh Housing Quality Standard: Verification of progress in achieving the Standard; Welsh Government Social Research; Number: 49/2014; 13 May 2014.
- Welsh Government letter dated 20 March 2015; The Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) - Verification in achieving and maintaining the Standard: next steps.

- Evaluation Level Access project works Report; Powys County Council; July 2018
- The Service User Perspective – the Welsh Housing Quality Standard – Powys County Council; Wales Audit Office; September 2018.
- Strategy to address damp issues in Powys owned housing stock; Powys County Council; January 2019.
- Strategy to address thermal comfort and fuel poverty; Powys County Council; January 2019.