



Private Rented Sector Improvement Project: End of Project Report

February 2014

Contact

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The WLGA Private Rented Sector (PRS) Improvement Project was launched in March 2012 by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), with funding from the Welsh Government. The work was completed in September 2013.

1.2 The project was carried out on behalf of WLGA by a group of 3 consultants¹:

Anne Delaney
Simon Inkson
Arnold Phillips

and was overseen by a steering group comprising:

Lee Cecil	National Landlords Association	
JJ Costello	Shelter	
Ann Rowland	Landlord Accreditation Wales	
Sue Finch	WLGA	
Geoff Marlow	Welsh Government	
David Humphreys	Housing Strategy	Flintshire CC
Hayley Bearman	Housing Strategy	Neath Port Talbot
Jenny Lewington	Supporting People	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Glesni Owen	Private Sector Housing	Denbighshire CC
Elen Probert,	Private Sector Housing	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Martin Whatty	Homelessness	City & County Swansea
Fiona Wilkins	Private Sector Housing	Caerphilly CBC
Gareth Williams	Private Sector Housing	Carmarthenshire CC
Robert Owen	Homelessness	Bridgend CBC

1.3 The size of the PRS in Wales has doubled over the last 10 years, and a number of organisations, including the British Social Housing Foundation, have predicted that the PRS will comprise at least 20% of all homes in the UK by 2020. This is a significant shift, and it is likely that there will be increasing reliance on the PRS to provide housing for people in housing need. The Welsh Government has recognised this, and its Housing (Wales) Bill includes substantive references to the growing importance of the sector. The demand for private rented sector housing is likely to

¹ Tamsin Stirling was one of 4 consultants originally appointed, but withdrew from active participation in the project when she was appointed as a Welsh Government Ministerial Advisor.

continue to grow, due to new homelessness duties outlined in the Bill, the results of welfare reforms, and the gap between social housing supply and demand.

Authorities will in the foreseeable future rely on the private rented sector to meet local housing need and to fulfil their housing duties.

- 1.4 In 2010 the WLGA had developed an improvement toolkit on Local Authorities and the PRS and, at the outset of the project, local authorities in many areas of Wales were already working more closely with the PRS, for example through social lettings and other PRS access schemes. In order to ensure that such schemes were most effective, it was clear that a clear and consistent corporate and strategic approach from local government was necessary.
- 1.5 The key aim of the Private Rented Sector Improvement Project was to support local authorities in Wales to improve their partnership with the private rented sector in order to improve the quality and size of the sector and its accessibility to households in housing need. The project aimed to assist individual authorities to:
 - improve the corporate understanding of the strategic importance of the PRS in their area
 - bring together the appropriate departments within the authority in order to develop and implement an improvement plan
 - help individual services to improve their work with the PRS
 - improve the ability of the authority to make use of the PRS to address housing need and homelessness
- 1.6 To achieve these aims, a range of work was undertaken, including:
 - learning events
 - work with individual authorities
 - production of materials for use across authorities
 - research on social lettings agencies in Wales

This work is described in more detail in the following chapters.

2 Learning Event and Seminar

- 2.1 On 01 May 2012 a Learning Event: Improving the Local Authority and Private Rented Sector Partnership was held at the Media Resource Centre, Llandrindod Wells.
- 2.2 89 people attended the event, from all 22 local authorities and 2 other organisations.
- 2.3 Appendix 1 to this report contains:
- the Learning Event programme
 - notes for workshop facilitators
 - a briefing note prepared for the event
 - a proforma which attendees were asked to complete outlining the types of consultancy support they felt they could benefit from during the project
- 2.4 Feedback from participants at the event was very positive. Following the event:
- detailed information was collated covering the general and authority-specific issues raised at each workshop
 - notes of authority working practices discussed at the event were collected and placed on WLGA's PRS web pages
 - an analysis was made of requests received for consultancy support
- 2.5 In July 2012, 4 Regional Housing Seminars for local authority elected members, scrutiny and cabinet were planned for Denbighshire, Cardiff, Llanelli and Torfaen. In the event, it appeared that the proposed Seminars coincided with a great deal of new member induction and training activities in authorities, and the numbers of delegates registering was disappointingly low. It was therefore agreed to hold one Seminar for members and senior officers from across Wales, and this was held on 24 July at Nantgarw.
- 2.6 6 authorities were represented at the Seminar (officers from 5 authorities and members from 5 authorities).
- 2.7 Appendix 2 to this report contains the Seminar programme and briefing note prepared for members attending the Seminar

3 Work with individual local authorities

- 3.1 Based on issues raised at the Learning Event and Seminar, and on the analysis made of requests from local authorities for consultancy support, a programme was drawn up for work with individual authorities.
- 3.2 Each of the 22 local authorities in Wales was offered a core package of support (3.5 days of the consultants' time free of charge), and all 22 authorities accepted the offer.
- 3.3 The core package comprised:
- a facilitated discussion with service heads whose responsibilities impacted on the private rented sector (e.g. housing strategy, housing enforcement, housing benefit, supporting people, homelessness, regeneration, children's services, adult services). The session was designed to use the initial self assessment diagnostic contained in the WLGA's "Local Authorities and the Private Rented Sector Toolkit". Before attending the discussion, each Head of Service was asked to complete the diagnostic, based on their own views and the views of their team. These views were then fed into the facilitated discussion, in order to:
 - identify areas for improvement
 - identify whether the authority would require additional support to implement identified improvements and, if so, the type of support that they would require
 - form the basis for an improvement action plan developed by the consultants
 - a session with leading members in the authority (e.g. cabinet members whose responsibilities impact on the private rented sector, chairs of scrutiny committees whose remit incorporates the private rented sector). The session consisted of a presentation on:
 - the importance of working proactively with the private rented sector in the light of the changing housing market, the Housing Bill and welfare reform
 - the importance of a clear and consistent corporate approach to dealing with the private rented sector
 - the main areas for improvement identified by officers

- potential roles for scrutiny in relation to the private rented sector
- a facilitated discussion on the authority's approach to working with the private rented sector
- a feedback session at which a PRS Improvement Action Plan (tailored to each the authority's particular needs) was presented and discussed

- 3.4 Feedback from participants in this process was again very positive, and most of the actions proposed by the consultants were adopted by authorities and are in the process of being taken forward.
- 3.5 Appendix 3 to this report contains an anonymised example of a PRS Improvement Action Plan produced for one local authority.
- 3.6 Following completion of delivery of the core package of support to authorities, the WLGA had confirmation from the Welsh Government of some additional funding for the project. Local authorities were therefore each offered an additional 1½ days consultancy support, to help take forward work on their PRS Improvement Action Plans.
- 3.7 The way in which those days were used was left entirely up to each individual authority, and authorities were free to suggest any form of support that they would find most helpful.
- 3.8 19 of the 22 Welsh authorities took up the offer of additional consultancy support, and the ways in which the additional days were used is summarised in Appendix 4 to this report.

4 Materials produced for use across all authorities

- 4.1 As a result of discussions at each of the 22 Welsh authorities, it became apparent that authorities were facing many of the same issues, and trying to solve many of the same problems. It was therefore decided to produce materials to address those issues which could be used across all authorities. The materials produced are listed below.

