

Dyfodol Cynaliadwy
Sustainable Futures

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol • Director General



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Mr Darren Millar AM
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

2 July 2013

Dear Mr Millar,

PROGRESS IN DELIVERING THE WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD

Further to my attendance at the Public Accounts Committee on 25 June, further evidence was requested on the following key issues:

- A List of Ministerial Task Force members,
- A copy of the 'Evaluation of the Regulatory Framework for associations in Wales'.
- A few case studies on community benefits.

I have attached the relevant information as Docs 1 -3 in accordance with the list above. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Jones
Director General – Sustainable Futures

Composition of the Ministerial Task Force WHQS

Chris O'Meara(chair)

Kathleen Kelly

Bob Smith

Peter McHugh

Keith Edwards

Mike Owen

Kath Palmer (Civil Servant - Deputy Director Homes and Places)

Pen Pictures.

Chris O'Meara (Chair)

Chairs the WHQS Task Force. Chris is Chief Executive of Cadwyn Housing Association. From April 2008 – May 2011, was a part time housing policy adviser to the Deputy Minister for Housing and (latterly Regeneration). Prior to that she was Chair of Community Housing Cymru.

Kathleen Kelly

Kathleen has been at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation for 7 years and leads UK wide programmes of research and policy development on Housing including Market Volatility, Young People and Homelessness. Kathleen provided support to the [JRF housing market taskforce](#) an interdisciplinary group of experts focussed on long term measures to promote a more stable housing market. Kathleen previously worked in central Government covering research and evaluation on a range of housing issues including the Supporting People Programme and Choice Based Lettings. She has also worked as a front line housing advice worker in private practice and for charities including Shelter and Citizens Advice.

Bob Smith

Bob is a Senior Lecturer in Housing in the School of Planning and Geography at Cardiff University. He has more than 30 years of housing research experience, much of it in relation to housing policy and practice in Wales, where he has worked since January 1988. Bob has undertaken commissioned research for a variety of organisations, including Government departments, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, national charities, representative bodies and individual local authorities and housing associations and has published widely on housing and regeneration. In 2007-08 he was a member of the Ministerial Task and Finish Group which produced the influential report on Affordable Housing in Wales ("The Essex Review") and he has been a member of the external panels which shaped the first post devolution national housing strategy for Wales (2001) and the current national housing strategy. A corporate member of the Chartered Institute of Housing and a Board member of a community based housing association in South Wales, Bob is also a member of the advisory board for Welsh Housing Quarterly.

Peter McHugh

Peter is the Head of Housing and Community Development at Denbighshire County Council with responsibility for a portfolio including management and maintenance of the Councils Housing Stock, Housing Strategy, Regeneration and Economic Development.

Peter is responsible for steering Denbighshire towards achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard to all stock by December 2013. Before joining Denbighshire, Peter spent 6 years as a Consultant working with Local Authorities and RSLs in developing Joint Venture Vehicles, project managing stock transfers and delivering service improvement programmes. Prior to that Peter spent 3 years at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister working with local authorities on their stock options appraisals and advised and supported authorities in the delivery of their ALMO/PFI and Stock Transfer investment strategies. Peter has also held the position of Head of Service with 2 leading Registered Social Landlords in the North West of England.

Keith Edwards

Keith returned to his post as Director of Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Cymru in January 2009 following a two year secondment to lead the Welsh Assembly Government **i2i** – inform to involve project.

He was Director of TPAS Cymru for 9 years before joining CIH Cymru in 2000. Prior to entering housing Keith worked in the trade union, co-operative and community development movements.

He is a member of the Welsh Housing Quarterly advisory board and a former member of the Inside Housing Editorial Panel. He sits on the Welsh Assembly Government Housing Programme Board and is a Ministerial appointee to the Wales Financial Inclusion Steering Group, National Regeneration Panel and WHQS Ministerial Task Force. In July 2009 he was made an honorary life member of the Welsh Tenants Federation.

