



To: Members of the Communities  
Scrutiny Committee

Date: 28 June 2013

Direct Dial: 01824 712554

e-mail: [dcc\\_admin@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:dcc_admin@denbighshire.gov.uk)

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** to be held at **9.30 am** on **THURSDAY, 4 JULY 2013** in **COUNCIL CHAMBER, RUSSELL HOUSE, RHYL**.

Yours sincerely

G. Williams  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

## **AGENDA**

### **PART 1 - THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS PART OF THE MEETING**

#### **1 APOLOGIES**

#### **2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at this meeting.

#### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**4 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)**

To receive the minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held on 23 May 2013 (copy enclosed).

**(9.35 a.m. – 9.40 a.m.)**

**5 RHYL GOING FORWARD PROGRAMME (QUARTERLY REPORT)**

To consider a report (copy to follow) by the Rhyl Going Forward Programme Manager which outlines the Council and its partners' strategic long-term vision for Rhyl and to seek Members to monitor the Programme's progress in delivering its anticipated outcomes, including the Programme's income generation ambition, identify any slippages with the Programme's delivery and recommend actions to address them.

**(9.40 a.m. – 10.10 a.m.)**

**6 CONTROL OF CARAVAN SITES (Pages 15 - 18)**

To consider a report by the Planning Policy Manager (copy enclosed) which seeks Members' comments on the progress of the project to monitor and enforce legislative controls on caravan sites within the County and to control the emergence of new sites in the area.

**(10.10 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.)**

**7 DEVELOPING THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY - DENBIGHSHIRE (2013-18) (Pages 19 - 90)**

To consider a report by the Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships (copy enclosed) which presents the Committee with the draft Local Housing Strategy 2013-18 for members' observations prior to its publication for wider consultation.

**(10.30 a.m. – 11.00 a.m.)**

**~ ~ ~ ~ BREAK (11.00 a.m. – 11.10 a.m.) ~ ~ ~ ~**

**8 IMPROVING OUR HIGHWAY/PUBLIC REALM SERVICE DELIVERY METHODS (Pages 91 - 96)**

To consider a report by the Head of Highways and Environmental Services (copy enclosed) which outlines the reorganisation of the Council's Highways/Public Realm Services' delivery methods and seeks Members' views on the proposed future approach to delivering those services across the County.

**(11.10 a.m. – 11.30 a.m.)**

**9 CONDITION OF THE COUNTY'S HIGHWAYS (Pages 97 - 106)**

To consider a report by the Strategic Highways Manager (copy enclosed) which seeks the Committee to comment on the proposed process for determining the future prioritisation of highways maintenance work.

**(11.30 a.m. – 12.00 p.m.)**

**10 UPDATE ON SUPPORTING PEOPLE FUNDED INTERNAL SERVICES IN DENBIGHSHIRE (Pages 107 - 112)**

To consider a joint report (copy enclosed) by the Service Manager: Strategic Development and the Supporting People Team Manager which seeks Scrutiny to consider the impact of the new arrangements on the delivery and funding of Supporting People services in Denbighshire and comment on the risks involved in securing internal services where Supporting People provides key funding.

**(12.00 p.m. – 12.30 p.m.)**

**11 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 113 - 142)**

To consider a report by the Scrutiny Coordinator (copy enclosed) seeking a review of the committee's forward work programme and updating members on relevant issues.

**(12.30 p.m. – 12.50 p.m.)**

**12 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

To receive any updates from Committee representatives on various Council Boards and Groups.

**(12.50 p.m. – 1.00 p.m.)**

**MEMBERSHIP**

**Councillors**

James Davies  
Peter Evans  
Carys Guy  
Huw Hilditch-Roberts  
Rhys Hughes  
Win Mullen-James

Bob Murray  
Joe Welch  
Cefyn Williams  
Cheryl Williams  
Huw Williams

**COPIES TO:**

All Councillors for information  
Press and Libraries  
Town and Community Councils

This page is intentionally left blank

## COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Thursday, 23 May 2013 at 9.30 am.

### PRESENT

Councillors James Davies, Peter Evans, Carys Guy, Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Chair), Rhys Hughes, Win Mullen-James, Bob Murray, Joe Welch, Cefyn Williams and Huw Williams

Cabinet Members – Councillors Hugh Evans, Bobby Feeley, Huw Jones and David Smith attended for particular agenda items relating to their individual portfolios

Observers – Councillors Brian Blakeley, Meirick Davies and Gwyneth Kensler

### ALSO PRESENT

Corporate Directors Customers (HW) and Economic Ambition & Community Ambition (RM), Strategic Regeneration Manager (MD), Head of Housing and Community Development (PMc); Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure (JG), Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships (SK), Head of Adult and Business Services (PG), Services Manager: South Locality (HT), Catering Manager (HJ), Public Protection Manager (EJ), Strategic Procurement Manager (AS), Procurement Officer (APJ), Scrutiny Coordinator (RE) and Committee Administrator (KEJ)

#### 1 APOLOGIES

Councillor Cheryl Williams

#### 2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

No CVs/statements had been received prior to the meeting for the position of Vice Chair of the committee for 2013/14. The Chair sought nominations from those present and Councillor Bob Murray proposed, seconded by Councillor Peter Evans that Councillor Cary Guy be appointed Vice Chair. There being no further nominations it was –

***RESOLVED** that Councillor Carys Guy be appointed Vice Chair of the Communities Scrutiny Committee for the ensuing year.*

#### 3 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of personal or prejudicial interest had been raised.

#### 4 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

**Grass Cutting** – Councillor Win Mullen James reported that a meeting of the Highway Grass Verge Cutting Working Group was being arranged to discuss grass cutting schedules and biodiversity issues. Members highlighted the need for a

common sense approach to the grass cutting programme and in responding to local biodiversity concerns. The Corporate Director: Communities agreed to ensure that information previously requested by the committee in terms of grass cutting schedules and maps, including the operation of biodiversity cuts in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), was circulated as soon as possible.

***[HW – to facilitate the above]***

## **5 MINUTES**

The minutes of the committee's last meeting held on 18 April 2013 were submitted.

***RESOLVED*** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2013 be received and approved as a correct record.

## **6 TOWN AND AREA PLANS**

The Strategic Regeneration Manager (SRM) submitted a report (previously circulated) outlining the Council's performance to date in delivering its town plans and seeking members' views on progress. The quarterly performance report for town plans (Annex A); commentary about individual actions with red/orange status (Annex B) together with a summary of the principal outcomes for the first year of the Plans (Annex C) had been attached to the report.

The process developed for monitoring the performance of Town and Area Plans involved quarterly reports presented to Member Areas Groups (MAGs) highlighting delivery confidence attached to priority actions. That information would also be aggregated and included in quarterly performance reports to Cabinet. A recent funding allocation for delivering the corporate priority for improving the local economy had enabled priority actions identified for early implementation to proceed and would feature in the next quarterly reports to the MAGs. Work had also started on the process of developing Town Plans into Town & Area Plans in order to address the needs and priorities of smaller and more rural communities.

Councillor Hugh Evans, Leader and Lead Member for Economic Development highlighted the important role of the Town Champions within the process and his hopes that the Plans would evolve and become more ambitious in the future to create a vision for each town and its surrounding area.

During consideration of the report members commented as follows –

- it was encouraging that most projects were on track for delivery but there was also a need to report upon clear outcomes and impact
- the importance of funding being available when required to deliver projects as planned was highlighted
- acknowledged the plans were still in the early stages and would take time to develop to reach their full potential
- suggested that the straightforward projects, particularly those with visual impact, be undertaken at an early stage
- highlighted the importance of local members in progressing their town/area plans together with interaction with the Town Champion and Link Officer

- stressed the need for plans to provide a true reflection of the overall investment and benefits within the different areas together with identified funding sources for projects/actions to ensure transparency and accountability
- there was a need to ensure the delivery of identified actions were not beyond the Council's control
- emphasised the important role of the Rural Champion within the process and his interaction with local area members
- Councillor Cefyn Williams referred to the report reference that the Edeyrnion area educational review had supported improvements in educational attainment and he wished to clarify that there was no evidence to support that statement which was a matter of opinion and still an issue of contention.

In responding to members' comments officers advised that the funding allocation to progress priority actions for improving the local economy had only recently been endorsed and given the lead time for capital projects reporting on delivering those projects would feature in the next report to the MAGs in July. Work was ongoing to broaden the existing town plans into town and area plans following which the content and detail would be further developed. It was the responsibility of the local members and Town Champions to set their own priorities for actions identified. In terms of measured outcomes it was agreed to supplement the report on delivery confidence with additional information regarding the number of projects completed and their subsequent impact. Councillor Huw Jones, Rural Champion reported upon the work he was undertaking to ensure the interests of all rural communities were incorporated into the emerging Area Plans.

**RESOLVED** that, subject to the members' comments above, the progress made with the delivery of Town Plans in their first year be noted.

At this juncture (10.15 a.m.) the committee adjourned for a refreshment break.

## **7 RESTRUCTURING OF THE REGENERATION, BUSINESS SUPPORT AND TOURISM SERVICES**

Councillor Hugh Evans, Lead Member for Economic Development introduced the report (previously circulated) outlining the rationale and process for restructuring the services in order to deliver the Council's economic and housing priorities. Following members' concerns regarding the impact of the proposals on individuals and communities assurances had been given that the process had been undertaken with full support and advice from Human Resources and would move closer to communities by providing a locally based structure. He also made reference to his vision for the service advising that the new structure would deliver the expectations contained within the emerging Economic Ambition Strategy.

The Head of Housing and Community Services (HHCS) detailed the service review process undertaken in conjunction with the Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure (HCML) where there was a shared service outcome. The service review concluded the existing structure, skills base and resource allocation were not fit for purpose on a number of levels and would not be capable of delivering the ambitious programme of Regeneration and Business Development contained within the Corporate Plan and Economic Ambition Strategy. A new structure (Appendix 1 to

the report) had been developed providing a joined up, robust and strategic approach with alignment of resources to deliver the Council's Economic Ambition priorities. The Senior Management Team restructure would be completed in June with all posts appointed by the end of September. The HCML reported upon the next phase of the process in terms of Communication and Marketing Services and integration of the Tourism function to ensure a fit for purpose structure to respond to corporate priorities. He highlighted the merits of that restructure and welcomed the opportunity to provide a detailed report back to members in September.

The Chair reminded members to focus on proposals for service delivery rather than operational matters concerning individual positions within the service. In response to members' concerns in that regard assurances were provided that every effort would be made to retain staff who wished to remain with the authority and the appropriate processes for managing operational change were being followed.

The committee acknowledged the need for a restructure within the service in order to effect improvements and meet business needs and recognised the amount of work which had gone into the comprehensive review. Members sought assurances regarding future savings; the development of funding bids for community groups and services, and clarification on the outcomes and impact of the new structure on service delivery. Questions were also raised regarding the interaction and involvement with other agencies such as the Denbighshire Enterprise Agency and partnership working to deliver aims and improve the local economy. [The Leader declared a personal interest with respect to Denbighshire Enterprise Agency] The need for better communication with members and a clear tourism strategy was also highlighted. The Chair was keen that social media be used as a promotional and marketing tool. The following responses were received –

- the restructure would be cost neutral with a reduction in managers generating savings which would be reinvested in front line services
- the new structure would facilitate excellent service provision with a focus on localities to make it easier for members, businesses and stakeholders to receive quality advice, assistance and support
- acknowledged the main risk associated with restructures was failure to deliver outcomes but this risk had been mitigated by the strategic approach taken
- elaborated upon the aims of becoming closer to businesses and to work closely with other agencies in providing support and advice to businesses
- a headline action from the emerging Economic Ambition Strategy sought to explore the creation of a partnership of business support agencies
- provided assurances that the new service would provide clear leadership for staff with good governance and accountability
- indicated that funding streams and opportunities would be discussed further once the Senior Management Team was in place and assurances were provided that funding bids would be developed in a joined up way
- plans for social media had been included as part of digital marketing
- confirmed that the restructure would maximise tourism opportunities and provide a stronger Tourism, Marketing and Events function



- the finalised Economic Ambition Strategy would help shape service delivery leading to the further development of measureable outcomes and it was agreed to receive an information report on the Strategy in October.

Councillor Meirick Davies referred to Welsh Language issues and the absence of Welsh essential posts in the structure. The HCML advised that there was reference to the Welsh Language Policy in the Communication & Marketing Services structure and he agreed to circulate the policy regarding designated Welsh essential/desirable posts to councillors for clarity. The HHCS added that this aspect would be considered further when considering resource requirements for each locality. In response to concerns raised by Councillor Gwyneth Kensler the HCML agreed to provide clarity on the function of the Rural Development Plan in relation to the Economic Ambition Strategy and the role of elected members. Finally reference was made to a recent article in the Daily Post highlighting that Rhyl had double the amount of overseas visitors last year while figures for other traditional holiday towns were down. Councillor Brian Blakeley congratulated the Council on that achievement and commended the work of officers in that regard.

***[JG to circulate copy of Welsh Language essential/desirable posts to members and to provide clarity regarding RDP]***

***RESOLVED that –***

- (a) subject to members' comments above the report on the restructuring of the Regeneration, Business Support and Tourism Services be noted;*
- (b) an information report on the restructuring of the Communications and Marketing Services be received in September, and*
- (c) an information report on the Economic Ambition Strategy to include outcomes; timelines, delivery confidence status and performance measures be received in October.*

***[recommendations (b) & (c) – RE to include in forward work programme]***

## **8 REVISING THE LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY - DENBIGHSHIRE**

The Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships (SOSP) introduced Dr. Colin Stuhlfelder, Glyndwr University and submitted a report (previously circulated) outlining progress to date in revising the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) developed in partnership with Glyndwr University and sought members' input into the emerging Strategy. A series of consultation events had been scheduled following which a detailed report and an action plan would be submitted to the committee in July.