Information for Wales Housing websites

- 4.2 This information was produced for inclusion in WalesHousing websites operated by 18 of the 22 local authorities. The information was designed to provide homeseekers with information about how to access privately rented accommodation in their local area, and about their rights as tenants and their

landlords' responsibilities. The information was produced in a format which each local authority could customise to make it relevant to the local area. One example of how a local authority has used this information is available at https://www.swanseahousing.co.uk/index.php?section=accommodation&option=pr_s_homepage

Landlord information

- 4.3 This information was produced for use as a pdf document on the Landlord Accreditation Wales (LAW) website, providing existing landlords or potential landlords with easy-read information about:

- the role and responsibilities of landlords
- how to go about letting and managing a property
- help available to manage and improve their properties
- the management of Houses in Multiple Occupation
- forthcoming changes in legislation and regulation which will affect the role of landlords in Wales

Template for embedding PRS in Local Housing Strategies

- 4.4 This information was produced to assist local authorities in embedding the private rented sector in their Local Housing Strategies. It is available on WLGA website at <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/embedding-the-prs-in-your-local-housing-strategy/>

Data sharing advice note

- 4.5 Various departments within local authorities hold rich data about housing in the private rented sector. The purpose of this advice note is to provide clarity about the sharing of data between different teams within the local authority in relation to the details of properties and their owners. Given the proposed introduction of a landlord registration scheme in Wales, it was agreed that the paper produced would be provided to local authorities as requested, but not published extensively.

Guidelines on low interest loans to landlords

- 4.6 This paper was produced to provide local authorities with guidance on the establishment of loan schemes which target landlords who are willing to work in partnership with them to provide housing for people in receipt of Local Housing Allowance. The paper can be found on the WLGA website at <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/housing-publications/guidance-on-loan-schemes-for-landlords-and-property-owners/>

Questionnaire seeking information from landlords

- 4.7 Guidance was produced for local authorities on how to develop and promote an online survey for private sector landlords to gather information about the numbers of homes they own and rent and the markets they work in. The purpose was to enable authorities to make personal contact with landlords who work at the lower-rent end of the market, to consult them on how partnership working with authorities could be made more attractive to landlords. The advice note can be found on the WLGA website at <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/understanding-your-local-private-rented-sector/>

Updated toolkit

- 4.8 At the conclusion of this project, and using the learning from the project, the consultants updated WLGA's 2010 improvement toolkit on Local Authorities and the PRS. The updated toolkit is available on WLGA's website [here](#)

5 Research on social lettings agencies in Wales

- 5.1 It became clear during the course of work with individual authorities that most were looking to increase the number of properties managed by Social Lettings Agencies in their areas. However, little information was available on the extent of social lettings across Wales, or on the ways in which Welsh Social Lettings Agencies were operating. A briefing paper was therefore produced to address these issues.
- 5.2 To produce this paper, the consultants:
- held face to face or telephone interviews with all Social Lettings Agencies operating in Wales at the end of March 2013
 - held 4 regional meetings with local authorities in Wales (in Bridgend, Pontypool, Llanelli and Colwyn Bay) to discuss social lettings
- 5.3 The resulting briefing paper:
- provides information on the operation of Welsh Social Lettings Agencies
 - draws conclusions about the information collected
 - makes recommendations for the future of social lettings in Wales
 - contains an advice note on social lettings
 - contains a proforma social lettings agreement for use between local authorities and Social Lettings Agencies

- 5.4 The paper is available on the WLGA's website [here](#)
- 5.5 Preliminary findings from the paper were presented at the PRS Summit organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru.

6 Conclusions

- 6.1 This project identified a wide range of issues which were acting as barriers to progressing the work that local authorities need to do to improve their partnership with the private rented sector in order to improve the quality and size of the sector and its accessibility to households in housing need.
- 6.2 A wide range of project outputs were produced to respond to these identified needs:
- all 22 authorities now have PRS improvement action plans tailored to their individual needs
 - authorities have received the support of their choice from the consultants to progress these action plans
 - a wide range of materials is now available to all authorities to address common issues identified
 - information is now available on the extent of social lettings across Wales, and on the ways in which Welsh Social Lettings Agencies are operating, and recommendations have been made for addressing the issues raised
- 6.3 Local authority responses to the whole range of this work have been very positive, and all 22 authorities in Wales are, as a result of the project:
- much more clearly focused on the strategic importance of the PRS
 - aware of their increasing reliance on the PRS to meet local housing need and to fulfil their housing duties
 - aware of what they need to do to make optimum use of the PRS in their area
 - working actively to achieve this

Appendix 1A:

Learning Event: Improving the Local Authority and Private Rented Sector Partnership - 01 May 2012 (PROGRAMME)

10:00 – 10:15 Registration and Refreshments

10:15 – 10:25 Welcome and Introduction

Welsh Local Government Association: Sue Finch

10:25 – 11:10 The Future of the Private Rented Sector

Building and Social Housing Foundation: Ben Pattison

11:10 – 11:30 The Private Rented Sector in Wales

Tamsin Stirling: Housing Consultant

11:30 – 11:45 Break and Refreshments

11:45 – 12:40 Workshop One

1. Corporate working: building a joined up approach to the PRS
2. Creating a high quality PRS
3. Increasing the supply of privately rented homes
4. Supporting and incentivising private landlords

12:40 – 1:20 Lunch and Refreshments

1:20 – 2:20 Workshop Two

Repeated: See Workshop One

2:20 – 2:35 Building the Local Authority Partnership with the Private Rented Sector

Welsh Local Government Association: Sue Finch

2:35 – 2:50 Improvement Sector for Authorities

Anne Delaney: Housing Consultant

2:50 – 3:15 Next Steps: Plenary Discussion

3:15 Close

Appendix 1B:

Learning Event: Improving the Local Authority and Private Rented Sector Partnership - 01 May 2012 (NOTES FOR WORKSHOP FACILITATORS)

The WLGA learning event will include a choice of 4 workshops, with participants each selecting 2. Each workshop will last about an 1 hour and will run twice 11.45 – 12.40 and 1.20 – 2.20, with a maximum of 25 participants attending each workshop.

The primary aim of the workshops is to enable participants to share ideas and to learn from one another. We have asked a small number of practitioners to help facilitate each workshop and to start the workshop off by providing a brief and informal outline of the relevant work in their Authority eg what worked - what didn't, lessons learnt and any future plans (absolute max of 10 mins per person – ideally 5 mins).

We are asking the facilitators to agree who should chair the workshop, but to share responsibility for keeping the discussion going by. Ideally everyone should have an opportunity to contribute and in some cases encouraging the more reticent participants.

A note taker will be taking notes in workshop and these will be circulated to participants following the event. There will be no workshop feedback during the event itself because of the limited time available.