Mike Owen

Chief Executive of Merthyr Valleys Homes since April 2011. He is a Governing Board member of the Chartered Institute of Housing. Previously Chief Executive of Carrick Housing a three star ALMO in Cornwall where he was a CLG and LGA advisor on reform of council housing financing and the redistribution of the national subsidy system for housing.

In the 1990's Mike was the Chief Executive of Birmingham Co-operative Housing Services a secondary housing co-operative setting up fully mutual and TMO's across the West Midlands.

'Evaluation of the regulatory framework for associations in Wales'

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/aboutresearch/social/latestresearch/evaluation-regulatory-framework-housing-associations-wales/?jsessionId=CF71C5FC5425569D9D01E9BEC611CB0F>

Summary Report

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/research/130619-interim-evaluation-regulatory-framework-housing-associations-summary-en.pdf>

The Following examples are case studies of Community benefits achieved through procurement and responsible business as a result of WHQS investment from Large Scale Voluntary Transfer organisations (LSVTs).

RCT Homes has developed a number of tools to capture partner contributions and attributed training and employment opportunities. These systems evidence the impact, capturing cash, in kind and volunteering undertaken by their partners.

Over £1,000,000 in cash donations

Almost 1,000 volunteer hours

£140,000 worth of materials and labour

£200,000 open book 'pain gain' efficiency savings

£140,000 matched funding for Resident Environmental Improvement schemes

In recognition of their partners' contribution, in 2012 they launched the 'More than Awards', to recognise and thank partners. RCT Homes report the total community benefit contribution that partners have made in the form of a 'statement', with a certificate and memento.

In recognition of all their innovation and commitment in relation to securing community benefit through procurement, RCT Homes were successful in winning the 2013 Welsh Government Procurement Awards category for Community Benefit. They were also highly commended for Responsible Procurement by Business in the Community (BITC) in 2010, winning the category in 2011. RCT Homes also achieved UK recognition as finalists in the UK CIH Housing Awards for Meeting Residents Needs & Aspirations through Procurement.

Rhydfelin Amateur Football Club (AFC) Refurbishment of Derelict Changing Facilities.

RCT Homes main partner Costain Construction adopted this scheme as their principal corporate social responsibility (CSR) project occupying and refurbishing significant elements of the building instead of locating in a nearby industrial estate or using portacabins. They brought together other partners to deliver the scheme.

CSR Positive Outcomes for Rhydfelin AFC:

Secured £57,180 (to date) in donations and in kind contributions from partners,

Developed a strong network of business partners,

Developed a strong relationship with the football club and the local community,

Improved local facilities and services,

Raised aspirations and confidence among the local community,

Increased local participation, and

Changed attitudes

These all triggered a catalyst for social change

Action Camp

This is a project from RCT Homes and is delivered by Young Wales. Action Camp is a three day residential event covering a number of key Welsh Government themes. Now in its ninth year it is primarily, though not exclusively, aimed at young people aged eleven to eighteen.

The Camp is followed up by community programme Particip8 that aims to increase youth volunteering locally.

As a result of Action Camp many young people have gained experiences that they won't easily forget. It has made them more aware of the consequences of their own actions, and also taught them how they can live a much healthier lifestyle. It has given these young people very good life skills and helped them grow in confidence.

Action Camp has given 5 young people a chance to gain work experience, and has given 2 of them employment for the summer holidays. I think Action Camp has again demonstrated it is an excellent way of bringing young people together, in a safe environment.”

Many young people attending Action Camp often feel excluded from activities others enjoy. They miss the chance to swim, shop, cook and be with their friends, as well as missing the opportunity to make new friends. Published statistics estimate that one in four children and young people are affected by child poverty. Growing up in poverty can damage child development, which will have a detrimental effect on the positive outcomes in adult life. The costs, of this, are great and go well beyond the individual. It can have disastrous effects on their community.

- Action Camp tries to ensure the attendees enjoy a short break from their home environment, with the opportunity to try many new experiences.
- 98% of the Action Camp attendees achieved an NOCN Entry Level Award, accrediting their efforts. The qualification is approved within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) at Entry Level (Entry 3) and Level 1 and encompass the principles of Foundation Learning.

