

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

30 JANUARY 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL & PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL POLICY

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek Cabinet approval to amend the Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy (**Appendix 1**) to reflect the Welsh Government changes to the terms and conditions of the 'Houses into Homes' empty property loan scheme.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priority

2.1 The Policy contributes to the following Corporate Priorities;

- Supporting a successful economy; and
- Smarter use of resources.

3.0 Background

3.1 The Private Sector Housing Renewal and Disabled Adaptations Policy sets out the assistance provided by the Authority to; address poor and hazardous housing conditions; bring empty properties back into use and; enable the homes of disabled and elderly people to be adapted to meet their needs.

3.2 There are specific schemes included in the Policy for bringing empty properties back into use and one of these schemes is the Welsh Government 'Houses into Homes' empty property loan scheme.

3.3 The scheme forms part of the Authority's overall approach to tackling empty properties in the Borough and enables the renovation and improvement of single properties or their conversion into a number of units i.e. a three storey house into three flats, in order for them to be suitable for use as residential accommodation.

3.4 Loans are provided by the Authority to owners of empty properties where the property has been empty for six months or longer. The maximum loan amount per unit of accommodation is £25,000 and the maximum loan amount per applicant is £150,000. The empty property must be sold or rented on the open market following completion of the works. Owners have a specified loan term by which they have to pay back the loan to the Authority.

3.5 The specific terms and conditions of the loan scheme are prescribed by Welsh Government and are contained on pages 11 to 14 of the Policy (Appendix 1).

4.0 Current situation / proposal

4.1 Welsh Government have changed the terms and conditions of the 'Houses into Homes' empty property loan scheme. The changes are as follows:

- Increased the loan term for empty properties intended for rental from a maximum of 3 years to 5 years. This assists applicants by giving them longer to pay back the loan.
- Increased the maximum loan offered per applicant for empty properties from £150,000 to £250,000 (10 units at £25,000 per unit). This assists applicants who may own a number of empty properties or who are looking to convert a large building into a number of flats.

5.0 **Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6.0 **Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken when the Policy was initially approved by Cabinet on 7th June 2016 to assess its relevance to the Authority's public equality duties and potential impact on protected equality characteristics.

6.2 This policy has been assessed as relevant to the Authority's general and specific duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination with regard to gender, disability, race, religion and belief and age.

6.3 The policy has also been assessed as relevant to the Authority's duty to promote and protect human rights (specifically protection of property and right to respect for private and family life).

6.4 The proposed amendments made to the Policy have no effect on this EIA.

7.0 **Financial Implications**

7.1 The total funding for the scheme is £900,010 and is provided by Welsh Government. The funding does not have to be paid back to Welsh Government. The funding is recycled to other applicants upon repayment of loans.

8.0 **Recommendation**

8.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the revised Private Sector Renewal and Disabled Adaptation Policy, specifically, the changes to the 'Houses into Homes' empty property loan scheme as outlined in section 4.1 of the report.

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Background documents
None