At the start of the workshop I suggest the person who has agreed to chair the workshop:

- clarifies the title of the workshop (to make sure everyone is in the right place!)
- introduces the other facilitators
- introduces the consultant who will be taking notes and explains that the notes will be circulated to every participant after the event
- confirms the time when the workshop will end
- emphasises that it is a **workshop** and the aim is to provide an opportunity for **everyone** to share their learning and to ask questions
- asks if people who speak can start by giving their name, their role and their Authority

At the end of the workshop I suggest you

- thank everyone for their contributions

- In the first workshop - clarify when participants need to be back from lunch for the next workshop
- In the second workshop – encourage people to return to the main room as quickly as possible

Workshop 1: Building a joined up, corporate approach to the PRS

The private rented sector is growing and is becoming an increasingly important strategic partner of Local Government. Although work is developing in this area, relatively few Authorities have developed a corporate strategy in relation to the private rented sector. The aim of this workshop is to explore some and perhaps all of the following:

- **experience of using the WLGA PRS improvement toolkit**
- **the challenges of working across the Authority and how to overcome them**
- **developing a corporate PRS strategy**
- **developing and implementing an improvement plan for work with the PRS**
- **awareness raising in the Authority**
- **engaging elected members**

Facilitators

David Humphreys, Housing strategy, Flintshire CC David.Humphrey@conwy.gov.uk

Peter James, Head of Housing services, Conwy Peter.James@conwy.gov.uk

Joanne Lewis-Jones, Housing Strategy, Torfaen CBC Joanne.Lewis-jones@torfaen.gov.uk

Rhys Horan, Environmental Health, Wrexham CBC Rhys.Horan@wrexham.gov.uk

Workshop 2: Creating a high quality private rented sector

If the private rented sector is to become a sector of choice in Wales it will need to be of high quality in every sense of the word. The aim of this workshop is to explore ways in which the Local Authority can work with landlords and other key partners to improve the quality of the sector including: The workshop will explore some and perhaps all of the following:

- **making the best use of enforcement powers**
- **HMO and selective licencing**
- **Understanding what is important to tenants through customer profiling**
- **maximising the contribution the sector makes to the local community**
- **tenancy sustainability**
 1. **increasing energy efficiency**

2. grants and loans to landlords

Facilitators

Glesni Owen, Environmental Health, Denbighshire CC Glesni.owen@denbighshire.gov.uk

Sam Watkins, Customer profiling, Carmarthenshire CC

S.J.Watkins@Carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Louise Davies, Environmental Health, Rhondda Cynon Taff Louise.m.davies@rctbc.gov.uk

Workshop 3: Understanding the PRS in your area and increasing the supply

Although the private rented sector is growing, it will clearly need to expand further if it is to meet future housing need and respond to homelessness. The aim of this workshop is to consider ways in which Authorities can increase their understanding of their local private rented sector and the ways in which the supply of rented homes can be increased. The workshop will include some and perhaps all of the following:

- **building an understanding of your local PRS**
- **using the housing access website**
- **social lettings agencies**
- **making use of empty homes and flats over shops**

Facilitators

Val Brown, Carmarthenshire CC V.Brown@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Natalie Southgate, Housing Strategy, Cardiff CC N.Southgate@cardiff.gov.uk

Anna Henchie Jones, Housing Strategy, Ceredigion

anna.henchie-jones@ceredigion.gov.uk

Richard Brice, Carmarthenshire CC R.Brice@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Elliw Guner, Empty Homes, Gwynedd ElliwGuner1@gwynedd.gov.uk

Workshop 4: Supporting and incentivising private landlords

Private landlords have an increasingly important role of play in providing homes for people unable to access social housing or owner occupation. This workshop will look at the range of ways in which you can attract, support and incentivise good landlords to provide good quality homes which meet housing need. The aim of this workshop is to explore some and perhaps all of the following:

- **engaging and communicating with landlords**
- **building an active landlord forum**
- **landlord training and accreditation**
- **links with Housing Benefit and DHP**
- **landlord/ tenant charters**

- landlord tenant liaison
- tenant support
- loans
- advice

Facilitators

Yvonne Hewitt, Expanding the PRS as a housing option – Denbighshire CC

Yvonne.Hewitt@denbighshire.gov.uk

Robin Millard, Mitigation of Housing Benefit changes – Swansea CBC

Robin.Millard@swansea.gov.uk

Anne Rowlands: Landlord Accrediation scheme, Cardiff CC A.Rowlands@cardiff.gov.uk

Marcia Williams: seconded to Swansea CBC – expanding PRS as a housing option

Marcia.williams@thewallich.net

Arwena Russell, Housing Benefit Manager, Bridgend CBC Arwena.Russell@Bridgend.gov.uk

Appendix 1C:

Briefing Note: The changing context for the private rented sector in Wales Welsh Local Government Association - April 2012 (KEY MESSAGES)

- The proportion of homes in the private rented sector has increased significantly since 2006/07
- The private rented sector is playing an increasing role for:
 - o people who can, on the face of it, afford to buy, but who do not have the necessary deposit
 - o people who cannot get access to social housing due to demand exceeding supply
- Some people are living in the private rented sector by choice while others are not
- The proportion of homes across Wales in the private rented sector is likely to continue to increase and will soon exceed the proportion of homes in the social rented sector
- The welfare reform agenda is already starting to have an impact on the private rented sector and as more elements are implemented, will continue to do so
- A number of projects and initiatives led by local government are underway which aim to ensure that people living in the private rented sector are in good quality, well managed and affordable homes
- The Housing Bill is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to directly influence the future nature and scope of the private rented sector

1. Introduction

The WLGA improvement toolkit ***Local authorities and the private rented sector*** was published in February 2011¹. In the year since its publication, there have been a number of developments in relation to the private rented sector. After providing an overview of housing demand and supply issues in Wales, this short briefing summarises these developments to provide the context for the 2012 Welsh Government funded project which aims to support a number of local authorities to improve their work with the private rented sector.

2. Housing demand and supply in Wales

The main findings of Alan Holmans' report ***Housing Need and Demand in Wales 2006-2026*** were that:

- an estimated 284,000 additional homes are required in Wales between 2006 and 2026
- 183,000 of these are in the market sector and 101,000 in the non-market sector

- these estimates average 14,200 dwellings a year - 9,200 in the market sector and 5,100 in the non-market sector
- there is a backlog of unmet housing need which is estimated at 9,500 householdsⁱⁱ

The ***One Wales*** target of 6,500 new affordable homes during the last Welsh Assembly Government administration was exceeded due to concerted efforts by the Welsh Assembly Government and delivery partners, both local authorities and housing associations. However, this significant increase in the number of affordable homes still represents a shortfall each year when compared to the 5,100 homes a year in the non-market sector identified as required by Holmans.

Since 2006-07, owner-occupation in Wales has reduced from 74% of all homes in Wales to 70%ⁱⁱⁱ. A decade of rapidly rising house prices was followed by the market collapse in 2007-08 with associated changes in lending practices particularly in relation to the requirement for substantial deposits. In the third quarter of 2007, gross mortgage lending at loan to values of more than 90% equalled £14.6 million; in the third quarter of 2011, it was just one twentieth of that figure^{iv}. The average age of first time buyers has now risen to at least 38.

Homes provided by councils and housing associations comprise 16% of all Welsh homes, down from 17% in 2006/07^v. Social housing is simply not able to meet additional demand from those who, on the face of it, can afford to buy, but cannot get access to a mortgage. The most recent Welsh Government figures, published in 2009, indicated that there were 91,000 people on local authority and housing association waiting lists^{vi}. Added to this, the Social Housing Grant budget is due to fall from around £70 million in 2011/12 to £48 million in 2013/14, (although we have already seen additional monies for Social Housing Grant during 2011/12 allocated through the supplementary budget process^{vii} and bids have been submitted within the Welsh Government for a proportion of the 'consequential' from financial decisions by the Westminster Government).