The LHS set out the current local housing situation across all tenures and provided strategic direction for five years. Dr Stuhlfelder outlined the LHS development process and explained that the high level summary and full progress report were the starting point with regards to setting the vision, themes and objectives. The Strategy would consist of three themes (1) Communication, (2) Consolidation, and (3) Construction with specific objectives and outcomes detailed for each.

The committee discussed various aspects of the housing strategy highlighting the need for affordable housing, particularly in light of the recent welfare reforms and sought further information regarding initiatives such as shared ownership schemes and intermediate tenures to meet current demand. Assurances were also sought that quality standards could be sustained in council housing stock. In response members were advised that –

- the Housing Need Update (research commissioned from Glyndwr University 2011) had recommended an affordable housing target of 36% but a target of 10% had been set in the Local Development Plan based on the economic viability of sites
- there was a need to balance a conducive environment for construction against the need for affordable housing and to explore alternative ways of funding affordable housing projects such as the Empty Homes Strategy and schemes with private landlords which may help achieve affordability targets
- research would be undertaken into models for shared ownership and their affordability together with other initiatives including intermediate rent
- the importance of the private rented sector within the county was increasing and work was ongoing with Registered Social Landlords in the development of appropriate models to address housing requirements
- the Welsh Quality Housing Standard for council housing stock should be achieved by the end of 2013/14 and a full housing stock survey had recently been completed with a rolling programme of investment to ensure standards were sustained in the future; there was also potential to increase housing stock following future changes to council housing finances.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *subject to members' comments above, the report on progress made in revising the new Local Housing Strategy and the breadth of current housing challenges that need to be incorporated into the Strategy be noted, and*
- (b) *the proposed three theme areas for inclusion in the new Local Housing Strategy be endorsed.*

**[SK&SL to note and action above]**

At this juncture (11.50 a.m.) the committee adjourned for a refreshment break.

## **9 REVIEW OF DAY SERVICES IN NORTH DENBIGHSHIRE**

Councillor Bobby Feeley, Lead Member for Social Care introduced the report (previously circulated) detailing revised proposals to remodel day care for older people in the north of the county prior to submission of the proposals to Cabinet. She highlighted the need for a sustainable service for the future in light of the growing population of older people and reduction in funding provision.

The Head of Adult and Business Services explained that the proposals had been revised following feedback from this committee and the consultation process. He elaborated upon the rationale behind the proposals which would ensure that the service delivered was consistent with the reablement approach and was sustainable going forward. Proposals included –

- moving existing services in Prestatyn from Llys Nant to Nant y Mor in order to provide further opportunities for people
- in the medium/long term to explore moving day care provision in Rhyl to Gorwel Newydd and using Hafan Deg to progress the reablement approach
- an initial move to 3 days provision of day care at Hafan Deg with the other 2 days focusing on providing reablement
- developing a detailed project plan for the current arrangements in both Hafan Deg and Llys Nant in consultation with service users and carers.

In response to questions members were advised that –

- officers were unaware of any impact on Nant y Mor as a result of the closure of Michael Phillips Respite Centre in Rhyl but would explore the matter further
- subject to approval of the proposals by Cabinet on 25 June detailed discussions would begin with Llys Nant service users and carers about the move to Nant y Mor; the committee was reassured that Llys Nant would not be closed until suitable arrangements had been made for all service users
- confirmed that the two Hafan Deg service users currently attending for more than 3 days each week would be provided with alternative support services
- confirmed that respite care provision would also transfer to Nant y Mor and support provided to carers would not be affected
- the authority would engage with the third sector and other parties about how more effective transport arrangements could be developed
- traditional models of social care could create a dependence but the new model focused on helping individuals to support themselves.

Councillor Brian Blakeley thanked officers for listening to councillors' views and consultation feedback and amending the proposals accordingly. He commended officers on their hard work and suggested the committee keep the matter under review. The Chair was pleased to highlight the committee's role within the process and how it had influenced proposals to ensure an acceptable compromise was reached. Members thanked the officers for the work undertaken in that regard.

**RESOLVED** that –

- Cabinet be recommended to approve implementation of the new model as set out in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.13 of the report, and*
- an evaluation report on the provision of Day Care Services in Denbighshire be received by the committee in approximately twelve months' time.*

**[PG & HT to progress both recommendations]**

## **10 FOOD REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

The Corporate Director: Customers introduced the Catering Manager; Public Protection Manger and Strategic Procurement Manager and submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the findings of the Task and Finish Group established to review the Council's policies and procedures with respect to food

procurement, regulation and contract management in the wake of the horsemeat scandal.

The Task & Finish Group discussed issues around the following key areas –

- the procurement of meat and meat products
- the Council's role as an enforcing and regulatory body, and
- the sufficiency of contractual arrangements with commissioned services.

Following scrutiny of the above areas officers were tasked with producing a Position Statement and recommendations for service improvement (attached to the report) and the report recommendations stemmed from those documents. Councillor David Smith, Lead Member for Public Realm commended the Council's response to the horsemeat scandal and how the authority dealt with such issues and emergencies in general. Councillor Win Mullen-James was a member of the Task and Finish Group and echoed those sentiments highlighting the hard work of the officers involved.

The committee raised questions regarding the sourcing of meat and contract specifications and sought further assurances regarding the robustness of the procedures in place to identify food fraud. In response officers –

- reported upon the current contracts and specifications for meat including the stipulation for British meat with beef under 30 months old and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status (Welsh origin) from approved suppliers for beef and lamb
- elaborated upon the results of recent investigations which had established that one product item (chicken) had been sourced from Germany
- explained that sampling was undertaken by both local authority and Food Standards Agency and a proactive approach was being undertaken to establish traceability, hygiene and the meeting of contract specifications
- highlighted the strengthening of contract management procedures including the need to report any changes in the supply chain
- provided assurances that robust systems were in place but in view of the nature of the industry fraud cases could not be totally eradicated
- elaborated upon the Food Standards Agency audit in July 2013 covering food hygiene, standards and delivery
- confirmed that an additional food standard officer had been employed for a period of 12/18 months until an existing trainee became fully qualified.

To guarantee the quality and origin of meat procured the Chair queried the possibility of stipulating that all suppliers must be Red Tractor Assured in future contracts. Officers referred to potential difficulties with that approach including supply problems and availability of products at particular times of the year together with the financial implications of imposing that requirement. In particular, any increase in school meals above £2.00 would have a detrimental impact on take up rates. It was noted that the Task and Finish Group would be maintained in the short term to monitor delivery of the report recommendations and it was suggested that the matter be given further consideration by that forum. It was agreed to

receive a report back on the work of the Task and Finish Group in approximately twelve months' time.

**RESOLVED** that –

- (a) *the recommendations of the Food Review Task and Finish Group as detailed in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.13 of the report be supported and recommended to Cabinet for approval;*
- (b) *the Food Review Task and Finish Group be asked to explore the viability of future meat procurement contracts stipulating that all suppliers must be Red Tractor Assured, and*
- (c) *a report back on the work of the Food Review Task and Finish Group be submitted to the committee in approximately twelve months' time.*

**[HW to arrange for recommendations to be reported and for the Task and Finish Group to consider recommendation (b). RhE to action (c)]**

## **11 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

A report by the Scrutiny Coordinator was submitted (previously circulated) seeking members' review of the committee's future work programme and providing an update on relevant issues. A draft forward work programme (Appendix 1); Cabinet's forward work programme (Appendix 2), and Progress on Committee Resolutions (Appendix 3) had been attached to the report.

Members agreed the following revisions to the work programme –

- September – Gypsy Strategy and information report on restructuring of the Communications and Marketing Services
- October – information report on the Economic Ambition Strategy
- May/June 2014 – Provision of Day Care Services in Denbighshire and Food Review Task and Finish Group

The Scrutiny Coordinator drew members' attention to the new service performance challenge process detailed within the committee's information brief (previously circulated). Committee representatives for each service assessment were sought and details of the meeting schedule had been provided. It was agreed to match as closely as possible the committee representatives previously appointed to the new service areas. Further consideration would need to be given to any unfilled positions following that appointment process.

**RESOLVED** that, *subject to the above, the forward work programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be approved. [RhE to action above]*

## **12 FEEDBACK FROM COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

No reports from committee representatives had been received.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 p.m.

This page is intentionally left blank

**Report To:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

**Lead Member / Officer:** Head of Planning and Public Protection

**Report Author:** Planning Policy Manager

**Title:** Control of Caravan Sites

---

**1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 The report is a follow up to the one presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee in July 2011 and provides an update on work which is on-going within the County on the Control of Caravan Sites.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

- 2.1 To provide information regarding the progress of the project to monitor and enforce legislative controls on caravan sites in the County and to control the emergence of new ones.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

- 3.1 That Committee considers and provides observations on the direction of the project and for Officers to report back on the production of the Caravan Sites Strategy document for Denbighshire as well as action taken to date.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 There are a large number of caravan sites in the County, comprising a mix of static, touring and residential sites, which contribute to Denbighshire's tourist accommodation offer. The Council's Caravan Site License records indicate that there are approximately 6000 static caravan pitches, 900 touring caravan pitches and 70 residential caravan pitches. Proposals for new caravan sites are subject to planning controls and a requirement for a site license. However, historically there has been little co-ordinated work across the Council to cross reference planning and licensing information, carry out systematic monitoring of sites and to take appropriate action against any breaches of legislation.
- 4.2 Elected Members and others have expressed concerns about the proliferation of caravan sites in the County and how they may be being used. This issue has also been flagged up at National level by the Assembly Member, Darren Millar. He is seeking to introduce a Holiday Caravan Park Bill for Wales which may provide greater controls for Local Authorities to protect the "holiday" character of sites. It has been

identified that a proportion of people using caravans do so as their main or sole residence, avoiding Council tax and using local services. Some of the accommodation can be sub-standard and is possibly being used by vulnerable people in the community. The Police have also raised concerns about the increasing numbers of crimes being reported on caravan sites. As such, Officers acknowledge that this is a major issue for the County which will not only require cross-service co-operation but should also involve partner organisations such as the Police and Fire Service.

- 4.3 A review of caravan parks in the County and the development of a future strategy for the monitoring and enforcement of the parks have been initiated as a project within the Planning & Public Protection Service. This is being led by a steering group of senior officers from across the service, including public protection, planning policy and development control.
- 4.4 The project involves developing a robust evidence base, including planning and licensing information on all caravan sites in the County. This is being captured in a database which will be updated whenever new information becomes available, with a major update on an annual basis. This information will form the basis for the development of a Caravan Sites Strategy for Denbighshire. The proposal is that this would establish a monitoring framework for existing sites, establish a corporate cross-service working group with a single point of contact at officer level, and develop a clear strategy for the Council's future approach to caravan sites – both existing and new sites.
- 4.5 In addition it is suggested that the new Strategy document should involve the roles of the Police and Fire Service as well as the caravan park owners themselves. The Community Safety Partnership is running a linked project around "Safer Caravans" which is focussing on people protecting their belongings in caravans and the parks themselves. It is clear that the park owners are keen to ensure that sites are policed better. Discussions between the Council and park owners have shown that many owners are willing to actively participate in developing a clear strategy for the future management of their sites.
- 4.6 Council Officers are now inspecting caravan sites across the County and establishing the relevant information on these sites. This information is being used to establish exactly how they may be being used throughout the year. In many cases Caravan Parks are operating in accordance with planning permission and licensing requirements. They operate to provide holiday accommodation for tourists who have residential properties elsewhere. These people visit their caravans for holidays and return home after a short to medium stay.
- 4.7 However, it is clear that other sites are not being used in accordance with relevant consents. They contain people with no alternative



addresses who are clearly residing in the caravan. It is these sites which are being targeted by the Council Officers for appropriate action.

- 4.8 The “appropriate action” will involve working with partner organisations, caravan park owners and, where necessary, serving relevant enforcement notices. Officers are, however, also conscious of the wider implications of taking enforcement action. In some instances this may involve a person possibly losing their existing home. The involvement of colleagues in Social Services and Housing has also been noted.
- 4.9 Finally, it is important to mention that the Council has recently adopted the Local Development Plan. This provides an up to date policy context for dealing with new proposals for static, touring or chalet developments in the County. The new policies set more restrictive criteria for such developments in the County whilst recognising the need to enhance the tourist accommodation and outdoor activities offer in the County. Supplementary Guidance will also be produced which will provide further commentary on the control of caravan sites in the County.

**5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

- 5.1 Controlling the way caravan parks are used contributes towards Council priorities:-
- Developing the local economy
  - Vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible
  - Ensuring access to good quality housing

**6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

- 6.1 The project and the development of the working group to take it forward are not considered to require any additional staffing or financial resources.

**7. What are the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

- 7.1 An EqIA will be undertaken for the development of the Strategy document.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

- 8.1 None.

**9 Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1 N/A

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 There are no perceived risks associated with the recommendations in this report.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

11.1 Not applicable at this stage.

11.2 Article 6.3.3(a) of the Council's Constitution

**Contact Officer:**

Planning Policy Manager

Tel: 01824 706912

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer:</b>	<b>Lead Member for Customers and Communities/ Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Developing the Local Housing Strategy – Denbighshire (2013-18)</b>

---

**1. What is the report about?**

- 1.1 The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) sets out the current local housing situation across all tenures and provides strategic direction for five years. The existing LHS was adopted in 2007 and is currently being fully revised.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide an opportunity to comment on the draft Local Housing Strategy prior to wider consultation.