The Following examples are case studies of community benefits achieved through procurement in new build situations for traditional RSL's.

St Michael's Church

Grwp Gwalia's St Michael's Church in Bohun Street, Manselton, Swansea is an example of how the repair and restoration of a Grade II listed church can be redeveloped to provide new build, residential accommodation.

The scheme has received £350,000 of Welsh Government funding from Social Housing Grant towards a total scheme cost of £601,893 for the residential element, which provides six, three person, two bedroom flats for residents over 55 and was completed in December 2012.

The scheme included the restoration works of a church building; demolition of a church hall and hut, the re-ordering of internal church building space to accommodate new community facilities and the creation of a new West elevation church door and flat accommodation which has been designed to Code 3 + of Code for Sustainable Homes.

The scheme is located within Swansea Strategic Regeneration area and has provided the following community benefits:-

- the physical regeneration of a semi derelict site of a church hall and hut
- new community facilities within the church, across a range of user groups in a multi purpose flexible space.
- 95% of the supply chain for the scheme and sub-contractors were based within a 20 mile radius of this site which has provided support to the local economy.

Turner Street

City Gardens, Turner Street, Newport is a mixed tenure housing scheme of 35 homes of which 32 are for affordable housing. The site is located in a popular area of the city and had been derelict for a number of years.

The scheme has received £349,229 of Welsh Government funding from the Social Housing Grant which contributes to a total scheme cost of £764,985, to support the provision of 6 general needs units within the scheme.

As part of the scheme, Seren group agreed to pilot 2 new affordable housing products for Newport County Council, a 4 bedroom ladder project and a flat share unit.

The ladder project is aimed at young people aged between 18 and 25 who are in or are seeking employment and are living in circumstances where their accommodation is of poor quality or where they are at possible risk of becoming homeless.

The "flat share" comprises of 2 bedroom flats and are targeted at people under 35. The flats have been designed in response to proposed changes to welfare reform.

Due to the unique nature of the “ladder project” and the “flat share” Charter and Newport County Council will be monitoring progress closely as the model could be repeated elsewhere if successful.

The scheme has provided the following community benefits:-

- Greenhill Construction employed three local apprentices and one local trainee Site Manager and giving them the opportunity to gain valuable experience and expertise working on a local site
- Renovation to sea cadets huts
- Local school involvement, poster competition and health and safety talks
- The two pilot projects directly benefit young people within the community, who would otherwise find it difficult to secure suitable accommodation
- The original derelict site has been totally regenerated, improving the outlook of the area.

NEW - Argel Extra Care Project

This new project in Johnstown, Carmarthen is being undertaken by Family Housing Association in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council and forms part of the authority’s on-going strategy for older people.

This project provides:-

- 50 self-contained one and two bedroom apartments with the usual facilities of an extra care development, including lounge, dining room, craft and hobby room, wellbeing room and a range of sitting rooms and circulation spaces designed to encourage social interaction.
- 11 self-contained apartments for people with dementia, which have their own communal and recreational areas.
- A Day Centre for use by non-residential older persons in the community.
- A kitchen serving both the extra care development and the Day Centre. The kitchen will also form the hub of the Meals on Wheels service within the area.

The funding and partnership arrangement is innovative in that funding from the projects comes from three sources (private finance from Family Housing Association, Carmarthenshire County Council and the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government has supported the scheme with a Social Housing Grant of £6.2m which contributes towards a gross scheme cost of £10.8m and is expected to be completed in January 2015.

This project allows tenants to live independently knowing that support is on hand should they need it. All areas including the apartments are suitable for access by people with disabilities.