The final dimension of the supply and demand jigsaw is homelessness. Welsh Government statistics show that the number of households accepted as homeless by Welsh local authorities fell from a peak in 2004-05 through to the end of 2009, but increased by 25% between September 2009 and September 2011. The October to December 2011 quarter saw a decrease of 9% in the number of households accepted as homeless (1,395 households) compared to the same quarter the previous year^{viii}. However, the Welsh Government notes that the figures may represent a quarterly fluctuation rather than a change in trend. The same statistics indicate that, at the end of December 2011, there were 2,530 households in temporary accommodation and 245 households in bed and

breakfast.

Given that the austerity measures, including welfare benefit reforms, have only partly been implemented, (the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggest that 88% of total spending cuts and benefit cuts are still to come^{ix}), there is an expectation that the number of people facing homelessness across Wales will rise.

3. Who is living in the private rented sector?

Many private renters are young people; the English Housing Survey^x indicates that more than half of private renters are under 35 (we don't have a similar data set in Wales), but there has also been a significant increase in the number of young families renting in the private rented sector.

The proportion of low and middle income earners aged under 35 and renting has more than tripled from 14% in the late 1980s to 47% now, according to UK research carried out by the Resolution Foundation^{xi}. An increasing proportion of those renting privately are on Housing Benefit, not necessarily out of work, but with a low income.

Rightmove found that in October 2011, 'trapped renters', who state that they would like to buy but who cannot afford to, accounted for over half of the UK rental sector.

There is particular concern from some organisations about the increasing number of families in the private rented sector. The March 2012 policy briefing from Shelter, ***Homes Fit for Families***, notes:

'The challenges the new generation of private renters face as they struggle to find a decent place they can call home means it is time for long term strategies to adapt to the changing world of private renting.'^{xii}

4. The private rented sector: developments and practical responses

The private rented sector comprised 14% of homes across in Wales in March 2011, up from 9% in 2006/07^{xiii}. There have been a number of reports and surveys which have attempted to predict future trends in relation to the private rented sector at a UK or England and Wales level. They all predict a significant rise in the proportion of homes in the private rented sector, but differ as to how fast this will happen. For example:

- June 2010, the British Social Housing Foundation published ***Tenure Trends in the UK Housing System***^{xiv}. *'If recent trends persist, the private rented sector*

would be larger than the social rented sector by 2013 and by the end of the decade, one in five households could be private renters'

- property company Savills predicts that one in five households will be privately renting by 2016^{xv}

However, the impact of the welfare reform agenda on the scale and nature of the private rented sector is difficult to predict. A number of changes have already been made to Housing Benefit, e.g:

- The extension of the single room rent to single people aged up to 35 years of age (rather than 25)
- Local Housing Allowance rates being calculated on the 30th rather than the 50th percentile
- The capping of Housing Benefit payments for different size homes (£250 a week for one-bedroom homes up to £400 a week for a four-bedroom home)
- The maximum Local Housing Allowance award being limited to the rate for a four bedroom property

Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing estimates that 30,640 homes in Wales will be put out of reach of people on Housing Benefit as a result of these changes, in particular number 2^{xvi}. The CIH notes that, the result will be that, in many places, there will not be enough affordable homes to rent for those claiming. Wales is particularly badly affected with demand outstripping supply in 20 out of 22 council areas and some local authorities facing situations where three people are chasing every affordable private home for let. The CIH research includes estimates of the impact by local authority area. Despite this, the proportion of homes in the private rented sector will soon be greater than the proportion in the social rented sector.

The growing importance of the private rented sector has been reflected in a number of practical responses which are summarised below.

Policy

- The National Assembly for Wales Communities and Culture Committee Report ***Making the most of the private rented sector*** was published in February 2011^{xvii}. The report highlighted a need to change the perception of the private rented sector to make it a tenure that people are content to choose. The report also noted that:
 - the credit crunch and the economic climate will lead to increasing reliance on the private rented sector for a place to live

- Government needs to ensure that, as far as possible, those living in the private rented sector enjoy similar standards to people who rent from social landlords

Practice

- The development of **housing options websites**. www.cardiffhousing.co.uk was the first website to be developed and includes information about all housing options in the city, including the private rented sector. A project funded by the Welsh Government during 2010/11 enabled the majority of Welsh local authorities to develop similar websites; the weblink www.waleshousing.org indicates the 17 authorities which now have live housing options websites
- The drafting of a 'learning from implementation' briefing on **social lettings** (as part of the evaluation of homelessness prevention projects 2010/11). This briefing has yet to be published by the Welsh Government

Funding

- In order to **mitigate the impact of the Housing Benefit changes**, the Welsh Government is providing £1.4 million over 2 years (2011/12 and 2012/13) to local authorities in order to introduce a programme of approved work with landlords and tenants with the intention that tenancies can be sustained. The principal purpose of the grant is for local authorities to prevent homelessness as a result of the changes to the Housing Benefit regime. Different approaches have been taken by local authorities; broadly speaking, the models are based on tenant casework, working with landlords and raising awareness of the changes and bringing empty homes back into use. At least 10 authorities have employed additional members of staff to undertake these roles
- The DWP are also providing additional funding for **mitigation** during 2012/13. The funding will be allocated by an agreed formula; local authorities are discussing whether they will use these resources regionally or locally
- The DWP are providing £300,000 'transition' funding to support a project led by Cardiff Council which aims to develop access for those dependent on Housing Benefit to lower cost accommodation by **actively promoting house or flats sharing across Wales**. The project involves the establishment of 6 shared accommodation brokers alongside the Houseshare Wales website (www.housesharewales.co.uk). The brokers cover Cardiff/the Valleys, Dyfed, Gwent, North East Wales/Powys, North West Wales and Swansea Bay
- Additional monies allocated by the DWP for **Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)** to help counteract the impact of changes to Housing Benefit. The DHP budget for all of Wales has risen from less than £1 million in 2010/11 to just over £2.5 million in 2012/13. A briefing by Shelter Cymru

published in March 2012^{xviii} found that a number of Housing Benefit departments refuse to grant DHPs for deposits or rent in advance to homeless people, due to the wording of the DWP guidance which states that someone must be in receipt of Housing Benefit in order to be entitled to a DHP; this by definition excludes people who are actually homeless. This *'could be excluding potentially thousands of homeless people in Wales from accessing the private rented sector'*^{xix}. Housing Benefit managers have raised this issue with the DWP which is seeking legal opinion. The DWP have indicated that they will address this issue in guidance which is currently being revised

5. The private rented sector: future developments

Changes to Housing Benefit due to be introduced in April 2013 which include Local Housing Allowance being increased by the Consumer Price Index on annual basis, rather than being reviewed monthly and the introduction of under-occupation provisions in the social rented sector, will have an impact on the private rented sector, in particular the availability of accommodation for those living on low incomes. Some households underoccupying in the social housing sector may move to the 'right' size home in the private rented sector.

April 2013 will also see the introduction of new local assistance to replace Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for general living expenses, with administration devolved to the Welsh Government. The Westminster UK Government intention is to devolve funding to Wales at the level of spending recorded for 2012-13. In early 2012, the Welsh Government consulted on options for delivery post April 2013^{xx}.

The forthcoming Housing Bill is highly likely to include a provision for discharge of homelessness duties into the private rented sector. The Bill is also likely to include other provisions in relation to the private rented sector, e.g. a requirement for accreditation and registration of landlords and lettings agents, a requirement for a written tenancy agreement and other proposals that were set out in the Rugg Review and the associated Welsh Government consultation paper^{xxi}. Although the precise detail of legislative proposals will only become clearer as we move through the process of the White Paper and drafting of the Bill, it is clear that the private rented sector will be playing a more significant role in providing for those in housing need.