**3. What are the Recommendations?**

For members to consider the draft LHS and make any relevant comments before wider consultation.

**4. Report details.**

4.1 Context

The current LHS was the result of a significant amount of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and adopted in 2007. The County's LHS is the key overall strategy in terms of housing and provides strategic direction. It sets out the current housing situation and future direction.

The emerging LHS will differ to the 2007 version in number of ways:

- Evolving dynamic housing environment with new challenges – welfare reform, people delaying purchasing housing, wider generational affect of housing, etc. The housing market is markedly different to the one in 2007
- A new, innovative, more focussed document which we have more control over in terms of content
- Increased focus on collaborative projects in North Wales

- Glyndŵr University has been selected to develop the LHS in close partnership with Denbighshire County Council as they offer a wealth of expertise, excellent track record and value for money

#### 4.2 Key housing challenges in Denbighshire

Denbighshire is facing challenging times including:

- The Council and partners are facing financial challenges. The Social Housing Grant is reducing to just over £1 million compared to £9 million in 2008. Denbighshire County Council's proactive approach has meant accessing over £1.6 million in additional money from Welsh Government since 2011
- A shortage of affordable housing across the county especially in rural areas and some urban areas. Alternative ways of funding affordable housing projects are being investigated
- Relatively low turnover of Council/Housing Association stock throughout the County. Meeting housing standards now and in the future is a significant challenge
- Increasing importance of the private rented sector within the county. Many more people are delaying decisions to purchase homes in the current economic environment and seeing this as an alternative option. The condition of stock in this sector is a key consideration
- Relatively stable house prices across the county with limited turnover depending on property size and location
- Providing planned and measured interventions to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform
- Denbighshire has an ageing population which needs a range of options enabling households to make informed choices about the future
- Housing need update (Glyndŵr University 2011) and subsequent preliminary analysis has highlighted the following key areas:
  - 60% of households are unable to afford private rented option because of much higher rents and more households in the lower income bands (33% in 2009). Private rented has become more unaffordable than homeownership with a mortgage (using Welsh Government guidance)
  - The median income level has reduced from £25-30k per household in 2009 to £20-25K in 2013
  - For a third of households the only affordable option open to them is to rent a Council or Housing Association home (April 2013)

### 4.3 **LHS development process**

The process consists of the following elements:

- Background research – Big Plan, etc.
- Development of an outline draft document to encourage debate (Scrutiny – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013)
- Consultation day with stakeholders on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013
- Development of a draft as a result of consultation – wide circulation
- Final LHS – adopted by Full Council (September 2013)
- Development of executive summary and easy-to-read versions.
- Once finalised this will be made available on the DCC website
- The LHS will be monitored by a range of mechanisms including the Strategic Housing Partnership (Lead Member, senior housing staff and local Housing Associations) and regular reporting to Scrutiny. An option analysis of other potential mechanisms is currently being developed.

### 4.4 **Draft report**

- Appendix A summarises the changes made in light of the consultation event on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2013
- Appendix B contains latest draft LHS to promote discussion – previous discussed the outline on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013

## **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

5.1 The Corporate Plan provides seven strategic objectives, four of which directly relate into housing:

- Quality of housing
- Extra care housing
- Developing the local economy
- Modern and customer focused services

## **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

6.1 The cost of developing the LHS with Glyndwr University is a fixed cost of £7,500 plus expenses for the consultation event. These costs are contained within the existing budget for Housing Services.

6.2 The profile of LHS will be raised and used to bring in further funding from external partners through collaborative working.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?**

7.1 The development of the LHS and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is concurrent and progress made to date includes:

- Attendance of corporate training on EqIA (28<sup>th</sup> May 2013)
- Ability to utilise existing expertise within Community Housing Service and Glyndŵr University
- Preliminary discussion with Corporate Equalities Officer and further meetings planned.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

Please refer to section 4.3 and Appendix A which summarises the responses from the consultation event.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Development of the LHS must be incorporated within existing budgets. The cost implications of any schemes or developments emerging from the Plan in future would need to be assessed individually.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

10.1 The risks for each projects contained in the LHS are monitored and evaluated regularly as part of the project management approach.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

11.1 The Local Government Act 2003 – Part VII gives the Council general powers to produce the LHS and associated policies.

11.2 Article 6.3.1 of the Council’s Constitution stipulates that Scrutiny will be consulted on any proposed changes to the Policy Framework – the Local Housing Strategy forms part of the Council’s Policy Framework, whilst Article 6.3.3(a) states that in exercising its policy development and review functions scrutiny may “assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by an in-depth analysis of policy issues...”

**Contact Officer:**

Senior Officer – Strategy and Partnerships

Tel: 01824 712282

## Appendix A

**Denbighshire County Council**

**Progress Report**

**June 2013**

Dr. Colin Stuhlfelder

& Jane Richardson

**Glyndŵr University, Wrexham**

## Progress since the last update

- 1.1. Since the last update for the Scrutiny group, a public consultation event was held in Ruthin on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.
- 1.2. It was a well-attended event and included presentations from Shelter Cymru on the issue of Welfare Reform, North Wales Housing on tackling Empty Homes, as well as shorter information sessions with Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council regarding digital inclusion, and from the lead officer on the Single Access Route to Housing. A full list of attendees is available from Sue Lewis.
- 1.3. The response to the event on the feedback sheets filled by participants at the end of the session, were positive or very positive.
- 1.4. The event's true success was in the 'Cocktail Party' session where the Vision, 3 Themes and the 3 objectives for each theme (which were those presented to Scrutiny on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May) were revealed to the whole group on sheets of flipchart paper on the walls of a room. Participants were then given a pack of post-it notes and a marker pen and invited to walk around the room, discuss the information on the sheets with others as well as myself and the other facilitators (Sue, and Brett Sadler of North Wales Housing). As they went around, they added their thoughts and comments to the post-it notes and stuck them to the relevant sheets.
- 1.5. At the end of the 'Cocktail Party' the participants gathered around each sheet and directed myself and the facilitators to re-group and reorganise the post-it notes according to their collective opinions; rather than relying on myself to take the sheets away and organise them away from their input. The reorganising itself sparked further debate and eventually I, Sue and Brett took a group off and evaluated a selection of sheets with them to make sure no discussion was cut short by time constraints.
- 1.6. The written feedback from this event has been added as an appendix to the Draft Strategy Framework included as part of this report.
- 1.7. The highlights of the Cocktail Party feedback were:
  - a. As was noted at the start of the event by myself, the Vision for the strategy was considered 'too long and wordy' and was edited down by the attendees as well as by myself as the event proceeded.



- b. Based on the feedback received, the draft Vision has been shortened to the following statement with the words 'pride' included on the suggestion of a number of attendees:

**Everyone is supported to live with pride in homes that meet their needs, in the vibrant and sustainable communities Denbighshire aspires to.**

- c. With regards to the 3 themes of **Communication, Consolidation & Construction** the attendees made a series of both general and specific comments on what the Strategy should include under these themes, as well what the Council could itself be doing. None of the comments were about the wording of the three themes and so these will be carried forward into the consultation stages and strategy drafting to follow.
- d. With regards to the 3 objectives under each of the 3 themes, with the exception of suggestions for delivering a 'Transparent' service rather than a 'See Through' housing service under the Communication theme, all the comments were on the content and direction of these objectives and so they too will be carried on into the next stages.
- e. The many comments, including an entire sheet relating to who we need to speak to next, have been an excellent guide for the drafting of the action plan to support the Strategy.

**1.8. Next Steps:**

- 1.9. With Sue Lewis and Simon Kaye the responses from the event have been evaluated and used to update the Draft Strategy Framework attached. They have also been used to map out the initial Action Plan that will now be drafted and applied to the Draft Strategy Framework to form a full working Draft.
- 1.10. On the basis of the success of the consultation event, and the suggestions of other organisations and groups to contact, I will be developing a survey for wide distribution based on the feedback from the event and the Draft Strategy Framework as well as directly contacting groups to invite them to respond.
- 1.11. Where possible I will attend events in the County to further promote the Strategy.
- 1.12. It is not my intention to have a 'closing date' for all feedback, rather I will maintain consultation opportunities through the drafting of the strategy and will make the necessary amendments where there is a clear benefit and connection from this to the Vision and themes of the strategy.

This page is intentionally left blank

## Appendix B

**Denbighshire County Council**

**Draft Strategy Framework**

**June 2013**

Dr. C. Stuhlfelder

& J. Richardson

**Glyndŵr University, Wrexham**

1.1. **Draft Strategy Framework**

1.2. The Framework represents the research of National, Regional and Local policy and strategy that will underpin the full Strategy.

1.3. The Framework has been updated as a result of the consultation undertaken to date. This includes changes to the wording of the **Consolidation** and **Construction** theme's 6 objectives which were presented at the public consultation event on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June.

1.4. The Framework will now be **reduced** down into a more streamlined format that includes direct reference to the **Action Plan** currently being developed with Council staff based on this Framework and the consultation feedback.

1.5. Further feedback will continue to be sought as the draft develops.

## Introduction: The Situation in 2013.

### 1.6. The 2011 Update produced by the Housing Team stated:

The ramifications of the 2008 Credit Crunch, the subsequent recession, and the 2010 CRS are still not clearly definable; though it is clear the contraction in the house building sector has occurred to varying degrees. Therefore, when considering changes to the drivers for economic development in the County, described in ... the Fordham Survey, the LDP deposit of 2009, and the Wales Spatial Plan Update of 2008, the only reliable statement to be made, is those drivers detailed as positive for the County may have become, or could be subject to pressures where their ongoing association may become a negative. (Glyndŵr, June 2011, pg.7)

Since the start of the Update project in 2010 and the completion of the research stage of this Local Housing Strategy in 2013, the truth of the statement that the ramifications of the Credit Crunch are ongoing and not clearly definable are obvious.

### 1.7. Nationally, the Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities of 2012 states:

We are in difficult times. Housing markets are depressed and new house building is at a low point. More affordable homes are being built but numbers have fallen as the impact of public sector cuts is felt. Some of the factors behind the changes, such as Welfare Reform, are outside our control. The underlying trend in homelessness is upwards, fuelled by rising costs of living, depressed earnings, and in some cases, people losing their jobs. The quality of existing homes is also cause for concern, with potential impacts on people's safety, and their health and well being, most worryingly for children. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.4)

### 1.8. While locally, the Council's Corporate Plan 2012-17: An excellent council, close to the community also described a similarly bleak picture:

The financial position faced by local authorities is currently very tough. Funding cuts by the UK Government in recent years mean that we have a lot less money to invest in services now than we have in the past. So far, we have been able to manage this situation by reducing our spending without any noticeable impact on the frontline services valued by our communities. (DCC, 2012, pg.2)

### 1.9. Any review of recent headlines in the national press and in those media outputs specific to the Housing Sector would indicate a poor outlook with additional complications for directing housing strategy going forward from

2013. A recent example includes a BBC News article stating an increasing number of households are borrowing money on credit cards, loans and overdrafts in order to eat (BBC News, May 2013), adding 'Food Poverty' to the list of depressing terms often used in the media; Fuel Poverty being the one most commonly seen and central to national debates for a number of years.

1.10. A key topic of consideration for many, in the Social housing and the private rented sector, as well as for owner occupiers, relate to the Welfare Reforms introduced by the Coalition Government. The Welsh Government commissioned a two part study to evaluate the impact of Welfare Reforms on Welsh communities and households, reporting in early 2012 and February 2013. They stated:

...the impact of the tax and benefit changes to be implemented by 2014–15 will mean that **on average households in Wales can expect to lose 4.1 per cent of their income (or £1,110 per year)**<sup>1</sup>. This compares to a UK average loss of 3.8 per cent (or £1,170 per year).

...

Furthermore, **the poorest households with children are estimated to lose the largest proportion of their income** as a result of the tax and benefit changes. In particular, **non-working lone parents** and **workless couples with children** are expected to suffer a disproportionate financial hit. (Welsh Government, February 2012, pg.5)

Potential impacts on **housing** services relate to housing affordability, rent arrears, evictions and homelessness due to benefit cuts, direct and monthly payments, and sanctions, which may create budgeting problems. (Welsh Government, February 2013, pg.8)

Taking these forms of evaluations, and reports from the media and other sources such as the homelessness organisation Shelter Cymru, the Draft Strategy will develop a summary of the main pressures likely to impact on householders in the County from 2013-18. It will also detail the further impacts of changes on the operations of the Council itself relating to regulatory or financial developments.

---

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis in bold was in the original text.

- 1.11. From the perspective of seeking to produce an optimistic and forward-looking Strategy, the potential for pessimism arising from such uncertainty is not aided by even flagship Welsh Government projects such as the NewBuy scheme, set to help households purchase a new home and simultaneously encouraging house building, being dropped when their feasibility is challenged by the actions of the UK government.
- 1.12. However, 2012 did see the presentation of the Housing White Paper for Wales which, setting aside NewBuy, details a wide range of potential new powers and schemes to stimulate and strengthen the housing sector across all tenures; inclusive of general needs housing and more specialised accommodation for groups with particular social, physical or cultural needs. These may be challenging times but, with the Welsh Government attempting to direct resources and encourage innovations at the sector, to be detailed in the Strategy, these could also be exiting times for housing strategy and the Draft will seek to reflect a balance of the negative with the positive.
- 1.13. The White Paper, which should progress to the presentation of legislation later in 2013, contains a vision for housing delivery in Wales:

Renting a home from a social or private landlord will be seen as good options.

