

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 9 th May 2016
Report Subject	Welsh Housing Quality Standard Compliance Policy – Verification and maintaining the standard.
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer, (Community & Enterprise)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council is proud to have developed and agreed a revised delivery programme that will meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standards by the year 2020. This is a significant achievement for the authority having been in a position in 2012 where achievement of the standard was only possible by 2036.

At the heart of the development of a revised plan was the desire to provide high quality housing and neighbourhoods for the tenants of Flintshire.

The Policy demonstrates Flintshire's interpretation and application of the WHQS, and compliance with individual components, and its intentions for assessment and verification of achievement of the standard.

This policy will respond to the Welsh Government's request for each landlord to produce a 'WHQS Compliance Policy' and a 'Compliance Certificate' for each property at point of re-let.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Committee support the introduction of the proposed Compliance Policy and Compliance Certificate.
2	That Committee support the proposed timescales for introduction of the Compliance Policy and review periods.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WELSH GOVERNMENTS REQUIREMENTS
1.01	<p>Welsh Government wrote to all Housing Providers and Local Authority Chief Executives in July 2015 requesting that each provider;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Develop a Compliance policy that should be in place in April 2016 and reviewed annually➤ Develop an independent verification process➤ WHQS compliant certificates to all new tenants. Where a property is not compliant at the point of re-letting, information about the indicative works programme should be required to use the new tenant➤ Community Benefits: all landlords are required to use the Value Wales Measurement Tool for all works programmes.
1.02	<p>Welsh Government outlined requirements for inclusion in the Compliance Policy. The policy requests the Council to clarify its approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Interpretation of the WHQS reflecting resources and circumstances.b) Interpretation and recording of 'Acceptable Fails', reporting and annual progressc) Data collectiond) Data storagee) WHQS progress and reportingf) Independent Verificationg) WHQS plus standardh) Summarised annual financial investment in the stocki) Link to WG statistical returnj) Interpretation and measurement of Community Benefits.
1.03	<p>Independent verification has been discussed with Wrexham County Borough Council and both authorities will verify each other's submissions to Welsh Government.</p>
1.04	<p>A Compliance Certificate has been developed for introduction at the point of new tenancy re-lets. The Certificate consists of a list of 41 components that properties are required to comply with to meet the WHQS. At the point of re-let, the list will be compiled and any components that are not compliant, will be noted on the Certificate as to when those major works are likely to be completed as part of planned projects with anticipated timescales.</p>
1.05	<p>Community Benefits: The Value Wales Measurement Toolkits have been supplied to Welsh Government and Flintshire County Council will continue to send the toolkits for all major projects.</p>
1.06	<p>Flintshire County Council proposes to implement the Compliance Policy in the 1st Quarter of 2016/17.</p> <p>The WHQS Compliance Certificate will be further developed and implemented in the 3rd Quarter of 2016/17.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The completion of Compliance Certificates will require additional resource to complete the documentation, e.g. full assessments of the current standard against the WHQS and verifying future plans and timescales for completion of any outstanding WHQS elements. However, a Contract Surveyor is allocated within the Capital Programme to major works on Void properties ensuring maximisation of the funding and compliance with WHQS and it is envisaged that the Compliance Certificate could be completed through this resource.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Compliance Policy has been shared and discussed at the Housing and Regeneration Programme Board and has also been discussed with the Tenants Federation. Internal consultation has also been undertaken with other teams in Council Housing Services to ensure a consistent approach throughout the service. Further consultation will continue throughout the year with tenants groups and individuals as part of the introduction of the proposed policy and certificate. Feedback will be collated and included in the annual review.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	<p>The Compliance Policy is a requirement of Welsh Government and therefore failure to implement will raise questions and pose potential risks to annual MRA funding which is reliant on the submission of annual returns and compliance with policy requests.</p> <p>The compliance of the WHQS is reliant on the achievement of the delivery of the programme each year. Delivery is reported and monitored quarterly through the Improvement Plan and is reviewed six weekly at the Housing and Regeneration Programme Board.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	<p>Appendix 1 – WHQS Compliance Policy</p> <p>Appendix 2 – WHQS Compliance Certificate</p>

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	The Welsh Housing Quality Standard – Revised guidance for social Landlords on Interpretation and Achievement of the WHQS – July 2008.

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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>WHQS – Welsh Housing Quality Standards – The standards to which all social housing in Wales should be upgraded to.</p> <p>Community Benefits: Community Benefits is a policy set out by Welsh Government to provide opportunities as part of large scale investment programmes to help provide jobs, growth and tackle poverty in Wales.</p> <p>Acceptable Fail: A dwelling may contain one or more elements which are classified as an ‘acceptable fail’ under the WHQS guidance and therefore there may be several reasons why the property containing those elements might then be regarded as an acceptable fail for the purposes of the WHQS data collection. In these cases, the social landlord data providers were asked to record the main reason for that ‘acceptable fail’ according to the hierarchical order below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resident Choice 2. Physical Constraint 3. Timing of Remedy 4. Cost of Remedy