Alongside this, the draft guidance on the implementation of the Supporting People review re-emphasised that housing-related support can be provided to individuals/households whatever the tenure of their home. Authorities that do not currently have a tenure-neutral

floating or tenancy support scheme may find that they need to put such a scheme in place.

- i <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/english/local-authorities-and-the-private-rented-sector-toolkit/>
- ii <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/needanddemand/?lang=en>
- iii **Welsh Government Dwelling Stock Estimates 2009-10**
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2011/110126/?lang=en>
- iv **Special Report Rental Britain** – Savilles/rightmove, Spring 2012
- v As iii
- vi <http://www.assemblywales.org/09-013.pdf>
- vii <http://wales.gov.uk/funding/budget/budget1112/suppbudgetfeb2012/?lang=en>
- viii <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2012/120403/?lang=en>
- ix <http://www.walespublicservices2025.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/PS2025-Paul-Johnson-IFS-slides-9-2-12-.pdf> - see slide 8
- x <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housingsurveys/englishhousingsurvey/>
- xi http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/media/downloads/Chapter_5_-Housing.pdf
- xii http://england.shelter.org.uk/professional_resources/policy_and_practice/policy_library/policy_library_folder/policy_briefing_homes_fit_for_families_-_the_case_for_stable_private_renting
- xiii As iii
- xiv <http://www.bshf.org/published-information/publication.cfm?lang=00&thePubID=46C4A5EA-15C5-F4C0-99C662FE48B048B9>
- xv <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/nov/22/housing-strategy-prices-people-homes>
- xvi http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Wales/Benefit_Reforms_Impact_Worse_for_Wales
- xvii http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-third-assembly/bus-committees/bus-assembly-publications-committee-inquiries/research-completed_inquiries.htm#communitiesandculturecompleted
- xviii http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk/images/pdf/DHP_col.DOC.pdf
- xiv As xviii
- xx <http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/socialfund/?lang=en>
- xxi <http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/privaterentsector/?lang=en&status=closed>

Appendix 1D:

Request for consultancy support and feedback from learning event

The WLGA has secured funding for a private rented sector support project during 2012/13. The project will involve a consultancy team (Anne Delaney, Simon Inkson, Arnold Phillips and Tamsin Stirling) working with a number of local authorities to assist them in improving their work with the private rented sector. The main aim of the project is to ensure the partnership between local authorities and private rented sector landlords is fit for purpose.

Although based around the private rented sector improvement toolkit developed by WLGA and published in early 2011, the support will be tailored to meet the needs of authorities. For example, it could be specific support around a particular issue, project or initiative lasting for a relatively short period of time, or it could be wide ranging support lasting the majority of the financial year and engaging with elected members, officers at all levels and partner organisations, including private rented sector landlords.

In order to help the WLGA and the steering group identify the portfolio of authorities that will receive support from the project, we would be grateful if **you could complete this proforma and hand it in before you leave the event today. If you wish to do a joint response with colleagues, please feel free to do so.**

Many thanks for your input - Sue Finch, WLGA

Name(s)/job title(s) of person completing proforma	
Local authority	
Contact email address	
Contact phone number	

1. Would your authority benefit from assistance from the private rented sector support project?

Yes	
No	

2. If yes, please provide brief comments in the table below about areas relating to working with the private rented sector which your authority is finding difficult to progress. The areas listed are the 10 around which the WLGA private rented sector improvement toolkit

www.wlga.gov.uk/english/local-authorities-and-the-private-rented-sector-toolkit is structured:

<i>Areas of work</i>	<i>Brief comments about difficulties being experienced</i>
Recognition of the potential of the private rented sector to deliver on corporate objectives and relevant actions included in high level strategies, e.g: - actions to grow and improve the quality of the PRS feature in relevant plans and strategies, Cabinet members and relevant Corporate Directors briefed about the importance/role of the PRS, relevant Scrutiny Committee has looked at PRS	
Joint working across departments/teams within the authority, e.g: - cross-authority group in place, all relevant teams aware of role, consistency of approach, work underway on welfare reform, effective information sharing mechanisms in place	
Adequate resources for working with the private rented sector, e.g: - resources proportionate to role of PRS in local housing market, DHPs strategically targeted	
Knowledge of the private rented sector, e.g: - knowledge of landlords, lettings agents, properties, empty properties, database kept up to date	
Communication with private sector landlords, e.g: - consistent messages to landlords from all parts of the authority, newsletter, forum, website, consultation with landlords	
Supporting tenants to sustain tenancies in the private rented sector, e.g: - information, advice, pre-tenancy work, floating support, mediation service, tenant liaison, homeless prevention funds, DHP allocation spent and increases each year	
Supporting landlords, e.g: - information and advice, training, promotion of LAW training, contact points, HB effective, safeguarding policy has aim of sustaining tenancies, work with local credit union	
Improving the quality of the private rented sector, e.g: - licensing, accreditation, enforcement measures, loans to landlords, funding for energy efficiency	

work, opportunities for owners of empty properties, incentives for nominations, 'good' CIEH standard	
Improving access to the private rented sector, e.g: - leasing, social lettings/PRS access scheme, bond, rent guarantee, working with HAs/third sector organisations, good information on PRS as an option	
Take opportunities to collaborate with other authorities on work around the PRS	
Other (please describe)	

3. If you have indicated that you are having difficulty progressing areas relating to work with the private rented sector and you would find the offer of assistance helpful, please briefly outline what assistance you/colleagues think that your authority would benefit from:

--

4. We would welcome your feedback on the learning event

	Not at all/ no	Quite/some	Very/lots
How useful did you find the overall event?			
Did you hear about good practice/ interesting ideas that you think are worth following up?			
Are you taking away new learning that can be put into practice in your organisation?			
Did you make any useful contacts during the day?			
Anything else you want to feed back from the event?			

Appendix 2A:

Seminar: Putting the Spotlight on the Private Rented Sector Partnership 24 July 2012 (PROGRAMME)

10.00 Registration and Refreshments

10.30 The Private Rented Sector: Setting the Scene

Simon Inkson | Housing Consultant

Why is the Private Rented Sector (PRS) an important partner of Local Government?

What are the benefits of a strategic / corporate approach?

10.50 What works? Three examples from the regions

Integrating the Private Rented Sector into housing options (common housing register, leasing, social lettings etc)

Action to improve the quality of the Private Rented Sector

Improving energy efficiency in the Private Rented Sector

11.25 Roundtable Discussion

Facilitated by Simon Inkson and Arnold Phillips

What role can Members play in developing a corporate approach to the PRS?

What role can scrutiny play?

Which departments need to be involved?

12.00 Feedback

12.30 The WLGA Improvement Offer

Arnold Phillips | Housing Consultant

Details of how the consultants can assist your local authority over the coming months

12.45 Round-up session

12.50 Close and Lunch, with refreshments

Appendix 2B:

Briefing Note for members attending the Seminar

The Private Rented Sector in Wales: A Briefing for Elected Members

Welsh Local Government Association - July 2012

Introduction

This briefing has been produced as part of a WLGA project which aims to improve the partnership between local government and the private rented sector. This document is aimed at elected members:

- Cabinet Members who have housing and/or environmental health within their portfolios
- those with a scrutiny role that relates to housing and/or environmental health, and
- those who have an interest in housing issues

It is presented in question and answer format, with links to sources of further information.