...

Co-operative housing will become a much more significant part of the housing system. People will receive more and better help to live independently, with additional support for our most vulnerable people, and not-for-profit organisations such as housing associations will be used to even greater effect. There will be even better, more integrated, policy and delivery by public services and joint action between organisations, with effective collaboration between local authorities.  
(WG, May 2012, pg.5)

- 1.14. The schemes and proposals in the White Paper will be detailed in the relevant sections of the Draft Strategy and, while some elements may not necessarily become law in the final version of the legislation, this Strategy will be written from the perspective that the Council cannot simply wait out the outcome of the legislative process. **Denbighshire must be proactive and begin the process of exploring the implications of the White Paper so as to contribute to the national debate.**

- 1.15. The White Paper will therefore form the national ‘spine’ of the Strategy with relative national documents such as the Welsh Government’s 212 Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs, and the 2013 Vibrant and Viable Place: New Regeneration Framework providing evidence and guidance on the formulation of County-specific objectives and outcomes.
- 1.16. Both the Infrastructure and Regeneration plans highlight the importance of housing in their targets and recommendations:

Homes are vital – affecting health and well being, quality of life, and people’s opportunities. Investing public money in building and refurbishing homes already makes a significant contribution to national and local economies, creating and supporting thousands of jobs and training opportunities. It plays a huge part in regenerating communities and has economic benefits to Wales. (Welsh Government, 2012b, pg.67)

- 1.17. And similarly, within local plans produced by the Council, the importance of housing is recognised as vital to the County in far more than simply the important process of ensuring everyone has access to a safe and decent home. The ‘Vision for Denbighshire 2025;’ the 2011 Denbighshire: The Big Plan 2011-14, and the 2012 Corporate Plan 2012-17: An excellent council, close to the community detail improved services to the community, in the broadest definition of the term (residents, public and private sector providers alike); the building upon the success achieved and the resources in the County already; as well as the need to continue to build new homes and regenerate the spaces and communities served by the Council.

- 1.18. These three Council documents, along with the key national documents detailed will form the effective ‘thread’ throughout the Strategy. In order to accomplish this, the Housing Team has adapted the methodology detailed in the 2006 Welsh Government Preparing Local Housing Strategies: Revised Guidance to Local Authorities in Wales from the Welsh Assembly Government. The LHS Guide states:

The primary purpose of a Local Housing Strategy is to articulate a locally agreed direction for addressing the housing requirements, problems and opportunities of an area, taking into account national policies and priorities set out in ‘Better Homes for People in Wales’ (Welsh Assembly Government, October 2006, pg.8)

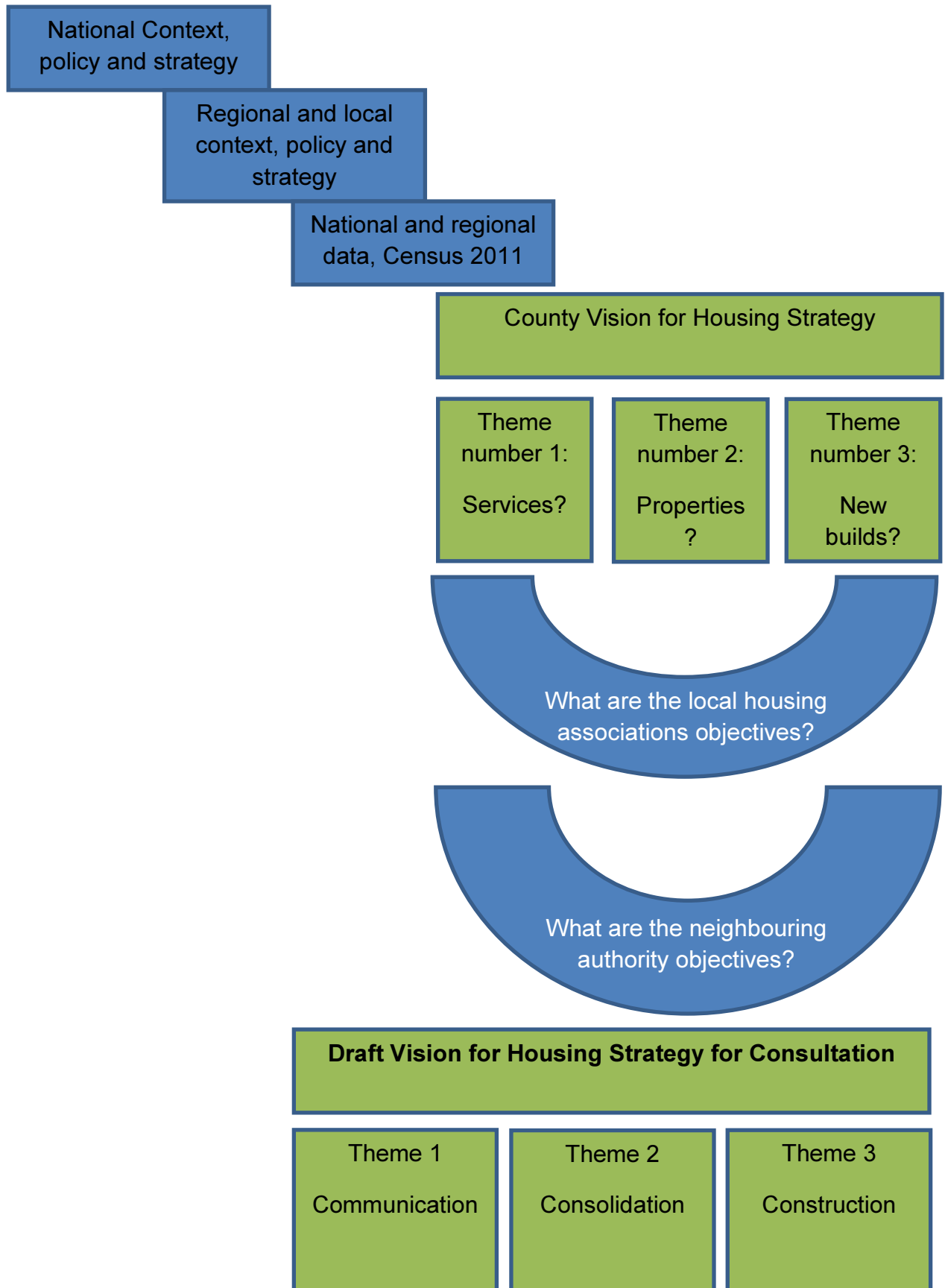


And;

The Local Housing Strategy must be framed within the context of the overarching vision for the economic, environmental and social well-being of its area and inhabitants set out in the authority's Community Strategy, and be linked closely to other relevant local strategies and plans. (WAG, October 2006, pg.18)

- 1.19. While obviously the currency of the LHS Guide is somewhat out of date, it is this form of 'cascade approach' where local vision, themes and objectives are derived from national, then regional, then local drivers that the Housing Team has adopted. Fig.2 is a visual interpretation of this approach:

Fig.2: Draft model for scoping exercise leading to setting a contextualised County housing vision and strategic objectives.



1.20. The model in fig.2 shows the approach the Housing Team has been using to date in order to set the initial draft vision for the County as well as the 3 themes and initial objectives for consideration at consultation. It also indicated two other elements of the Strategy as it is formed into the first Draft.

1.21. The first element is the importance of a second ‘thread’ through the Strategy to match that provided by key national and local plans. The use of a comparison of 2001 and 2011 Census data, now that the 2011 data is available in full, places the 2013 Strategy at a useful point which the 2011 Update missed due to the timing of that particular study. Furthermore, the 2011 Census and more recent housing market and employability data available from various sources including CACI Paycheck means a review of the 2010/11 data in the 2011 Update can be compared and used as evidence at key points in the Strategy. For example, a comparison of data from 2003 in the Update and 2011 Census data relating to Tenure shows (fig.3):

Tenure	Total number of households in 2003	% of households	Total number of households in 2011 Census	% of households	Change since 2003	% change
Owner-occupied (no mortgage)	14,341	35.80%	14,937	36.80%	596	1.00%
Owner-occupied (with mortgage)	14,400	36.00%	13,122	32.40%	-1,278	-3.60%
Council	3,869	9.70%	3,283	8.10%	-586	-1.60%
Registered Social Landlords	1,738	4.30%	2,042	5.00%	304	0.70%
Private rented	5,657	14.10%	6,383	15.70%	726	1.60%
Other	-	-	63	0.20%	-	
<b>Total</b>	<b>40,005</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>40,005</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

Fig.3: Comparison of households per tenure in 2003 and from the 2011 Census. Source: Glyndŵr University; Office for National Statistics

1.22. The comparison shows a significant drop in the number of households owning a home with a mortgage, some of whom may have paid off their mortgages in the 8 year period and can be accounted for in the 1% increase in those owner

occupiers without a mortgage. The more significant figure is the larger increase in households renting from private landlords. This represents a significant shift in the tenure profile and is reflective of national trends.

- 1.23. The most recent Dwelling Stock Estimate for Wales published in 2012 indicated a significant and continuing shift in the share of the housing sector by tenure. **While the overall percentage share for the private sector is in Wales is still around 84%, as it was at the last Living in Wales Survey 2008, it is now composed of a decreased 70% owner occupied share against a rising 14% showing for the private rented tenure. The decline of the owner occupied sector is being translated into an increase in the private rented sector.** The shift from 73.4% owner occupied in the Living In Wales Survey to 70% at the stock estimate in 2012 is only slightly larger than that in the County. Therefore, when formulating a Strategic response to this, the Housing Team have, and will continue through the consultation, considered what moves are being made nationally, form example in the White Paper with regards to mandatory accreditation for private landlords, to address a growing private rented sector.
- 1.24. The shift in the tenure profile and national trends in higher private rents against declining household incomes is also evident in fig.4 and 5 arising from the recalculation of affordability in the County from the 2011 Update to 2013. The latest figures show that statistically, **private rent has become more significantly more unaffordable, according to Welsh Government guidance which states that a household spending more than 25% of its gross income on rent is unable to afford that rent, than home ownership with a mortgage.**
- 1.25. Therefore, the affordability threshold table produced in 2011 needs to be rearranges in order to represent the succession of affordability through different tenure types (fig.4 and 5):

Affordable Housing and Open Market Housing Types/tenures	Minimum Household Income Threshold	% of Denbighshire Households below the threshold	Maximum Household Income Threshold
2 Bed Social Rented Affordable Housing	n/a	n/a	£15,600
2 Bed 80% Market Rent	£15,600	22%	£19,552
2 Bed 30% Discount for Sale	£17,625	27%	£35,000
2 Bed Open Market Rent	£19,552	33%	n/a
2 Bed Open Market House	£25,178	47%	n/a

Fig.4: 2011 Affordable Housing & Open Market Housing minimum and maximum income thresholds.

© CACI Paycheck, Hometrack & Glyndŵr University

Affordable Housing and Open Market Housing Types/tenures	Minimum Household Income Threshold	% of Denbighshire Households below the threshold	Maximum Household Income Threshold
2 Bed Social Rented Affordable Housing	n/a	n/a	£13,957
2 Bed 30% Discount for Sale	£15,273	33%	£21,818
2 Bed 80% Market Rent	£19,136	43%	£23,920
2 Bed Open Market House	£21,818	48%	n/a
2 Bed Open Market Rent	£23,920	60%	n/a

Fig.5: 2013 Affordable Housing & Open Market Housing minimum and maximum income thresholds.

© CACI Paycheck, Hometrack & Glyndŵr University

1.26. While the percentage of households unable to afford a mortgage without assistance has stayed largely the same at 48%, intermediate rents have become more unaffordable, linked as they are to private rent levels. This will require a significant evaluation of the recommendations made in the 2011 Update and how the Council now relates to a sector that has become significantly more expensive in a County where, according to the data used to produce fig.5, the median household income band has dropped from 25-30K to 20-25K in the space of 3 years.

## 1.27. The County Vision for Housing

**Everyone is supported to live with pride in homes that meet their needs, in the vibrant and sustainable communities Denbighshire aspires to.**

1.28. This Vision for the County has been put to a number of consultation groups, the Scrutiny Group included. On the basis of feedback received, a shorted vision has been produced. This may well change during the course of the drafting of the strategy and the Housing Team welcomes all suggestions and comments.

1.29. Finally, before outlining the three themes, it is worth considering how the Council proceeds with its Core Principles for the Strategy. In 2007 these were given as:

- A home is a **basic right**<sup>2</sup> for all the people of Denbighshire
- All residents of Denbighshire should have **equal opportunity** to access housing of good quality to meet their needs
- The needs of **vulnerable groups** must be carefully considered
- There should be a **choice** of housing for all residents of Denbighshire
- A home or a lack of a home has a fundamental impact on a wide range of factors which significantly influence any individual's **quality of life** such as health and well-being, educational achievement and economic circumstances
- A **socially inclusive** approach will assist in **sustaining** communities
- Meeting **local needs** is a key part of this strategy
- Ongoing **consultation** is required to determine needs and identify gaps in service provision. (Denbighshire CC, 2007, pg.9)

As a set of principles, the Housing Team would suggest they are a decent reflection both of what has occurred in the County since 2007 and the direction of strategy and policy nationally and regionally and would propose their retention into the 2013 Strategy. It would suggest a continuity between the documents were the Core Principles to be retained.

