

FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	16 th December 2014
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Service Area	Housing Renewal Team
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	7 th January 2015

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To approve the Council's updated Housing Renewal Policy (1st Jan 2015 – 31st March 2018).

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 repealed previous prescriptive legislation concerning housing renewal grants and provided local authorities with increased flexibility to address local housing needs and priorities. It required local authorities to create and publish Housing Renewal Policies, which clearly define the types of assistance available and who is eligible to apply.
- 1.2 This latest version of the Council's Housing Renewal Policy outlines all of the type of housing grant and loan assistance available to local citizens, who meet the eligibility criteria for each product.
- 1.3 It should be noted that some of the assistance products referred to in the Policy do not have a capital budget aligned with them and so are effectively not available at this current time.
- 1.4 This updated version of the Housing Renewal Policy is based upon the latest housing stock condition data available to the Council (2008/9) and includes within it

for the first time, references to new loan products and Welsh Government funded 'strategic domestic energy schemes'.

2.0 NEW PRODUCTS AVAILABLE

- 2.1 Vacant Property Grant – to be administered by the Regeneration Team using Vibrant & Viable Places funding.
- 2.2 Houses into Homes (H2H) Empty Property Loans– Although these loans have been delivered by the Housing Renewal Team since 2012, Welsh Government are about to provide further tranches of loan funding to the Council, to allow the Scheme to continue into the future.
- 2.3 Home Improvement Loan – will be available from early 2015 for the first time in Merthyr Tydfil. Funding for this Scheme is being loaned to the Council from Welsh Government.
- 2.4 Strategic Domestic Energy Schemes – feature in the Policy for the first time. The Welsh Government continues to access European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to fund area based energy efficiency retro-fit schemes for homes (example – external wall insulation, new boilers etc...).

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 3.1 The Welsh Government is to provide loan funding to the Council to deliver the Houses into Homes Loans and Home Improvement Loans.
- 3.2 The loan on offer to the Council has not been finalised but is likely to be in the region of £87,617 for 2014/15 and £262,850 for 2015/16.
- 3.3 The total loan sum is to be repaid to Welsh Government in 2029-2030. Welsh Government underwrite 2.5% of any bad debt experienced.
- 3.4 The risk to the Council is extremely low as all loans issued over £5,000 will be registered as a legal charge on the property. This will ensure all loan funding is recoverable.

4.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

- 4.1 Positive impacts in the following priority outcomes have been identified:
 - i. People, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life
 - ii. People enjoy a vibrant, attractive, safe and sustainable place in which to live, work, play and visit
 - iii. Sustainable Development - enhancing the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of people and communities, achieving a better quality of life for our own and future generations

iv. Poverty - preventing poverty, helping people out of poverty and mitigating the impact of poverty;

4.2 No negative impacts have been identified.

5.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time. The screening form can be accessed on the Council's website/intranet via the 'Equality Impact Assessment' link.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

6.1 The Housing Renewal Policy is approved with immediate effect.

ELLIS COOPER
CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Housing Renewal Policy (1 st Jan 2015 – 31 st March 2018)	Dec 2014	
EqIA Screening Doc	Dec 2014	
SIP&SIA	Dec 2014	

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.