

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET REPORT

10th April 2018

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor James Evans
Portfolio Holder Corporate Governance, Housing and
Public Protection

SUBJECT: Strategy to measure and remediate radon levels in
Powys County Council owned housing stock

REPORT FOR: Decision

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposed outline strategy to measure and remediate radon levels in Council County Council owned housing stock.
- 1.2. Please refer to Appendix 1 Strategy to measure and remediate radon levels in Powys owned housing stock for further information.

2. Proposal

- 2.1. The radioactive gas radon is a hazard in many homes and workplaces. Breathing in radon is the second largest cause of lung cancer in the UK resulting in up to 1,100 fatal cancers per year. However, radon hazards are simple and cheap to measure and can be relatively easy to address if levels are high. Public Health England have published reports containing radon affected maps for the whole of the UK.
- 2.2. Landlords have a responsibility to their tenants under their duty of care and the Housing Act to provide a safe home. Radon is identified as a potential hazard in dwellings in the Housing Act 2004. The need for action is defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- 2.3. Public Health England recommends that radon levels should be reduced in homes where the average is more than 200 Bqm⁻³. The Target Level of 100 Bqm⁻³ is the ideal outcome for remediation works in existing buildings and protective measures in new buildings.
- 2.4. In 2017 Powys County Councils Housing Services commissioned the Radon Group, Public Health England to carry out an indicative postcode search on all council owned properties. The results give an indication of likelihood of high radon levels. The results of the indicative postcode search can be found in Table 1. Even in the highest probability bands, not all properties will have high levels, the only way to establish actual levels in a property is to monitor.

Table 1 Breakdown of properties by probability levels

| Shire | Less than 1% | 1 to 3% | 3 to 5% | 5 to 10% | 10 to 30% | Total |
|-----------------|--------------|---------|---------|----------|-----------|-------|
| Brecknockshire | 740 | 690 | 34 | 378 | 112 | 1954 |
| Montgomeryshire | 212 | 887 | 500 | 767 | 218 | 2584 |
| Radnorshire | 369 | 181 | 66 | 66 | 154 | 836 |
| Total | 1321 | 1758 | 600 | 1211 | 484 | 5374 |

2.5. It is proposed to implement a three phase radon monitoring programme over approximately eight years in all Council owned properties identified in the indicative postcode search with a likelihood of 5% or greater, approximately 1,700 properties. It is proposed to structure the programme as follows:

Phase 1 – An initial 9 month period monitoring approximately 50-75 properties on one or two estates from the highest probability category (10-30%)

Phase 2 – A further two year programme monitoring the remaining properties in the 10-30% probability category (approximately 425 properties)

Phase 3 – A five year programme monitoring all properties in the 5-10% likelihood (approximately 1211 properties)

There maybe overlap in the project phases depending on the number of results requiring remedial action and follow up monitoring, this may in turn impact on the project programme, allowing it to accelerate or decelerate accordingly.

2.6. Monitoring should be undertaken during normal occupancy conditions and after major improvement works have been completed. Monitoring packs will be sent directly to tenants.

2.7. Remedial measures such as fans and radon sumps will be required where high levels are identified. Once remedial works have been completed, follow up monitoring will be required to ensure that the remedial works have had the required impact on radon levels.

2.8. Assets will need to be checked and maintained as part of an ongoing cyclical maintenance regime to ensure acceptable levels are sustained.

2.9. Provision will need to be made within the Housing Revenue Account maintenance budget for resources to fund:

- the monitoring programme
- the programme of remedial works
- the cyclical maintenance programme to maintain the effectiveness of remedial measures
- additional staff resource to manage the monitoring programme and programme of works.

It is estimated that this is likely to cost the HRA in the region of £100,000 per annum during Year 1, which will increase to £150,000 per annum during Years 2-8.

3. One Powys Plan

- 3.1. The radon monitoring and remediation project in Council owned Housing stock will enable the Housing Services to support aspects of the Vision 2025, specifically the following priority areas:
- Health and care: leading the way in effective, integrated rural health and care
 - Residents and Communities: supporting our residents and communities

4. Options Considered/Available

- 4.1. It was considered whether fewer properties should be monitored (484 properties in the 10-30% likelihood bracket), however this would not identify as many properties with actionable radon levels requiring remediation.
- 4.2. The Radon Group (Public Health England) recommend monitoring all properties in the likelihood bracket of 1% or greater, which would require monitoring 4,053 properties. However, once actionable levels are identified it is important that the remedial work required and follow up monitoring is completed in a timely manner. It is considered that monitoring 4,053 properties would increase risk to the project in terms of the ability to manage the project, and could result in delays in completing follow up remedial works and re-monitoring, which could cause stress for tenants. Once the proposed project has been completed, and we have greater knowledge of radon levels in our stock, expanding the programme further could be considered at a later date.
- 4.3. Several options were considered how monitors were to be placed and collected for analysis:
- a) Placement of monitors by nominated staff or contractor;
 - b) Sending measurement packs directly to tenants;
 - c) Writing to tenants offering/requesting they complete a radon measurement and send packs only to those who reply positively; or
 - d) Arrange tests for new tenants only and make it a condition of the tenancy agreement.

Option b) Sending measurement packs directly to tenants has been identified as the preferred option as there have been issues where social Landlords have placed the monitors themselves in previous social housing projects. Also, option c) and option d) would not target and identify as many properties in the highest likelihood categories.

5. Preferred Choice and Reasons

- 5.1. It is recommended that Cabinet support a radon monitoring and remediation programme in Council owned Housing stock.

6. Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder,/Welsh Language/Other Policies etc

6.1. N/A

7. Children and Young People's Impact Statement - Safeguarding and Wellbeing

7.1. N/A

8. Local Member(s)

8.1. The effects of radon gas are experienced county wide.

9. Other Front Line Services

9.1. N/A

10. Support Services (Legal, Finance, HR, ICT, BPU)

10.1 Finance – The Finance Business Partner notes the content of the report and any expenditure costs to mitigate radon levels will need to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) maintenance budget and included in the Business Plan for 2018/19.

10.2 Legal – The recommendation can be supported from a legal point of view.

11. Local Service Board/Partnerships/Stakeholders etc

11.1. Not applicable

12. Communications

12.1. The Tenant Liaison Forum have been consulted on the proposed approach and are fully supportive.

13. Statutory Officers

13.1 The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

13.2 The Head of Financial Services (Acting Section 151 Officer) notes the comments from the Finance Business Partner.

14. Members' Interests

14.1 The Monitoring Officer is not aware of any specific interests that may arise in relation to this report. If Members have an interest they should declare it at the start of the meeting and complete the relevant notification form.

| Recommendation: | Reason for Recommendation: |
|---|---|
| 1. To implement a radon monitoring and mitigation programme in Council owned housing stock as outlined in this report and in Appendix 1 Strategy to measure and remediate radon levels in Powys owned housing stock. | To identify and mitigate radon levels in Council owned housing stock, ensuring we met our duty of care under the Housing Act 2004 and the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. |

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| Relevant Policy (ies): | | | |
| Within Policy: | Y | Within Budget: | Y |

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| Relevant Local Member(s): | All Members |
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| Person(s) To Implement Decision: | Simon Inkson |
| Date By When Decision To Be Implemented: | April 2018 |

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Background Papers used to prepare Report:
Appendix 1 Strategy to measure and remediate radon levels in Powys owned housing stock.