1.30. With regards to other details that will be included in the full draft, there are a series of methodological notes contained in the LHS Guide and in the key

---

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis in bold was present in the original document.

documents already mentioned in this Report. They have been examined and, as agreement on the Vision and Themes is gained, subject to suggestions and amendments arising from the consultation, they will be incorporated into an introductory and context setting section of the Draft Strategy.

## Local Housing Strategy Theme 1:

**Communication:** To actively engage with everyone in the County to provide efficient and well informed services

### 2.1. Rationale

- 2.2. Each of the three thematic areas has been given a single word name, all of which start with a C (and translate into Welsh equivalents which all start with an A). The purpose in three single word themes is both simplicity and ease of recall. Visually, in materials published after the strategy process and in the final format of the document, the use of three single words, colour coded for readability, is a model successfully used by other organisations including Caerphilly County Borough Council's Strategy (using 'people, property, place') and in the use of colour coding by the Equality & Human Rights Commission.
- 2.3. Having three broad themes also allows for key partner organisations in the County, such as the Registered Social Landlords, to find a point of correlation to the three themes. For example **Communication** is about delivering engagement, efficient services, and gathering and distributing data and intelligence to best coordinate services in the County. This would match up to any set of values or objectives provided by partners such as Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd. While Tai Clwyd are based in Denbigh, their area of operations extends beyond the County boundary and they cannot therefore be expected to adopt the Council's strategic themes directly. However examination of their 10 core objectives in their Business Plan 2011-2016 would see **Communication** and the objectives to be detailed match up with 6 of these with the other 4 correlating with the 2 other themes proposed for the draft Strategy; **Consolidation** and **Construction**.
- 2.4. There is a discussion to be had relating to using single word themes, even with an explanatory tag as shown above. They are meant to be bold, positive action terms but it may be that some people could struggle with a term such as **Consolidation**. This will be considered when the second theme is discussed in the following chapter.



2.5. As with the County Vision and the three themes, the objectives to follow are indicative of initial objectives for the draft. There is significantly more detail contained in the background research discussed at the start of this Progress Report that supports their selection; including relevant legislative contexts. However, as stated, in the interest of expedience at this early stage of the consultation process, a summary approach has been adopted. The Housing Team would welcome any comments and opinions relating to these, and any areas you believe should be added or amended.

2.6. **Objective 1: Broad and inclusive Engagement opportunities across all tenures**

2.7. The National Housing Strategy has 3 areas of action, the 3<sup>rd</sup> being 'Improve housing-related services and support, particularly for vulnerable people and people from minority groups.' (Welsh Government, April 2010, pg.2) and goes on to detail how this would be undertaken:

- (iv) Give people more choice by broadening the range of homes and tenancy arrangements to suit people's income and circumstances.
- (v) Give tenants a clear voice in decisions that affect them.
- (vi) Make it easier for people to find suitable accommodation, particularly people from minority groups.
- (vii) Ensure services reflect the needs of those who use them not the needs of organisations that deliver them. (Welsh Government, April 2010, pg.3)

The National Housing Strategy places the tenants voice as central to delivery of services in Wales and the Council should seek to do the same.

2.1. Similarly it is vital that engagement goes beyond just the tenants in the County and should encompass all residents, regardless of tenure, if the Council is to meet the commitments set out in the introduction where housing is a function of more than just providing decent homes for those in need as, for example, its narrower focus as a social landlord would suggest. Thus initial actions could include examining commitments detailed in the Council's Local Tenant Participation Strategy 2011-2014 to broadening their scope and that of the Denbighshire Tenants & Residents Federation.

2.2. Furthermore the White Paper suggests:

The design of services needs to be underpinned by an understanding of people's needs and evidence of what works, fuelled by the goal of continuous improvement. Services are at their best when they are informed or even led by the people who use them. (WG, May 2012, pg.59)

Evidence presented in the other national documents, such as the Welsh Government's 2013 Standards for Improving the Health and Well-being of Homeless People and Specific Vulnerable Groups, and the Wales Audit Office 2010 Housing services for adults with mental health needs agree with the need for engagement order to provide good collaborative services and this if further supported by work undertaken by the Audit Office with regards to engagement not only with the public but also with service providers:

- a. deciding together – where people and councils work together to share views, generate options jointly, and agree a course of action;
- b. acting together – people working with councils to make decisions and help carry through the action agreed; and
- c. supporting local initiatives – in which councils support groups to develop and implement their own solutions – that is, empowerment. (Wales Audit Office, June 2012, pg.22)

2.3. Partners and stakeholders included in good engagement agreements and structures should also include those within the Council but outside of the Housing & Community Development team. Such an approach is recognised in the Council's Corporate Plan 2012-17: Annual Delivery Document 2013-14 which provides extensive commitments to improved services relying on clear communication and engagement opportunities with partners within and without the County.

2.4. Extensive, varied and well delivered engagement opportunities, particularly when aligned to service providers in the County who deal specifically with hard to reach or vulnerable groups will also ensure inclusivity is a key component of engagement within the Strategy period.

- 2.5. **Objective 2: Developing the ‘See Through’ Housing Service**
- 2.6. **Following consultation, the term ‘See Through’ may be replaced with ‘Transparent’ depending on the opinions of other stakeholders and residents.**
- 2.7. The White Paper states ‘Local authorities will improve their strategic role to enable local housing needs to be met by close working between their housing and planning functions, and through efficient housing services.’ (Welsh Government, April 2010, pg.10). The Corporate Plan, and the Denbighshire Big Plan 2011-14 both highlight the need for effective and efficient services and the process of restructuring within the Housing & Community Development team is evidence of their commitment to this.
- 2.8. The Corporate Plan is also clear on the need for the Council to publish a set of Customer Service Standards. Housing & Community Development will already have standards in place for dealing with tenants and, as has been suggested with regards to engagement, these standards should be reviewed and made both more inclusive of all potential customers, regardless of tenure or interest, and potentially fed into the wider Council process of setting these standards.
- 2.9. The use of the term ‘See Through’ indicates the need for the Housing Service to be efficient, accountable, and accessible to the partners of the Housing & Communities Development team and examples of the successes in this area are evident in projects such as SARTH; highlighted in the Corporate Plan as an example of simplifying the process for residents in the County and reducing bureaucracy for all the partner organisations involved. It is also an example of the type of cross border collaborative cooperation at the heart of Welsh Government policy since the mid-2000s and the publication of Making the Connections: Delivering Beyond Boundaries.

**2.10. Gathering and deploying relevant data and intelligence to become the County HUB for Housing.**

2.11. The White Paper contains 4 summary points relating to its content. The last two state the Welsh Government, and through it local authorities and other partners, must:

- (iii) Do more to prevent homelessness, and improve housing services to help people, particularly those who are vulnerable, to lead healthy, independent, lives.
- (iv) Make a significant contribution towards our long-term vision by ending family homelessness by 2019. (WG, May 2012, pg.4)

The Welsh Government is asking local authorities to do this at a time of ever decreasing funds matched by ever increasing demands for services across the board, with homelessness widely recognised to be increasing due to the pressures of a stagnant economy and austerity measures; Welfare Reform being the obvious manifestation.

2.12. The issue of homelessness alone is a significant area of work for the Council. However, to fulfil the Council's role to engage with the wide range of residents and stakeholders, and to deliver an efficient and effective 'See Through' service, it must gather, analyse and be able to deploy and disseminate a wide range of data and intelligence it either gathers itself, or shares with the networks successful collaboration and engagement brings to cover all the responsibilities legislation, regulation and policy place upon it.

2.13. The Big Plan is itself an example of drawing together both a wide range of subject areas and correlating them to produce a single document and strategic approach, as fig.6. form the Plan demonstrates:



Fig.6: Big Plan approach from the 2011 Denbighshire Local Services Board Denbighshire: The big Plan 2011-14.

2.14. The gathering of data and intelligence relating to housing issues as understood in the broadest sense set out in this Progress Report requires the Housing & Community Development department, and onwards the Council as a whole, to have clear protocols with partner organisations and potentially an officer capable of coordinating the collection, deployment and dissemination of this data. The Corporate Plan does identify a new Corporate Programme Officer with a role to coordinate project approval. It should be an important part of their role to also coordinate or have an awareness of the intelligence gathered by the Council in order for it to be managed efficiently in order to inform and direct services.

2.15. Examples of the relevance of using good intelligence can be found throughout the national and regional documents, particularly with regards to delivering specialised services. In identifying weaknesses in housing-related needs in Supporting People Operational Plans for example, the Wales Audit Office recommended:

- a. better integrate needs mapping systems for identifying the support needs of different groups of people with other relevant data relating to housing, health and social care;
- b. create information sharing protocols whereby relevant local agencies agree to participate in needs mapping exercises; and
- c. improve the robustness of data by avoiding double counting and data input backlogs. (Wales Audit Office, November 2010, pg.12)

2.16. Particularly with regards to housing related services, the Housing & Community Development team must become an information and intelligence

HUB which, with clear and extensive engagement, and good partnership arrangements, can either deploy effectively its own resources, or be the point of contact for redirecting customers to the best service provider or potential partner. As will be seen when examining grants and loans, as well as opportunities for wider construction and regeneration projects in the following themes, while the Council may not be the source of all funding and sources, it should be the point in the County, and in the region, where residents and stakeholders can access the information and assistance they need.

- 2.17. Furthermore being the effective County HUB for housing related information will also allow the Housing & Community Development team to fulfil other roles the National Housing Strategy, the White Paper and regional documents have identified of the need for positive publicity and awareness to be raised by those with influence. For example, the Council must take a role in publicising private rent (and renting as a whole) as a positive choice and not a one of last resort:

Increasingly, people are renting homes, particularly in and around cities. But it's still not seen as attractive an option as ownership. Unlike most European countries, most people in Wales still want to own their own home. This is sometimes because of the quality of rented homes and poor management by the landlords who own them. But it can also be connected to the perceived stigma attached to renting properties from local authorities or housing associations. (Wales Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.9)

Regionally the 2013 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment undertaken on behalf of another regional collaborative consortium, to which the Council belongs, identified the challenge all participating local authorities had in changing perceptions of the gypsy and traveller communities. This had an impact on gypsies and travellers as groups, as part of the wider black and minority ethnic communities, and in the face of the negative backlash the programme My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding has had on these communities engagement with authorities.

- 2.18. Finally, becoming an intelligence and information HUB will also allow the Council and the Housing & Community Development team to better monitor the communities it serves, and to ensure continuous improvement in these services and to judge their viability and effectiveness over the Strategy period and beyond.
- 2.19. The **Communication** theme and the 3 objectives detailed are essentially cross-cutting objectives in that none of the objectives to follow under **Consolidation** and **Construction** can be successfully implemented without their successful deployment. Hence the listing of **Communication** as the first of the three themes.

## Local Housing Strategy Theme 2:

**Consolidation:** To build on the successes achieved, and to protect and improve the assets County already has.

### 3.1. Rationale

- 3.2. Of the three themes, the term **Consultation** may be the one where some people may wonder why this particular word has been used. It aims to be a positive term, stressing that in its communities, buildings, relationships, industries (tourism being an obvious one when considering locations across the County, along the coast and in Llangollen in particular). **Consolidation** suggests has a sense of action relating to enhancement and, even where relationships may be strained, or the physical regeneration is starting from a low base (long term empty properties for example) **Consolidation** suggests there is still something to build on.
- 3.3. Too often strategy documents, both from government and local authorities talk of ‘creating’ communities as if only the intervention of these powers means any viable community or development can exist. Using the term **Consolidation** suggests instead that the Council wishes to be an active partner, working through the engagement, efficient ‘See Through’ service, and well defined intelligence gathering and distributing HUB described under the first theme **Communication**.
- 3.4. Therefore, under **Consolidation**, the Council will seek to improve the existing housing stock by continuing to fulfil the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, bring Empty Homes back into use, and examine opportunities to improve energy efficiency across the tenures to tackle Fuel Poverty directly, and by this reduce overall pressures on stretched household budgets.
- 3.5. **Consolidation** will include an objective relating to building on the relationships already established with private sector landlords to ensure better relations and communication between the Council and all private landlords, private landlords and their tenants, and to use the objectives detailed in the **Communication** theme to act as a HUB for information improving the public



image of this sector, whilst also acting as a BRIDGE relating to potential loan and grant opportunities.

- 3.6. Finally the **Consolidation** theme will build upon relationships with the service providers and customers of specialised services for hard to reach or vulnerable groups in the County, including those who require specialised services under the various programmes associated with those services, including Supporting People.
- 3.7. **Consolidation** in particular is an opportunity to celebrate the successes within the County, though this will not be the exclusive remit of this particular theme. As indicated at the start of this Progress Report, it is the intention of the Strategy to balance the positive and the negative to provide an accurate picture of what has been achieved and what is still yet to be done.
- 3.8. The work undertaken in Rhyl for example, under the Housing Renewal Area national initiative in West Rhyl, in the North Wales Coast Regeneration Area programme which encompasses the town, and in the 'Rhyl Going Forward' local strategy, bringing the Council together with a broad range of housing and other community interest bodies, is an vital example of what can be achieved. It is also an example of work that is very much still ongoing and likely to extend beyond the life of the proposed Strategy period 2013 to 2018. Both nationally in the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs, and locally in Corporate Plan, the commitment to tackling the deprivation in parts of Rhyl and upper Denbigh is important and will form part of the emphasis in eventual draft Strategy.
- 3.9. Similarly the **Consolidation** theme will also stress the importance of working with the rural communities in the County who often exist at a distance from main routes such as the A55, and areas designated for national regeneration funds. Both national and local documents recognise the need to meet rural needs where development may concentrate as much on understanding service needs, as dealing with physical improvements to properties. The Big Plan has its 5<sup>th</sup> objective targeted at rural issues, stating: 'Rural areas may not feature as deprived areas, but rural areas may suffer from poverty that is

hidden. For example, poverty of services, lack of employment and other opportunities.’ (DLSB, 2011, pg.28). The Strategy, both in the **Communication** theme and throughout will seek to ensure rural issues are given the prominence they require in the objectives set.