Q: Why should we be thinking about the private rented sector?

A: Where people live 14% of homes in Wales were in the private rented sector in March 2011, up from 9% in 2006/07. This proportion is predicted to rise significantly in future years. Soon, there will be a higher percentage of homes in the private rented sector than in the social rented sector (currently 16% of all homes in Wales). In some parts of Wales, this is already the case. The private rented sector is playing an increasing role for:

- people who can, on the face of it, afford to buy, but who do not have the necessary deposit
- people who cannot get access to social housing due to demand exceeding supply

The private rented sector is home for both families and households without children. Some people are living in the private rented sector by choice while others are not. Statistics:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/housing/stock/?lang=en>

National Policy

The Housing White Paper recognises the increasing importance of the private rented sector and proposes a system of registration and accreditation for both landlords and lettings agents. It also proposes that local authorities should be able to discharge their homelessness duties into the private rented sector.

The Housing White Paper:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/housewhitepaper/?lang=en>

Welsh Government consultation paper on a Better Private Rented Sector:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/proposalprivaterentsector/?lang=en>

An increasing gap between housing demand and supply

The austerity measures being implemented by the UK Coalition Government are having an impact on national and local government finances in Wales. This means less investment for new social housing, with a likely increase in the gap between demand and supply. The last research project that looked at housing demand in Wales found that 14,200 dwellings a year were needed - 9,200 in the market sector and 5,100 in the non-market sector.

Housing Need and Demand in Wales 2006 to 2026:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/needanddemand/?lang=en>

Welfare Reform

A number of changes have already been made to Housing Benefit which have affected the private rented sector. An example is the extension of the single room rent to single people aged up to 35 years of age (rather than 25).

Changes to Housing Benefit due to be introduced in April 2013 which include Local Housing Allowance being increased by the Consumer Price Index on annual basis, rather than being reviewed monthly and the introduction of under-occupation provisions in the social rented sector, will have an impact on the private rented sector, in particular the availability of accommodation for those living on low incomes. Some households under occupying in the social housing sector may move to the 'right' size home in the private rented sector.

Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru briefing on welfare benefit changes and impact in Wales:

http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/news-article/data/Wales/Benefit_Reforms_Impact_Worse_for_Wales

Ensuring that the increasing number of people who are living in the private rented sector are living in good quality homes that are well managed and are as affordable as possible is vital. We need a more valued and professionalised private rented sector.

Q: What does this mean for local authorities?

A: The increasing importance of the private rented sector as part of local housing markets pose a number of challenges for local authorities. These include the need:

- for a greater focus on the private rented sector
- to get to know the private rented sector in their area answering questions such as who are the landlords and lettings agents, where properties are and what condition they are in and who is living in the private rented sector?
- for a more strategic approach to the private rented sector, ensuring different parts of the local authority know what work each is doing on the private rented sector and that different elements of work complement each other
- to join work up across different departments/teams within each local authority, for example, to ensure that a consistent message is going out to private sector landlords from all parts of the authority

Q: What are local authorities already doing?

A: Local authorities are already doing a lot of work on the private rented sector – developing social lettings agencies, supporting active landlord fora, working with Landlord Accreditation Wales and using the private rented sector to prevent homelessness.

Within local authorities, there is no one obvious lead department for work on the private rented sector – enforcement, private sector housing renewal, housing strategy, housing options/homelessness, housing benefit and supporting people can all be involved. This can be challenging.

A few specific examples from individual local authorities are provided below. The WLGA project involves collecting a wide range of examples which will be available on the website and included in the toolkit.

Getting Strategic

Wrexham County Borough Council developed a private rented sector improvement strategy which ran from 2009-12. As part of its implementation, the authority established a private rented sector working group involving internal (public protection, planning, and environment) and external partners (Shelter, National Landlords Association, Rent Officers and Glyndwr University).

Bringing empty homes back into use

Powys Council has developed its own revolving loan fund to bring empty homes back into use. The council works with Cefni lettings to provide a lettings management service for those property owners who wish to rent their newly improved homes.

Improving Quality

Denbighshire Council has a mandatory licensing scheme as well as an additional licensing scheme. The council has recently prosecuted landlords for failing to licence premises and has in the last 6 months taken over 2 Houses in Multiple Occupation using Interim Management Orders. The properties are managed on behalf of the council by Clwyd Alyn Housing Association.

Integrating the private rented sector into housing options

Newport City Council is working to integrate the private rented sector into housing options. It does this through working with Charter Options, having a bond scheme to help people access the private rented sector, using a leasing scheme for temporary accommodation, the development of a housing options website and a common housing register for all providers of housing in the city.

Developing systems to protect payment of rent to landlords

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has worked with the local credit union to develop a specific credit union account for private sector tenants. The model requires the landlord, tenant and Credit Union to agree a 5% charge per transaction which is split 2.5% to tenant's savings and 2.5% to cover administrative costs. There are currently 30 landlords with 201 tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit using the Credit Union rent account scheme.

Cross authority projects:

- **Mitigating the impact of changes to Housing Benefit**
- £1.4 million has been provided by the Welsh Government to all Welsh local authorities to take action to mitigate the impact of changes to Housing Benefit. Authorities are taking different approaches which include working with tenants, working with landlords, raising awareness of the changes and bringing empty homes back into use.
- **Promoting sharing**
- Cardiff Council is leading a project which aims to develop access for those dependent on Housing Benefit to lower cost accommodation by actively promoting house or flats sharing across Wales. The project involves 6 shared accommodation brokers working alongside the Houseshare Wales website. The brokers cover Cardiff/the Valleys, Dyfed, Gwent, North East Wales/Powys, North West Wales and Swansea Bay.
- **Landlord Accreditation Wales**
- All local authorities in Wales work together on Landlord Accreditation Wales. This is a national scheme that recognises good landlords by accrediting them and, in doing so, helps them differentiate themselves from less reputable landlords who give the rental

market a bad name. It also allows tenants to seek out professional landlords who offer good, well managed accommodation.

- Houseshare Wales www.housesharewales.co.uk
- Landlord Accreditation Wales www.welshlandlords.org.uk
- Local Government Association (2012) *Improving and shaping your private rented sector* www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=fb081a06-4350-4e9d-a0d0-d671737fe77e&groupId=10171
- WLGA private rented sector improvement project www.wlga.gov.uk/english/privaterentedsector

Q: What needs to improve?

A: The WLGA project has identified a number of key areas for improvement:

- strategic and corporate working
- understanding the private rented sector
- incentivising/supporting landlords
- tackling the changes caused by welfare reform

Q: What can members do to ensure that their authority gives working with the private rented sector sufficient emphasis?

A: Elected members can take the following actions to help ensure that the private rented sector in your area is high quality, with at least some of it accessible to people on low incomes:

- give a high corporate priority to improving the work that the authority does on the private rented sector
- request that a cross-authority plan for improving work on the private rented sector is developed
- be aware of the need for all departments and teams that work with the private rented sector to work collaboratively on improving the private rented sector
- identify resources to support improvement and provide incentives for private landlords to improve the quality of their homes
- request that the work the authority does on the private rented sector is subject to a scrutiny review, to establish how further improvement can be delivered

Q: How can the WLGA project help?

