

Written response by the Welsh Government to the report of the Local Government and Housing Committee – A Right to Adequate Housing

I would like to extend my thanks to the members of the Local Government and Housing Committee, and all those who took the time to provide evidence based on their experience and expertise, in order to inform the Committee's work on a right to adequate housing.

As set out in the Programme for Government, Welsh Government is committed to publishing 'a White Paper to include proposals for a right to adequate housing including fair rents and new approaches to making homes affordable for those on local incomes.'

Detailed Responses to the report's recommendations are set out below:

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should, as part of its Green Paper Consultation process, take account of the oral and written evidence presented to us in response to our inquiry on the Right to Adequate Housing.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government will consider the oral and written evidence submitted to the Committee as part of the analysis of responses to the Green Paper Consultation. A number of those who gave oral evidence to the Committee are also representatives on our Stakeholder Advisory Group, and their views and evidence have helped to inform the development of the Green Paper. In addition, many of those who gave evidence to the Committee have indicated they intend to formally respond to the Green Paper Consultation before it close on 15th September.

Financial Implications: None.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should give full consideration to the issues identified in this report as part of its Green and White Paper processes.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government has considered the issues identified in the report and will respond to them as part of the overall considerations of the evidence of the Green

Paper consultation. The Green Paper evidence, along with the work of the Local Government and Housing Committee's report into adequate housing will inform the development of options to be set out and consulted upon in the subsequent White Paper.

Financial Implications: None.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should ensure that disability groups and older peoples' representatives are represented on the Welsh Government's stakeholder advisory group.

Response: Accept in principle

Welsh Government will continue to engage with a wide-range of stakeholders as part of the development of this work, including reviewing and expanding membership of the Stakeholder Advisory Group as appropriate.

Welsh Government has extended an invitation to join the Stakeholder Advisory Group to the Older People's Commissioner for Wales. Unfortunately, due to capacity constraints they are not able to join the group at this time. We are continuing to explore representation from other third sector groups, to ensure appropriate representation of the views of disabled people and older people. We will also be undertaking targeted, online consultation sessions, for example workshops with Tai Pawb and Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS), to ensure a diversity of views.

The Committee may also wish to note that we commissioned Beaufort Research in June, through their Omnibus Survey, to interview tenants renting properties in Wales to better understand issues of affordability and adequacy across different regions. Responses have been broken down based on social grade, age, gender, ethnicity and/or whether a tenant has a limited illness, health problem or disability.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should undertake or commission further evaluation on the impact of existing housing law and whether the laws are being enforced effectively and people's rights are being claimed.

Response: Accept in principle

A post implementation evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 was published in 2018. This research and the subsequent work of the expert Homelessness Action Group have informed the Programme for Government commitment to reform housing law to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing. A White Paper setting out proposals for legislative reform will be published later this year.

The Welsh Government has also commissioned an independent evaluation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. The evaluation is currently ongoing and due to complete in the summer of 2025.

Financial Implications: None – the cost of the ongoing evaluation is already in budget.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should, through its Green and White Papers, gather views and give detailed consideration to how adequate housing should be defined, particularly in a Welsh context. This should include consideration of the definition provided in the draft Bill proposed by the Back the Bill campaign.

Response: Accept

As the Green Paper is a call for evidence, it provides everyone with the opportunity to give their views on how adequate housing might be defined in a Welsh context, and what a minimum standard of adequacy might look like. Welsh Government will therefore consider the views gathered through the consultation process, including the views of groups such as the Back the Bill campaign, in considering and developing the forthcoming White Paper.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should set out its assessment of how the 20,000 new affordable homes it aims to create will contribute to meeting the overall housing need in Wales. This should include an assessment of how the types of homes being provided will address specific areas of need, such as one-bedroom properties.