3.10. **Objective 1: Enhancing and making the most of the Existing Housing Stock**

3.11. The National Housing Strategy and the White Paper both place the improvement of existing housing stock as high priorities for Wales. The National Housing Strategy highlights the need to: (ii) Improve the quality and standard of all existing houses and rented accommodation, including their energy efficiency. (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.3). The White Paper contains a number of suggested new or strengthened powers, building for example on the enforcement actions available to the Council through existing measures such as the Housing Health & Safety Ratings System (HHSRS), enacted in Wales in 2006.

3.12. The White Paper summary states:

- (i) Increase the supply of new homes... by bringing 5,000 empty properties back into use.
- (ii) Improve the quality of existing homes, including their energy efficiency, through the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and other mechanisms. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.4)

Among the tools proposed in the White Paper is the potential for local authorities to apply higher Council Tax charges on long term empty properties and within the Paper is further detail and examination of more recent national schemes such as the ‘Houses into Homes’ programme which seeks to allow property owners to access loans in order to improve properties for sale or rent.

3.13. The Council, in partnership with other agencies, notable North West Wales Housing with regards to the Empty Homes Strategy, and in the use of both Rural and Coastal Housing Enablers has had successes over the 2007 Strategy period in bringing empty homes back into use as open market properties and affordable housing. This commitment was reflected in the 2007 Strategy and is given similar status in the Corporate plan which states:

- We will ensure that more empty homes are brought back into use.
- We will focus on derelict and eyesore sites in our communities to ensure they are redeveloped to meet the housing needs of the community.
- We will ensure that our council housing meets the Welsh Housing Quality Standard and is sustained to that standard over the course of the Housing Stock Business Plan. (Denbighshire CC, 2012, pg,12)

3.14. In order for the Council to meet these obligations, to utilise the powers available, and those potentially to follow the White Paper as the legislation is agreed, it must continue to enhance the relationships it has already with providers who have assisted in bringing empty properties back into use. Furthermore it must build on existing expertise relating to fund and grant applications, either for monies it controls itself or that is available through other agencies, to develop the HUB role detailed in the **Communication** theme. By doing this, the Council and the Housing & Communities Development team specifically, can act as the BRIDGE between the private sector home owners and landlords and other agencies in the County and beyond to maximise the potential improvements to the stock. The Corporate Plan Annual Delivery Document for 2013-14 states it will 'Introduce re-payable loans to allow home owners to improve living conditions.' (Denbighshire CC, 2013, pg.10) It is vital the Council explores both how it can direct funds and how it can help interested parties in the County to access other funding streams in order to maximise the return of empty properties to better use, and to enhance standards in the housing sector.

3.15. Similarly the Welsh Housing Quality Standard as a measure of improvement should be applied across the housing tenures in the County. The National Housing Strategy states:

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard does not apply to private houses but the need for improvement is similar. Encouraging owners to do this can be difficult, particularly where their financial means are limited. (WAG, April 2010, pg.12)

While the Council must continue its pledge to improve its own social housing stock to the Standard (and progress in this area will be included in the Draft Strategy), acting as a HUB for intelligence and as a BRIDGE for loan and

grant applications should extend to applying the Standard to private sector housing, both owner occupied and rented. There are a number of national schemes operated and many of these are highlighted in the White paper. For example, the NEST scheme to tackle Fuel Poverty and the measures taken by the Welsh Government itself:

We are also taking action to ensure that people benefit from UK-led initiatives such as the new Energy Company Obligation, which will replace the Carbon Emission Reduction Target (known as “CERT”) and the Community Energy Savings Programme (known as “CESP”), and the Green Deal. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.45)

- 3.16. It is accepted that the Council is experiencing increasing pressures on its budgets as these budgets are simultaneously cut. With regards to renewal area grants, energy efficiency, improved Standards, Empty Homes etc., being able to accurately direct home owners to the appropriate internal or external funding sources, assisting with such applications by using the intelligence at the Council’s disposal, is one way in which the Housing & Community Development team could truly and directly enhance its strategic housing role.
- 3.17. **Objective 2: Working with the Private Rented Sector to help landlords and tenants**
- 3.18. As noted in the **Communication** theme, the Council has a role to play, in partnership with the Private Rented Sector, in seeking to enhance public perceptions of private renting and private landlords. The gains in West Rhyl for example, often working with private landlords and Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMO) have sought to create:

... a sustainable housing market in West Rhyl where the requirement for ongoing public investment in the private housing stock and general physical environment is significantly reduced and the area become **one of housing choice rather than need**<sup>3</sup>; (DCC, November 2011, pg.6)

---

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis in bold from the original text.

As with all such relationships, the actions of a few poor landlords can taint the perception of the whole sector, and this is as true in Denbighshire as it is elsewhere in Wales.

3.19. The White Paper addresses this issue and proposes to:

- Legislate for a national, mandatory, registration and accreditation scheme for private landlords, lettings and management agents based on agreed Codes of Practice, and ensure every tenant has a written tenancy agreement.
- Use the accreditation scheme to promote the Green Deal and other energy efficiency initiatives. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.51)

While there has been some resistance to this in the consultation following the White Paper, there is an acceptance that voluntary accreditation only tends to pick up those landlords interested in being accredited and recognised as good landlords; thereby missing those whose actions truly merit closer inspection.

3.20. The White Paper recognises the complexity of the sector, showing the wide range of potential landlord types:

- (i) Business landlords - letting provides most of their income and they see their property as an investment.
- (ii) Sideline investor landlords - let property as a part-time activity and typically own a small number of rental properties.
- (iii) Sideline non-investor landlords – have become a landlord for varying reasons e.g. inheriting a property.
- (iv) Institutional landlords - large-scale, often corporate organisations, who own and rent property as part of their business.

There is a lack of data on private landlords in Wales. It has been estimated that in England and Wales, there are 700,000 landlords. Of these, just over two per cent belong to professional organisations. The sector is thought to be dominated by small scale landlords. Research suggests that around a third of landlords own only one property, 65 per cent own fewer than 10 properties. Two-thirds of private rented dwellings are thought to be owned by individuals with the remaining one-third split between companies and organisations. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.48)

For the Council, the challenge is to consider what it can do to make private renting now an attractive choice; particularly as the evidence shown earlier in the profiling example identifies this is a growing sector.

- 3.21. The Council already has enforcement and monitoring powers, or access to existing models, in the HMO Licencing, the HHSRS, Tenancy Deposit Scheme, and the Voluntary Landlord Accreditation Scheme. The Council could consider, for example, introducing a County-wide standard tenancy agreement pro forma for use by the private sector based on its own agreements and developed in conjunction with local Registered Social Landlords. There are examples of Registered Social Landlords working with Private Sector landlords in Wales which could be explored.
- 3.22. Evidence presented to the National Assembly for Wales Communities and Culture Committee during 2010 and 2011 relating to Making the Most of the Private Rented Sector identified a need for private rent to begin to compete with the ‘... security of tenure, low rents, high standards of management and maintenance and accountability.’ (National Assembly for Wales, February 2011, pg.15) While the report recognised this would be a difficult task for the private sector to achieve quickly, it should be the role of the Council, as it waits for the White Paper to become law, to actively seek partnerships and enhancements in the private rented sector in order to begin to afford tenants in this sector the access to engagement, security, and higher standards social tenants already enjoy.
- 3.23. It is important to note, with regards to private, social and specialised landlords, that the last few years have seen significant upsets in both sectors where services have come near to collapse in areas where traditionally such failures would not have been expected. The near-collapse until their rescue of the Southern Cross Healthcare in 2011, providing care home accommodation, and more recently the take-over bail out of the Cosmopolitan Housing Group, which provided general needs and student accommodation, shows even providers in oversubscribed markets are not immune from trouble. Furthermore such a major collapse would be detrimental not only to the residents of these organisations, but also to the wider sector. The **Communication** theme calls on the Council to engage with external partners

and to be a source of intelligence. Under **Consolidation**, as much as the Council must involve itself in the private sector to enhance those relationships, it must also apply the same principles of being an active partner with the larger social housing and care providers in the County to ensure continuity not only of standards but also of service.

**3.24. Objective 3: Ensuring effective leadership and partnership in delivering Specialised Services**

3.25. The Council, directly, through partnerships and other mechanisms assists in providing services to a number of hard to reach and vulnerable communities, households and individuals. The White Paper states:

Local authorities have a particularly important role to play. They deliver essential housing services direct to the public but they also have a vital strategic housing role. There is scope for further improvement in both. We want to see greater collaboration between authorities, including the sharing of expertise and limited resources. Some forward-looking authorities are already working in this way. Informed by household projections, establishing local housing needs and ensuring planning mechanisms to address these is perhaps one of the most critical roles for local authorities. Addressing need is not just about building new homes. It also involves considering the extent to which their strategies meet the needs of different groups, including demand for adapted and accessible housing. It should also consider the broader accommodation and support needed to help people. This includes specialist support services, refuges to support women escaping domestic violence, and other forms of accommodation, for example, to prevent rough sleeping. (WG, May 2012, pg.20)

The importance of the Council acting as a HUB relating to engagement, services and intelligence has been established, as has its role as a BRIDGE with the public and private sectors. With regards to specialised services, national documents such as the Welsh Government's 2013 Standards for Improving the Health and Well-being of Homeless People and Specific Vulnerable Groups highlight the need for integrated services underpinned by good intelligence and partnership work for groups identified in the context of this particular set of national Standards as the:

- homeless
- asylum seekers and refugees (for the first two years following granting of refugee status)
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Substance Misusers



- EU migrants who are homeless or living in circumstances of insecurity or who are vulnerable to homelessness. (Welsh Government, April 2013, pg.2)

3.26. Within the Draft Strategy and in the action plan to follow it, examination of specific tasks and measures relating to older people, disabled people, gypsies and travellers, as well as communities under the black and minority ethnic descriptor will be detailed in line with current legislation, regulation and good practice. For the purpose of this Progress Report, the overarching principles of addressing the needs and demands of these groups are evidenced in the National Housing Strategy under the 'Better Services to Improve People's Lives' theme, particularly with regards to 2 of the priorities in this area:

- (v) Do as much as possible to prevent homelessness but where it occurs, provide efficient services to help people to find accommodation.
- (vi) Provide housing-related advice, guidance and support, including financial and debt management advice, to help people to stay in their homes and to help them to make best use of their income. (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.16)

Both are underpinned by the details of the **Communication** theme presented in this Progress Report and require the Council to have in place the relationships and agreements required to assist households and individuals as they become vulnerable and, if they are unable to prevent issues arising, to aid them when they do become vulnerable.

3.27. Furthermore, with regards to the latter of the National Housing Strategy priorities, the current economic climate, and the evolving impact of Welfare Reform, mean the importance of the Council's role as a HUB for information and a BRIDGE relating to loans and grants must also extend to directly helping not only vulnerable and those requiring specialised care, but all residents who may be experiencing various pressures relating to housing. The Council recognises this in the Corporate Plan, stating: 'We will adapt the level of support we offer our customers in light of the UK Government's welfare reforms.' (Denbighshire CC, 2012, pg.12) While it is vital that specialised services are directed at those most in need of assistance, relying again on good engagement, a 'See Through' service, and good intelligence, developing these services on a basis of applicability and access to a broad range of



potential customers should be a guiding principle in their design. Such adaptability would mean those services designated in the Draft Strategy will be able to meet a changing environment of financial and social pressures.

- 3.28. The need for such adaptability as well as directed and targeted services can be seen in the Welsh Government's 2009 Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales, as well as the Wales Audit Office's 2010 Housing services for adults with mental health needs. Both call for closer cooperation and intelligence sharing between agencies as well as better relations between local authorities and the private rented sector which is often relied upon to take up the slack when the need for accommodation has to be met. It is important, in the development of better relations with the private rented sector, that the Council applies the standards and good practice detailed in national documents relating to specialised services and those aimed at vulnerable people and households to the private sector as well as to specialised care providers.
- 3.29. With regards to adaptability, a one-size-fits-all approach is equally unhelpful. It is not always the case that specialised accommodation is required, either in the public or the private sector. Therefore the Council must ensure provision is made to assist communities, households and individuals with particular social, physical or cultural needs to live in a manner suited to them. For example, with regards to vulnerable people, the Corporate Plan is has a clear priority that encapsulates many of the objectives proposed in this Progress Report as well as underlying the importance of choice in the services and options residents are able to access:

Priority: Vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible

Vulnerable People can live as independently as possible

- We will develop two or three additional extra care housing schemes across the county.
- We will continue to develop our reablement service, which supports people to accommodate their illness by learning or relearning, daily living skills.
- We will develop our programme of providing assistive technology to support adults to remain safe and independent.
- We will work with local organisations to develop community-based activities that help people to remain active and independent.