A: The WLGA project includes a number of elements:

- events such as a learning event for officers and briefings for members

- the production of online information, including a service improvement toolkit
- examples of what is working to be included in the toolkit and online
- consultancy support for all those authorities that want it during 2012/13. Whilst the focus of this support is on raising the profile of work on the private rented sector within authorities and supporting corporate approaches to this work, support for individual initiatives and projects relating to the private rented sector is also available through the project

All local authorities have been asked to identify areas on which they would like support from the project.

More information about the project, resources and examples of effective practice are online at www.wlga.gov.uk/english/privaterentedsector

WLGA contact: Sue Finch, sue.finch@wlga.gov.uk, 029 2046 8674

Appendix 3:

Example of one local authority PRS Improvement Plan

In the last 10 years the size of the private rented sector in Wales has almost doubled, to almost match the size of the social housing sector. It is anticipated that within the next year or so 1 in 5 households in Wales will be renting from a private landlord. In XX the private rented sector has grown from accommodating X% of households in 2001 to providing a home for X% of households in the County Borough in 2011 (of which X% were in receipt of Local Housing Allowance).

The sector is varied in its condition, management and maintenance arrangements and accessibility. Unlike the social housing sector the arrangements are still to a large extent unregulated, the relationships between the owners and local authorities are often diffuse and cautious and there is limited ad hoc public sector funding.

The proposals set out in the Housing White Paper will increase local authorities' duties in relation to the private rented sector and at the same time will increase the need for local authorities to work in partnership with the private rented sector to provide a wider range of housing solutions for people in housing need.

The attached action plan has been produced by consultants working for the WLGA, alongside Officers from XX Council, as part of the WLGA Private Rented Sector Improvement Project, funded by the Welsh Government. The engagement with the Council involved:

- a workshop session with a range of Officers from across the Council coming together to discuss ways in which the authority could improve the way it worked with the range of individuals and agencies working in the private rented sector
- a briefing for Councillors on the private rented sector and facilitated discussion about the role of the Council in relation to the private rented sector and the areas identified for improvement

The action plan has been produced in the recognition that there are already a number of positive actions being undertaken in XX which will deliver improvements in the supply and quality of private rented housing in the County Borough, but much remains to be done if the Council is to support the development of a private rented sector in XX which provides a sufficient supply of good quality, energy efficient, well managed, privately rented homes which are affordable to people from all walks of life.

This action plan provides a framework for improvement structured around the following six overarching objectives:

- raising the corporate profile of the private rented sector
- developing a corporate approach to the private rented sector
- providing resources to ensure that the Council is able to work effectively with the private rented sector
- improving the Council's knowledge of the private rented sector
- improving communication with the private rented sector
- improving access to the private rented sector

Whilst the action plan at this stage does not contain timescales for the completion of tasks, we would expect that the tasks outlined within the action plan will be completed in the next 12 months.

1. Raising the corporate profile of the private rented sector in XX.				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
1.1	Meet members (via a members seminar, or possibly Cabinet and Scrutiny) to discuss the importance of working constructively with the private rented sector and the Council's approach to engaging with private landlords and empty property owners.	Lead XX	1	All members have a well developed appreciation of the need for the Council to work in a more constructive and co-ordinated way with private landlords and empty property owners to increase the supply of affordable housing in the County Borough.
1.2	Consider appointing a member champion for the private rented sector.	Lead XX	2	Increased corporate attention is given to the need to increase access to affordable private rented sector housing.
1.3	Undertake a series of corporate briefings for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> senior managers staff within key functions within the Council key external partners which set out the importance of the Council working constructively with the private rented sector and empty property owners to provide a supply of affordable, good quality, energy efficient private rented housing.	Lead XX Involvement Senior managers, Affordable Housing, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Strategy, Housing Benefit, Housing Regeneration, Supporting People, Adult Services, Childrens Services, Trading Standards, housing associations, advice agencies, other external agencies	3	Senior managers, all staff in key functions across the Council, and key external partners, have a clear appreciation of the need for the Council to work in a more constructive way with private landlords and empty property owners to increase the supply of affordable housing in the County Borough.

		dealing with private rented sector.		
1.4	Put the case for and seek political approval for a new policy framework in relation to working with the private rented sector and empty property owners (see Task 2.1 below), and ensure that this new policy framework is appropriately referenced in future corporate policy documents.	Lead XX	14	A policy framework which provides a clear statement of the approach that the Council will take in respect of working with the private rented sector.
1.5	Undertake a Scrutiny Review of the Council's new approach to working with the private rented sector, 18 months following the adoption of the new policy framework.	Lead XX	16	An objective review of the success of the Council's approach to engaging with the private rented sector to establish whether this has led to the creation of an increased supply of good quality, energy efficient, affordable homes, and to ascertain whether further improvements are necessary.
2. Developing a corporate approach to working with the private rented sector in XX.				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
2.1	Set up a corporate Private Rented Sector Task and Finish Group, with clear lines of reporting, and including representatives from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Protection • Private Sector Housing • Housing Benefits • Tenant Services • Housing Strategy • Children's Services • Adult Services • Supporting People • Corporate Property • Business Support 	Lead XX Involvement Affordable Housing, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Strategy, Housing Benefit, Housing Regeneration, Supporting People, Adult Services, Childrens Services,	4	A document setting out a corporate approach to the private rented sector across all relevant functions within the Council, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Council's corporate aims and how working with the private rented sector contributes to these • a summary of the activities undertaken by different teams within the Council in respect of the private rented sector • details of a corporate 'offer' to private sector landlords aimed at increasing the supply of good quality, energy efficient, affordable private rented homes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services • Finance • PR Team <p>with the stated objectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating a more corporate, coordinated and pro-active engagement with the private rented sector • clarifying a corporate 'offer' to private sector landlords aimed at increasing the supply of good quality, energy efficient, affordable private rented homes (based on research outlined in 4.2 below) and successful measures elsewhere (as outlined in 4.3 below) • deciding how that 'offer' will be communicated, marketed and targeted • considering what needs to change to ensure effective delivery of the 'offer'. 	Trading Standards, Business Support, Legal Services, Finance, PR Team		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of service improvements, responsibility for implementing these and resources required.
2.2	Engage and consult with key stakeholders to seek views on the proposed new approach and to identify opportunities for partnership.	Lead XX	13	A revised version of the policy framework, incorporating partners' comments and suggestions and identifying further opportunities for partnership working.
3. Providing resources to ensure that the Council is able to work effectively with the private rented sector in XX.				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
3.1	<p>Identify an individual Officer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act as officer champion for private sector housing • co-ordinate activity across authorities and departments in relation to the private rented sector • act as a single point of contact for private landlords and empty property owners • direct private landlords and empty property owners to appropriate people within the Council 	Lead XX	9	A lead officer who co-ordinates work with the private rented sector and provides a single point of contact to deal with enquiries from private landlords and empty property owners

	or partner agencies			
3.2	<p>Consider allocating resources to establish a low cost loan fund for private landlords and empty property owners willing to work with the Council to provide good quality, energy efficient, affordable private rented housing, to enable them to undertake repairs and carry out improvements to properties in the private rented sector. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using Council reserves to fund this initiative • working in collaboration with other local authorities to develop a common loan scheme • linking the repayment period loans to the length of time that the owner is prepared to work in partnership with the local authority. 	Lead XX	10	An interest free loan fund established to provide financial support to landlords and property owners willing to work with the Council to provide affordable, good quality, energy efficient private rented housing.
4. Improving the Council's knowledge of the private rented sector in XX.				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
4.1	<p>Develop a corporate information sharing agreement in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • private landlords • empty property owners <p>The following functions need to be party to the agreement: Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Strategy, Housing Benefits, Housing Regeneration, Supporting People, Trading Standards, Planning, Legal Services.</p>	Lead XX	5	An agreement which all Departments and Teams within the Council sign up to, which enables information to be sent to private landlords and empty property owners whose details are held on databases by different Teams within the Council.
4.2	<p>Undertake research with private sector landlords and empty property owners to seek views on the services the Council could provide which would make them more inclined to work in partnership with the authority. A questionnaire should be sent to all landlords and empty property owners, and incentives (such as entry into a free</p>	Lead XX	8	A report identifying packages of support that the Council could potentially offer to different groups of landlords and empty property owners which would attract both groups to work in partnership with the Council.