Response: Accept in principle

Social housing is a key priority for this Government, and it is why we have set out the challenging commitment to deliver 20,000 homes for social rent during this government term. Our central estimates of additional housing need in Wales show that, between 2019/20 and 2023/24, 7,400 additional homes are needed each year. Approximately 52% (3,900) of the estimated need is for market housing and approximately 48% for affordable housing (3,500). Our commitment to deliver 20,000 social homes for rent goes beyond these affordable housing need estimates and we have been clear that we believe it is right that it does. Having a good quality warm, affordable home is fundamental to our wellbeing. In support of the 20,000 homes target, we have allocated record levels of funding to the Social Housing Grant, which is the key funding mechanism for the delivery of social housing. Local authorities allocate and prioritise Social Housing Grant to schemes within their areas based on their assessment of housing need.

In respect of specific needs in different areas of Wales, local authorities are responsible for determining local housing requirements and priorities for their areas, and for planning delivery to best meet this need. Housing needs vary across Wales, local authorities have a statutory duty to undertake a periodical review of housing needs, undertaken through Local Housing Market Assessments (LHMAs), and it is appropriate that this assessment continues on a local authority basis. The LHMA process and guidance was updated in 2022 and includes an assessment of affordable housing need by size of property. LHMAs inform Local Development Plans and the Social Housing Grant prospectus. Since 2022, each Local Authority has prepared a "Prospectus" which provides a summary of the housing need in its area and identifies its strategic housing priorities. The Prospectus explains the type of provision, and size of property, that the authority requires to be delivered with Welsh Government Social Housing Grant (SHG). The aim of the Prospectus is to enable the right type of affordable housing development to be delivered in the right places.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should, as a matter of urgency, work with relevant stakeholders to find a practical solution to delays caused to housing developments due to the targets on phosphates in rivers.

Response: Accept

On 20th March the First minister published a [Written Statement](#) and the [Action Plan](#) to relieve pressures on Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) river catchments to support delivery of affordable housing, which sets out clear actions, timescales, and responsibilities to tackle this multi-faceted issue. Later this year a further River Pollution Summit is planned to drive progress in implementing sustainable solutions to improve water quality in our rivers and drive the implementation of the '*Action Plan to Relieve Pressures on SAC River Catchments to Support Delivery of Affordable Housing.*'

Financial Implications: Any financial implications will be considered and included as part of the development of the Action Plan

Recommendation 8 The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should explore whether there could be a role for housing enablers in urban areas in order to collect information to better understand the housing needs of those communities.

Response: Accept

Rural housing enablers make a valuable contribution to understanding the needs of rural communities, and the role of housing in supporting the longer-term sustainability of smaller rural settlements, as well as delivering affordable housing in the context of the specific challenges of rural areas. As part of their strategic housing function, local authorities are expected to undertake appropriate assessments to ensure they understand the housing needs of urban areas through the Local Housing Market Assessment process. [Welsh Government's Town Centre position statement](#) also sets out a number of actions being taken to reinvigorate town centres, including enabling housing development in appropriate locations within and around town centres, following placemaking principles.

Financial Implications: None

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should, through its Green and White Paper consultation processes, explore how a two-staged approach of introducing the right to adequate housing into Welsh law could work in practice. The Welsh Government should consider the viability of indirect incorporation followed by direct incorporation, which would give the time for appropriate systems to be put in place whilst driving the process forward.

Response: Accept in principle

The Green Paper consultation is seeking evidence on securing a path to Housing Adequacy and how best this can be achieved in Wales. The consultation responses, as well as the Committee report and different approaches to incorporation will be considered and inform development of the forthcoming White Paper.

Financial Implications: None.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government should, in analysing the responses it receives to its Green Paper Consultation, give further consideration to the merits of introducing an annual housing survey.

Response: Accept

The Welsh Government is currently developing a business case for a possible annual survey on housing and housing conditions. It is anticipated the business case will be available by the end of the year.

Financial Implications: Any potential financial implications will be included as part of the development of the business case.