- We will adapt homes to meet the needs of disabled residents, and reduce the time it takes to deliver disability facility grants  
Vulnerable people are protected
- We will work with health, the police and the voluntary sector to further develop early intervention approaches to protecting vulnerable adults, children and families.
- We will ensure that vulnerable people at risk of becoming homeless have access to suitable and appropriate accommodation. (DCC, 2012, pg.10)

Many of these points will have come originally from the Housing & Community Development team in the consultation for the Corporate Plan and it is important that these same principles are carried through into the Draft Strategy.

- 3.30. Finally, with regards to the objectives set out in the **Communication** theme and here in the **Consolidation** theme, examination of national documents and recommendations, and evidence of schemes which have worked well in the region and the County, rely on the Council working closely with partners within and without the County. This has often included employing or partly supporting (through grants etc.) dedicated officers for specific tasks. Recent national, regional and local documents all make recommendations relating to specific officers dedicated to specific tasks, particularly around specialised care services and targeted areas such as landlord relations. However, in a time of budget cuts and efficiencies, detailed in the Corporate Plan and beyond, it is not viable for the Council and the Housing & Community Development team in particular, to seek out new staff for every demand, or to take staff off current roles in order to fulfil new ones.
- 3.31. Therefore, it is important for the Council to include in the roles detailed in the **Communication** and the **Consolidation** themes to explore funding streams and cross-boundary partnerships where specific projects requiring dedicated officers can be shared between organisations to both share the cost load and gain the benefit of a wider working relationship likely to afford a level of continuity locally and regionally. Building on the types of partnership work already evidenced in recent documentation will allow the Council to deploy its strategic housing role more effectively and more inclusively and will benefit

the development of the objectives to be detailed in the final proposed theme of the Draft Strategy; **Construction**.

### Local Housing Strategy Theme 3:

**Construction:** To ensure new homes meeting the needs, demands and aspirations of Denbighshire's residents are built and help to contribute to the economic strength of the County

#### 4.1. Rationale

4.2. The final theme is the most direct, **Construction**. Of the 3 themes it is also the one easiest to associate with a positive action and as with **Consolidation** it builds on the objectives detailed in the **Communication** theme. It also further develops those objectives detailed under the **Consolidation** theme with regards to the Council acting as a BRIDGE for loans and grants, and closer partnership work and the need for choice and adaptability.

4.3. The **Construction** theme will consider the need to build new homes directed by the housing needs and demand intelligence the Council has gathered and must capitalise on through the HUB model proposed in the **Communication** theme.

4.4. **Construction** will also provide an objective relating to ensuring the County maintains access to national regeneration funds as well as exploring new and innovative forms of funding and partnerships with both the public and private sector.

4.5. Finally the **Construction** theme will detail how the broader social and economic benefits of regeneration and new builds, as well as developments and improvements in all the tenures described in the **Consolidation** theme can be used to improve access to work, wellbeing, and quality of life in the County.

#### 4.6. Objective 1: Building new homes to meet recognised need and demand

4.7. The National Strategy Housing Strategy contains the theme 'More Housing, More Choice' which described in 2010 the unstable nature of the house building industry in Wales:

Despite action to support the industry, house building has reduced dramatically because of the recession. That said, progress has still

been made on increasing the number of affordable homes in Wales. In 2007-08 and 2008-09, another 4,235 affordable homes were built, which is more than half way towards the target of an extra 6,500 homes by 2011. (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.9)

Despite the downturn, the Welsh Government was able to deliver the 6,500 home commitment, and now has a new target, detailed in the White Paper, to

- (i) Increase the supply of new homes: a) by 7,500 new affordable homes, of which 500 will be co-operative homes and 500 will be built on surplus public sector sites, and b) by bringing 5,000 empty properties back into use. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.4)

4.8. The new target is to be met by the end of the current Welsh Government's period in office (2015) and the White Paper and ministerial statements associated with the target are linked to various innovations and new models for partnership and funding which will be considered in brief in this Progress Report and in more detail in the Draft Strategy. Meeting such an ambitious target in a time of austerity will not entirely be a case of finding new money for new builds, as recognised in the priority detailed above where delivering the overall target of 12,500 homes relies on two fifths of these being restored empty properties.

4.9. Within the national debates, as evidenced in the Welsh Government 2011 report, Meeting the Housing Challenge: Building a consensus for action, a precursor to the White Paper, the current economic climate has forced a rethink of the terms and references used in the housing sector:

The term "affordable housing" has long been used as a substitute for "social housing" but is being used by some in a broader sense; that is, to describe a home that someone can afford, based on their income and circumstances. In reality, this is "affordability" and the two terms should not be confused. Our commitment to social housing has not changed. Indeed, in the current economic circumstances, our resolve to help those whose needs cannot be met by the housing market is even greater.

"Affordability" is different to affordable housing and arguably, is a function of supply and demand. But several factors affect it. The combined effects of the economic downturn, possible employment losses and rising prices already mean that many individuals and families, whether renting or owning, are struggling to meet their

housing costs. Central to our purpose is not only increasing the supply of housing but equally, a commitment to enhancing the help that is available to people to cope with these pressures and the potential impact on their lives. (Welsh Government, December 2011, pg.4)

The need for this form of revaluation was evident in the 2011 Update produced by the Housing Team for the Council which recognised the need to balance a statistical need and demand for new housing with the equal need ‘...for local authorities to create a planning environment which encourages developers to invest in new housing for the open market in order to then facilitate realistic affordable housing targets.’ (Glyndŵr, June 2011, pg.6)

4.10. The requirement for a progressive approach to the direction of housing policy decisions is reflected in the Corporate Plan which states:

The housing market in Denbighshire will offer a range of types and forms of housing in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of individuals and families

- We will introduce planning policies that ensure a suitable mix of housing throughout the county.
- ...
- We will explore options with social landlords and the private sector for investment in new housing provision.
- We will develop a range of housing opportunities for young people across the county.
- We will develop a range of low cost affordable housing options for rent and sale for local people. (DCC, 2012, pg.12)

4.11. Furthermore the Council will also need to provide new accommodation for specific sections of the County population, reflecting demographic changes and the needs of vulnerable groups, as recognised in the 2010 Integrated Partnership Needs Assessment produced in preparation for the BIG Plan by the Denbighshire Local Services Board:

Need 9: Housing:

- Denbighshire needs more affordable housing and housing that will be suited to the needs of an aging population and vulnerable adults (such as those with mental health problems), who are likely to be living independently. Young people’s housing needs are also great and vulnerable young people’s support needs generally are often great (e.g. help to get back in to work or training). (Denbighshire Local Services Board, 2010, pg.67)

The need for these forms of accommodation, as with the White Paper priority relating to both new build and the restoration of empty homes, does not have

to rely entirely on new builds. However it will rely on partnerships and innovations that require a clear and well managed housing and planning policy to underpin future developments.

4.12. Therefore, the Draft Strategy will need to incorporate the latest policy statements produced by the Council, informed by national planning and housing guidance. The encapsulation of these will be contained in the final version of the Council's Local Development Plan which, according to the latest Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2012 will be in place in during the early period of the 2013 Strategy period.

4.13. **Objective 2: Seeking out new Innovations in investment and regeneration opportunities**

4.14. To meet the ambitious national target the Welsh Government has launched and plans to bring about a series of new financing and investment opportunities that draw together public and private funding arrangements on order to encourage housing development. For the County, meeting its share of the national target through the planning period and new build delivery targets in the Local Development Plan will require close examination of the schemes proposed by the Welsh Government and the innovations it details in the White Paper, for example, relating to projects such as Ely Bridge in Cardiff.

4.15. Prior to the White Paper, the National Housing Strategy recognised the need to '(ii) Increase the level of private sector investment in housing' (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.3). And the White Paper, echoing the issues raised with regards to creating a suitable planning environment for encouraging house building detailed in the 2011 Update, states:

We must also look deeper at what lies behind the problem of housing supply. (...)We recognise factors which may be preventing stakeholders from contributing to increasing supply. House builders identify negative land values, the requirements of Section 106 agreements and building regulations as having potentially negative impacts. Continual dialogue is essential to resolve these issues in a way that supports our common economic, social and environmental objectives. (Welsh Government, May 2012, pg.19)

The Council must therefore continue to engage in dialogue with house builders and commissioning organisations (such as Registered Social

Landlords) to ensure the delivery of the new homes needed. This will likely require examining how the affordable housing requirements on a site by site basis can be best delivered. The Draft Strategy will consider these in light of national as well as regional good practice. For example Flintshire County Council's approach to gifted homes on development was recognised by the Chartered Institute for Housing Wales in 2011 as an example of progressive engagement to overcome barriers associated with Section 106 agreements.

4.16. The White Paper also suggests different forms of housing project delivery, including co-operative housing as part of the development of a portfolio of pioneering projects for the Welsh housing sector. Furthermore, the White Paper and the Infrastructure Investment Plan highlight the need to seek other forms of funding as the ability of the Council to rely on traditional sources such as the Social Housing Grant continues to diminish: 'Using innovative finance approaches, where they offer value for money and are appropriate to use.' (Welsh Government, 2012b, pg.12)

4.17. While not all forms of new project types or financing streams may be appropriate for the County, for example the Ely Bridge Scheme relies on a certain mass of housing before it is viable and therefore precludes its use on smaller sites, it is vital for the Council to explore the avenues open to it. The Infrastructure Investment Plan goes on to detail:

#### Priorities

- £6m to expand the successful Welsh Housing Partnership, leveraging in an investment of £30m in total to deliver 280 family homes for intermediate rent.

...

- And, working with RSLs, launching a Welsh Housing Bond. We are committing £4m a year of funding for thirty years to support a Bond issue of over £100m, which will finance delivery of more than 1,000 affordable homes over the next four years.

#### Also we will

- Developing new and innovative ways to access housing e.g. co-operative housing and mutual home ownership which has led to the establishment of a co-operative housing stakeholder group formed of key housing and co-operative experts to develop a strategic approach to this work. The co-operative housing stakeholder group is supporting a number of pioneer co-operative housing projects



and is exploring new sources of funding and any legislative barriers to developing this housing.

- Supporting the development and implementation of a Welsh Housing Bond through providing revenue funding.
- Support and evaluate innovative models such as the Welsh Housing Partnership and the development at Ely Bridge, Cardiff. (Welsh Government, 2012b, pg.16)

The viability of all these forms of schemes should be explored in the County with the relevant likely partners in order to best place the Council in a position to capitalise on future opportunities.

- 4.18. Similarly, the Council should not only explore those schemes and innovations detailed in documents like the White Paper. There are other examples available relating, for example, to investment opportunities with the large Pension Funds in the UK that see housing as a safer investment during economic periods of stagnation. Furthermore, the period of the 2013 Strategy may see the granting of tax and borrowing powers to the Welsh Assembly. The example of this in Scotland offers guidance on future opportunities for Wales and these too will be detailed in the Draft Strategy.
- 4.19. **Objective 3: Ensuring housing policy helps drive the local and regional economy.**
- 4.20. The placing of policy at the heart of the local and regional economy is perhaps one of the easier objectives to produce. The National Housing Strategy states:

- (vii) Make best use of investment in housing and other regeneration activity to create more jobs and training opportunities, and to improve the look and feel of communities, and the services and facilities available to local people.

...

Investment in housing and housing-related support services does not only meet people's needs for a home. It brings with it benefits for the economy, for jobs and training opportunities, for people's health and well being, and for the environment. It also helps tackle poverty and inequalities and opens up new opportunities for people. There is scope to do more. (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.3)

And this is further recognised in the White Paper in fig.7 which graphically demonstrated the relationship between housing policy and the wider benefits outputs and outcomes:

Diagram 1: Broad policy outcomes from investment in housing

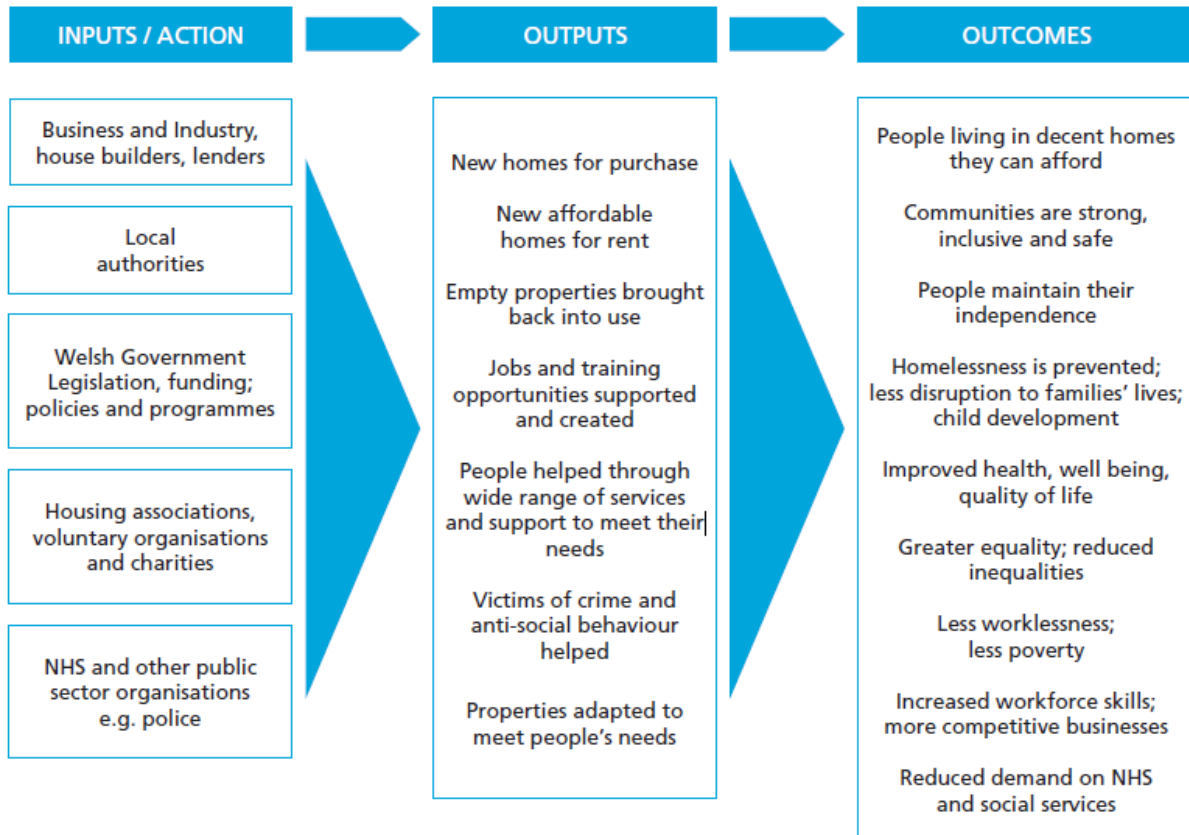


Fig.7: Broad policy outcomes from investment in housing. From Welsh Government's 2012 Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives in Communities.