	prize draw) should be offered to participants to boost the response rate. Questionnaires should be followed up by one to one interviews and focus group work with segmented groups of landlords (owners of single properties, owners of 2 – 5 properties, portfolio landlords).			
4.3	<p>Based on the results of the research with property owners, develop packages of support for private landlords and empty property owners who are willing to work in partnership with the Council to provide affordable private rented housing. Consideration should be given to the adoption of successful measures from other authorities, eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a council-backed paper based rent guarantee scheme • provision of rent in advance • low interest loans for improving properties (see 3.2 above) • discounts on fees • an enhanced Housing Benefit processing service • membership of landlords' forum • access to a crisis support service. 	<p>Lead XX</p> <p>Involvement Affordable Housing, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Strategy, Housing Benefit, Housing Regeneration, Supporting People, Trading Standards, Business Support, Legal Services, Finance, PR Team</p>	12	A tiered level of service provided to landlords and empty property owners related to their willingness to work in partnership with the Council with higher levels of support offered to landlords and owners prepared to work in partnership with the social lettings agency or to let to a person in receipt of LHA.
5. Improving communication with the private rented sector in XX.				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
5.1	Develop interesting and informative quarterly corporate newsletters for private landlords and empty property owners, utilising the skills of the Council's Public Relations, Communications and Business Support Teams. Consider using the Landlord Accreditation Newsletter format (with its wide breadth of articles of relevance to	<p>Lead XX</p>	6	The provision of regular useful information to private sector landlords which facilitates and encourages their involvement with the Council.

	<p>private landlords, such as tax and business planning advice).</p> <p>Newsletters should set out the Council's revised approach to working with the private rented sector and empty property owners, the services available to property owners, and the support available from the Council and its partners.</p> <p>They should be sent in hard copy or pdf format to all landlords and empty property owners identified on the various Council databases.</p> <p>The first issue should provide an incentive for landlords to respond to an invitation to become involved in the research identified in Task 4.2 above.</p>			
5.2	<p>Relaunch and rebrand the Private Sector Landlords Forum in partnership with LAW, NLA, ARLA and RLA. Use the Landlords Forum to promote Council services (eg. business support) which can offer support to landlords, and involve other stakeholders that can support or provide services to private landlords.</p> <p>Consider holding events specifically for different groups of landlords (eg. owners of single properties, owners of 2 – 5 properties, portfolio landlords) and empty property owners.</p>	<p>Lead XX</p>	7	<p>A vibrant series of meetings attended by a wide range of private landlords which participants find useful and relevant, which incline them to attend further events.</p>
5.3	<p>In conjunction with waleshousing.co.uk, establish a <u>XX.co.uk</u> website, and ensure it contains up to date information of relevance to existing and potential landlords, and links with other relevant websites to direct owners to sources of information, support and finance to enable them to provide good quality, energy efficient and well managed homes.</p> <p>Ensure that the <u>XX.co.uk</u> website is clearly linked to the</p>	<p>Lead XX Involvement Affordable Housing, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Benefit, Supporting People,</p>	15	<p>The <u>XX.co.uk</u> website acts as an access point of choice for existing and potential private sector landlords.</p>

	<p>Council's website, and vice versa.</p> <p>Launch the <u>XX.co.uk</u> website by sending information out to private landlords by post/e-mail.</p> <p>Ensure that the <u>XX.co.uk</u> website pages are regularly updated.</p>	Trading Standards, Business Support, PR Team		
6. Improving access to private rented homes in XX				
Ref No.	Task	Responsibilities	Timescale	Outcome
6.1	<p>Consider how the scale of social lettings activity in XX can be substantially increased by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> defining more clearly the purpose and role of a social lettings agency approach and the key elements for closer inter-agency working assessing the likely demand for such an approach by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> liaising with colleagues in Adult and Children's Services, Housing Advice and Homelessness, to better understand their forward need for accommodation by type, cost and area projecting the likely rehousing requirement that may result from the changes in welfare benefit reform importing relevant information from the Housing Market assessment process that may inform future demand within the sector for affordable housing determining whether the best approach would be the enhancement of existing social lettings arrangements with XX and/or a new purpose built 	<p>Lead XX</p> <p>Involvement Affordable Housing, Public Protection, Housing Advice, Homelessness, Housing Benefit, Supporting People, Adult Services, Childrens Services, Business Support, PR Team Finance, Legal Services.</p>	9	A substantially enhanced social lettings approach which facilitates increased access to private sector housing for a wide range of people in housing need.

	<p>approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparing a detailed Business Plan for the chosen approach with particular emphasis on financial sustainability, accountability, the provision of a quality and comprehensive service and the potential for regional working. 			
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Appendix 4:

Use made of additional consultancy support

Local authority	Additional work
Anglesey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation of brief for Landlords' Fair
Blaenau Gwent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation of first meeting of PRS Working Group Preparation of 'offer' leaflet detailing what the authority can do for landlords prepared to let to people from the housing waiting list Presentation of Member Development Briefing on the PRS
Bridgend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-council briefing for members Work on social lettings (jointly with Vale, RCT, Swansea, NPT)
Caerphilly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of All Member Seminar on the PRS Support to develop an in-house Social Lettings Agency
Cardiff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation for and facilitation of Landlord Consultation Event
Carmarthenshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further work requested
Ceredigion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research with commercial lettings agents
Conwy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' briefings Support in scoping plans for proposal to collaborate with Cartrefi Conwy in establishing a new Social Lettings Agency
Denbighshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet briefing Heads of Service briefing Members' briefing
Flintshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Partnership meeting. Further Officer support
Gwynedd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Conference Seminar re social lettings
Merthyr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further work requested
Monmouthshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafting and facilitating discussion on a Social Lettings Agreement with Seren Living (jointly with Torfaen and Newport)
NPT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' seminar Work on social lettings (jointly with Vale, RCT, Swansea, Bridgend)
Newport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial lettings agency sample survey and report Work on social lettings (jointly with Torfaen and Monmouthshire)
Pembrokeshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support to progress action plan and PRS Strategy
Powys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' session Additional officers' session
RCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice on landlord consultation event Advice on social lettings
Swansea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitation of initial meeting of corporate working group Information exchange protocol Work on social lettings (jointly with Vale, NPT, RCT, Bridgend)
Torfaen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' briefing Work on social lettings (jointly with Newport and Monmouthshire)
Vale of Glamorgan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further work requested
Wrexham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members' briefing Senior Officers' briefing