The following community benefits will be delivered:-

- Working with the contractor and Carmarthenshire construction training agencies – there will be apprenticeship opportunities in a range of construction disciplines. During the construction process there will be an average of 50 people employed on site.
- the promotion of independent living will provide a much more efficient use of the Council's existing domiciliary care resources allowing more residents in the community to receive much needed care
- The location of the scheme, within an established community and adjacent to a large comprehensive school will promote social integration and interaction and reduce isolation which is a big issue for the older generation

Penucheldre Extra Care

Penucheldre Extra Care scheme in Holyhead is the first unit of its kind on the Isle of Anglesey and was developed in partnership with Anglesey County Council.

Completed in November 2012, the scheme includes 54 purpose built one and two bedroom flats developed by Cymdeithas Tai Eryri. This Extra Care development provides flexible, person centred care to support independence and social inclusion and enables older people to retain more control within their lives.

The Welsh Government provided funding of £4.76m from Social Housing Grant as part of the total scheme cost of £8.2m with the balance coming from private finance.

- The scheme also offers; accommodation for visitors, a restaurant lounge and coffee bar, hair and beauty salon, fitness room, hobbies room and communal areas for socialising. The new flats enable people to enjoy a happy and stress-free retirement with companionship and activities on hand, as well as the peace of mind that care and support is available as required.
- Many of the support workers, the chefs and kitchen staff have been recruited from the local community. The Restaurant has created an opportunity to establish a new social enterprise – “Gwledda” – which prepares meals at Penucheldra and provides an outside catering service.

Vulcan House

Wales & West Housing Association's, Vulcan House development in Bethesda Street, Merthyr Tydfil is due to complete in March 2013 and will deliver 15, 2 bedroom flats for affordable housing.

The original Vulcan house site consisted of grade II listed buildings in a dilapidated state of repair and had been vacant since 1990.

Following an extensive consultation process with CADW and the conservation officer at Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Wales & West Housing Association obtained planning approval and listed building consent to retain the main house and demolish the outer buildings within the curtilage.

The Welsh Government provided funding of £1.1m from Social Housing Grant for 15 units as part of the total scheme cost of £1.96m with the balance coming from private finance. Handover of the development is expected to take place in August 2013.

Community benefits:-

- The local community has benefited from the redevelopment of this site along with the adjacent Vulcan Brewery development which completed in 2011, has seen the regeneration of this small area of Merthyr.
- This area of Merthyr has been transformed from a depressing site with many dangerous and dilapidated buildings to a housing development which sits within the footprint of the former Vulcan House and its annex.
- Wales & West Housing are working closely with GGAT and Cyfartha Junior School to capture the history of the site and record it for others to enjoy in the future.
- There are 7 subcontracting organisations working on the project with some 18 operatives working on site. In addition the developer benefited from job opportunities and a total of 24 jobs were created over the length of the contract.

Affordable Housing Project, Rivulet Road and Kingsmills Road, Wrexham.

Wales & West Housing acquired land at Rivulet Road from the private sector (a stalled site) and further land at Kingsmills Road from the Council for the development of affordable housing comprising of a range of dwelling types.

The site was a former gas works, which was contaminated over time and has been remediated to bring into use for residential purposes.

The project also includes a refuge for women fleeing domestic violence and a fully adapted property for a specific client.

The project started on site in May 2012 and the first dwellings are due for handover on 10th May 2013.

The Welsh Government provided funding of £7m from Social Housing Grant as part of the total scheme cost of £18m with the balance coming from private finance.

In addition, a Community Resource Centre is being provided that is funded by Wales & West Housing. This provides a community centre, medical facility in partnership with the health board and a suite of office accommodation.

The properties on Kingsmills Road have had the maximum amount of PV panels placed on their roofs to give the tenants cheap electricity. This has been paid for by Wales & West Housing Association to help prevent fuel poverty.

The benefits to the community include:-

- There are ongoing job opportunities on the development for local people. 28 local people have been employed from the immediate locality. These include 16 apprentices with a wide range of skills including; Bricklayers, Plasterers, Timber Frame Joiners and Forklift Drivers.
- A new Community Resource Centre will provide a new medical centre for the local community and a new community centre to replace the old one. There will also be a large Public Open Space which will be adopted by the Local Authority on the Kingsmills Road site.

