



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

A REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY 2023-2026

23 OCTOBER 2023

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT, IN
DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR M
NORRIS**

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Appendix A: Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 - 2026

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026 and seek approval for it to be implemented.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members approve the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023-2026 which supports the delivery of a private rented sector that offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council requires a Private Rented Sector Strategy (PRS) in recognition of the increase in demand for housing, across all tenures in Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT). The PRS plays an important role in helping the Council meet its housing need and provides an alternative housing option to residents.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 The PRS sector in Wales has grown over the last two decades and now accounts for 15% of the Welsh housing stock. In RCT, between the 2011 and the 2021 Census, the percentage of private rented properties grew from 13.7% to 17.6%, with an estimated 18,180 private rented properties in the Borough.
- 4.2 The Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy supplements the overarching RCT Housing Strategy 2023 - 2028 and outlines how the Council will work in partnership with landlords, residents and statutory bodies to offer safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.
- 4.3 The PRS in RCT has faced a number of challenges over the past decade such as changes to welfare reform, increase in tenants with support needs, poor property standards and the introduction of legislation aimed at regulating the PRS and improving standards. These challenges have intensified further as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost of living crisis and an increase in interest rates.
- 4.4 At the same time, more and more households are becoming homeless. This is due to a combination of continued welfare reforms, landlords serving section 21 notices (no fault eviction notices), the freeze on Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and rents being increased by landlords for a number of reasons including the increase in interest rates.
- 4.5 Despite these challenges, the PRS has continued to be invaluable as a housing option for residents and to enable the Council to discharge its homelessness duty.

5. **PROPOSED PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR STRATEGY**

- 5.1 RCT's proposed overall vision for the PRS is ***“to ensure that the private rented sector in RCT offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies.”***
- 5.2 The Strategy has set out 4 strategic aims that have been developed in order to ensure that the vision is achieved.
1. **To identify opportunities, funding and vehicles to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation. Such as:**

- Supporting partner organisations to push for a review of Local Housing Allowance and Broad Market Rental Areas rates in RCT.
- Working with partners including Welsh Government to introducing an 'intermediate product' with revised standards, different to those determined by Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS).
- Working with Welsh Government and other stakeholders to access funding and identify new models to increase the scale of affordable private rented accommodation.
- Promote the Social Lettings Agency with landlords through the RCT Landlord forum.

2. To support residents to access and maintain well managed privately rented accommodation. Such as:

- Working closely with Housing Providers and landlords to raise awareness and promote the tenancy related support that is available through the Housing Support Grant Team.
- Refer residents to appropriate support available in order for them to be able to improve their access to the PRS.
- Work with partners to review and develop the multi-agency response to housing support needs by building on relationships with health, probation, social services and landlords.
- Develop a policy for the provision of financial support, including the use of rent in advance and rent top ups.

3. To ensure the private rented sector offers good quality and managed housing. Such as:

- Working with landlords to improve management standards and conditions of properties and ensure effective management of properties.
- Evaluate the continued benefits of the Treforest Property Accreditation Scheme, to determine whether it has a continued role in improving managerial and service standards.
- Promote the grants and loans on offer to Landlords to improve the energy efficiency of their housing stock.

- Reviewing the current Additional Licensing Scheme and put forward recommendations following the review to be taken forward and implemented.

4. To develop strong partnerships and engagement to support the private rented sector. Such as:

- Ensuring that communication with landlords is regular, clear and transparent. The Council will continue to engage with landlords through the RCT's Landlord Forum and newsletter on a quarterly basis and provide a wide range of advice, knowledge and education to keep landlords well informed and up to date on relevant topics and legislation.
- Mapping all products that are available to landlords and develop an online 'One Stop Shop' where landlords will be able to navigate between services and clearly understand the different options and services available to them.

5.3 The strategic aims will ensure that the PRS in RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents and contributes towards a functional housing market which will result in the creation of prosperous communities.

5.4 In addition to this, a 3 year action plan will be developed to deliver and drive forward the aims of the Strategy and ensure that the Council's ambitions related to the PRS are met. The action plan will be monitored quarterly by the Private Rented Sector Working Group and performance measured against each action.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS/ SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

6.1 An equality and diversity screening exercise has been undertaken and a full impact assessment is not required at this time. In summary, the Equality Impact Assessment identifies positive and neutral impacts, and no negative impacts upon the protected characteristics. The Strategy outlines the Council's approach to improving housing conditions and management standards to ensure the PRS is an accessible housing option for residents of RCT, via a variety of funding offers, advice, support and guidance. The Council's services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, marriage of civil partnership, and/or gender reassignment, has access to affordable, safe and warm homes.

- 6.2 The impact on age and disability is positive, explicitly because of the impact that improving the conditions and management standards in the PRS will have on future housing supply. How the Council plans for future housing needs will have a huge impact on a diverse group of residents of all ages.
- 6.3 The vision for the Strategy is to ensure that the private rented sector in RCT offers safe, affordable accommodation that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies; this will enable people to have access to good quality housing and to be able to stay within their local communities.
- 6.4 The vision is facilitated by offering incentives, grants and loans through the Social Lettings Scheme and Houses into Homes loans, advice and guidance and where necessary enforcement action. We aim to provide high quality support to service users and we further aim to utilise all available technology, ensuring effective delivery of our service and providing person centred support.
- 6.5 The Strategy will ensure that anyone, regardless of a protected characteristic group can access private rented accommodation as a suitable housing option.

7. CONSULTATION/INVOLEMENT

- 7.1 A consultation exercise is not required at this stage but may be required as actions within the strategy are delivered. However, it is important to note that the Strategy has been developed collaboratively with key internal Council departments.

8. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been prepared for the purpose of this report. In summary, there are many positive impacts to residents of RCT through the approaches the Council takes in working with the PRS. Information relevant to the PRS is published on the Council's website and therefore information on available grants, loans, advice and assistance is available in both Welsh and English.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The strategy can be delivered and managed within existing staffing resources in the Housing Strategy team. The loan and grant products referred to in the strategic aims have already been secured from Welsh Government.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Delivering the Strategy will in some cases require the utilisation of existing Housing and Planning legislation, particularly where enforcement action in relation to the PRS is required.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 11.1 The development of the Private Rented Sector Strategy can be used to support the delivery of all three of the Corporate Plan priorities; people, places and prosperity. Investment in housing provides an ongoing stimulus to the local economy, by encouraging spending and local supply chains. Making available a supply of affordable homes, that are of a good standard also helps to improve the prosperity of residents and helps support a huge range of households in society that may not otherwise be able to meet their needs in the market, thereby promoting independence and positive lives for all.
- 11.2 The Strategy will also continue to assist the Council to contribute to three of the seven wellbeing goals that 'The Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' puts in place as follows:
1. A healthier Wales
 2. A prosperous Wales
 3. A Wales of cohesive communities

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report has provided an overview of the proposed Private Rented Sector Strategy 2023 -2026
- 12.2 Subject to its approval, the Strategy will support the delivery of a private rented sector that offers safe, affordable accommodation, that is well managed and of a good standard, creating accessible and sustainable tenancies. This will ensure that RCT provides a suitable housing option for all residents which contributes towards a functional housing market that will support the creation of prosperous communities.



Other Information: -

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

Climate Change, Frontline Services and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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