4.21. The Draft Strategy must make sure issues relating to local jobs, procurement policy, investments and partnerships are directed at benefiting the residents of the County not only in providing homes and jobs, but also in securing long term quality of life improvement. The National Housing Strategy recognises that for every million pound invested in affordable homes, it generates work for 21 people over the year in construction, not including those then required for repair and maintenance. Furthermore the Welsh Government recognises the importance of an active housing sector in helping people out of poverty:

- (i) Providing jobs.
- (ii) Providing financial information and skills to manage income and expenditure, which helps people tackle problems associated with debt, increases their available income, and overcomes the anxiety, depression and worry that poverty and financial problems cause.<sup>19</sup>

- (iii) Showing how people can cut their energy bills, with the associated financial benefits, which helps tackle fuel poverty. (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2010, pg.19)

4.22. To ensure the maximum benefit for the County from not only new and improved homes as detailed in the **Construction** and the **Consolidation** themes, but also in the work and employment required to gain these advances, the HUB and BRIDGE models described in the Progress Report must be developed and maintained. Recent developments by the Welsh Local Government Authority relating to collaboration make clear the importance of broader partnerships, including with regards to procurement and service delivery:

- To share information on what works well and, where appropriate, reform processes in the light of what works best
- To develop and agree regional plans where the decisions of one local authority have an impact on another
- To share the procurement of goods and services - jointly developing and managing markets and supply chains in the knowledge that they transcend administrative boundaries
- To jointly deliver services where there are economies of scale to be obtained for transactional processes, greater resilience from larger working groups and quality gains to be achieved from greater specialisation (Welsh Local Government Authority, October 2008, pg.6)

It is vital the Council seeks out all opportunities to maximise the broad benefit of the projects it operates and supports, particularly as the investment funds it has to rely on are smaller and under more pressure than during the previous Strategy period.

4.23. There have been notable successes for the Council in the area of maximising the benefits, recognised broadly, for example, in the 2009 [A Review of Renewal Areas in Wales: Report Prepared by Jonathan Willis for the Welsh Assembly Government](#) which stated

It is evident that the improvements made in Renewal Areas have provided increased employment opportunities. Eighty four percent of local authorities who supplied information reported employment gains. Eight local authorities were able to demonstrate a reduction in unemployment in percentage terms of between 0.5% and 4%. (Willis, September 2009, pg.8)

And the Corporate Plan identifies the need to develop the local economy as one of its main priorities. Successfully deploying the Draft Strategy with the broad intention of social and economic improvement, as well as creating a stronger housing sector, will be a guiding principle for the 2013 Strategy.

## Bibliography

Bangor (February 2013) Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, Bangor University, Bangor

BBC (April 2013) 'NewBuy: Wales home purchase help scheme abandoned,' BBC News website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-22189232>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

BBC (March 2013) 'Households renting from private landlords rises to 15% - ONS', from BBC News website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21697044>, 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2013

BBC (May 2013) 'Social Housing: Welsh Government's annual £4m for 30 years,' BBC News website, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-22390895>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

Cardiff (January 2012) Impact analysis of existing homelessness legislation in Wales: A report to inform the review of homelessness legislation in Wales, Cardiff University, Cardiff

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd (2011) Business Plan 2011-2016, Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Denbigh

DCC (2007) Denbighshire Local Housing Strategy 2007 – 2012, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin.

DCC (December 2010a) Housing Stock Business Plan, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (December 2010b) Supporting People Strategy 2011-2014 & Supporting People Operational Plan 2011-12, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (2011) Local Tenant Participation Strategy 2011-2014, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (November 2011) Rhyl Going Forward: Neighbourhoods & Places Delivery Plan 2011/12, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (2012) Corporate Plan 2012-17: An excellent council, close to the community, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (2013) Corporate Plan 2012-17: Annual Delivery Document 2013-14, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (January 2013) LHS Brief, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC (March 2013) Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2012, Denbighshire County Council, Ruthin

DCC, 'Renewal Areas and Group Repair Schemes,' Denbighshire County Council website, <http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en-gb/DNAP-758DYS>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

DCC, 'Vision for Denbighshire 2025,' Denbighshire County Council website, <http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en-gb/DNAP-75NNAT>, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

DLSB (2010) Integrated Partnership Needs Assessment, Denbighshire Local Service Board, Ruthin

DLSB (2011) Denbighshire: The Big Plan 2011-14, Denbighshire Local Service Board, Ruthin

Glyndŵr (June 2011) Update of Housing Need, Demand and Affordability in the Local Housing Market Areas of Denbighshire, Glyndŵr University, Wrexham

JRF (February 2013) The Links Between Housing and Poverty, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York

LAW, 'Landlord Accreditation,' Landlord Accreditation Wales website, <https://www.welshlandlords.org.uk/landlord-accreditation/>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

NAW (February 2011) Making the most of the Private Rented Sector in Wales, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff

NEST 'Welcome to NEST', NEST website, <http://www.nestwales.org.uk/>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2013a

NEST 'Whole house assessment', NEST website, <http://www.nestwales.org.uk/Hard-to-heat-home/>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2013b

RCS, 'Rhyl City Strategy', Rhyl City Strategy website, <http://www.rhylcitystrategy.co.uk/about-us/partnership-board-consortium/>, accessed 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2013

WAG (October 2006) Preparing Local Housing Strategies: Revised Guidance to Local Authorities in Wales from the Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff.

WAG (2009) Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff.

WAG (April 2010) Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff.

WAO (November 2010) Housing services for adults with mental health needs, Wales Audit Office, Cardiff

- WAO (June 2012) Public Engagement in Local Government, Wales Audit Office, Cardiff
- WG (December 2011) Meeting the Housing Challenge: Building a consensus for action, Welsh Government, Cardiff.
- WG (2012a) Housing Associations in Wales- Improving the lives of tenants and communities: A descriptive study, Welsh Government, Cardiff.
- WG (2012b) Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs, Welsh Government, Cardiff.
- WG (February 2012) Analysing the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales : Stage 1 analysis, Welsh Government, Cardiff
- WG (May 2012) Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities, Welsh Government, Cardiff.
- WG (July 2012) City Regions: Final Report, Welsh Government, Cardiff
- WG (October 2012) Homes for Wales: A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities. Consultation-Summary of Responses, Welsh Government, Cardiff.
- WG (February 2013) Analysing the impact of the UK Government's welfare reforms in Wales : Stage 2 analysis, Welsh Government, Cardiff
- WG (March 2013a) 'Arbed – Strategic energy performance investment programme', Welsh Government website,  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/energy/efficiency/arbed/?lang=en>,  
accessed 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2013
- WG (March 2013b) Vibrant and Viable Places: New Regeneration Framework, Welsh Government, Cardiff
- WG (April 2013) Standards for Improving the Health and Well-being of Homeless People and Specific Vulnerable Groups, Welsh Government, Cardiff
- Willis, Jonathan (September 2009) A Review of Renewal Areas in Wales: Report Prepared by Jonathan Willis for the Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Assembly Government, Cardiff
- WLGA (January 2008) The Equality Improvement Framework for Wales, Welsh Local Government Association, Cardiff
- WLGA (October 2008) Working Together: Case Studies in Welsh Local Government, Welsh Local Government Association, Cardiff
- WLGA (August 2012) A Collaboration Toolkit, Welsh Local Government Association, Cardiff

WLGA (March 2012) Getting Started with your Local Housing Market Assessment: A Step by Step Guide, Welsh Local Government Association, Cardiff



Appendix 1:

## Feedback Report from Public Engagement Event, 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2013

The event, held in Ruthin on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June as part of the initial consultation for the Local Housing Strategy.

It was facilitated by Colin Stuhlfelder of Glyndŵr University who are assisting Denbighshire County Council in producing the Strategy Draft

**The main information gathering technique used was a ‘Cocktail Party’:**

**How the ‘Cocktail Party’ worked:**

This session will be an all-group activity.

- The Vision for the Strategy, each of the 3 Themes and the 3 Objectives for each theme are put up on flip chart sheets on the walls of a room and introduced by Colin one by one.
- The audience will be invited to take part of a pad of post-it notes and a marker/felt tip pen.
- They can then wander around the room, discussing the themes and adding their comments and suggestions to those sheets where they have a contribution to make. (Prompts for likely contributions are made at the start)
- Once the audience has completed their wander, or at an agreed time, the sheets will be examined and, with their help, the post-it notes will be repositioned on the sheets, allowing the audience to directly set the priorities from each sheet.
- Can Use **N**ow **S**ooner **L**ater for example.
- Once agreed, the post-it notes can be cellotaped into place to retain the input of the audience.

The notes to follow include the ‘headers’ from each sheet and the feedback placed on post it notes and then reorganised by the attendees.

**All the comments included here will be incorporated in the process and the full write up of a Strategy Draft.**

The Vision for Housing in Denbighshire 2013-2018:

**Everyone in Denbighshire should be able to live in well connected, vibrant, and viable sustainable communities in homes that meet their ongoing needs of good health, wellbeing and quality of life; whether they rent or own their homes.**

Feedback indicated the Vision was too long and too wordy, as was actually pointed out by Colin when the Vision was revealed to the attendees.

While the Cocktail Party went on, suggestions were made and Colin made some quick changes to the vision statement based on what was seen around the room.

On the vision above, the following words were struck out initially:

~~**Everyone in Denbighshire should be able to live in well connected, vibrant, and viable sustainable communities in homes that meet their ongoing needs of good health, wellbeing and quality of life; whether they rent or own their homes.**~~

Comments on what the Vision could include were:

- 1.1. Everyone deserves a home that meets their needs
- 1.2. For everyone in Denbighshire to be proud to live there because "it's a good place to live"
- 1.3. Good homes for good lives

As a result of these comments and those on other sheets, Colin proposed:

**Everyone is able to live in a place that truly meets their needs and aspirations.**

Or

**Everyone is able to live with pride in a home that meets their needs, and a community they feel a part of.**

And on reflection:

**Everyone is supported to live with pride in homes that meet their needs, in the vibrant and sustainable communities Denbighshire aspires to.**

Additional general comments relating to the Strategy were:

- 1.4. Seeking stable communities rather than transient ones

- 1.5. Housing standards should adhere to minimum legal requirements (on discussion this was found that this related to the Council's enforcement action with the private housing sector. Other attendees spoke of the need for some flexibility and adaptability in other sectors, for example dealing with the needs of residents with specialised requirements)
- 1.6. Need to treat all equally in all tenures and to suit all individual needs. There was a feeling that the needs of the most disabled were not being met, especially when they want to be part of the community.
- 1.7. There is a need to reconsider the staffing group who attends and responds to specialised housing meetings.
- 1.8. Needs to be higher level and perhaps varied staff, for example development officers, Empty Homes officers, managers etc.
- 1.9. Need to offer Disabled Facilities Grant or mirror the DFG in council properties and if not to mirror this mandatory grant
- 1.10. Council is very good at small adaptations but when it comes to adaptations for the most disabled, discrimination is occurring.

The General comments will be pooled with others presented on the various sheets used in the Cocktail Party.

## Housing Strategy Theme 1:

### **Communication:**

To actively engage with everyone in the County to provide efficient and well informed services

There were no comments relating to the theme itself. Instead attendees made suggestions for what it should include and how it could be approached.

- 1.11. The Website needs to be improved and the Tai Teg model was suggested. This website brings housing opportunities to the people of Anglesey and Gwynedd: <http://www.taiteg.org.uk/>
- 1.12. The internal communication in the Council also needs to be improved.
- 1.13. The community councils need to be listened to.
- 1.14. Regular “surgeries” should be held to include public and private sector housing, planning, regeneration, private sector practitioners etc. under one roof.
- 1.15. Considerations of the Public Sector and the Private Sector should be considered together.
- 1.16. Should all forms of communication so everyone knows what is happening. Should include radio; one stop shops; websites; posters etc.
- 1.17. Be creative and think outside of the box.

An additional general comment was:

- 1.18. Change public perception that private renting is bad.

Theme 1: **Communication:**

To actively engage with everyone in the County to provide efficient and well informed services

Objective 1.1.

“Broad and inclusive Engagement opportunities across all tenures”

Again there were no comments relating to the wording or the appropriateness of the Objective.

Comments on how to support this Objective were:

- 1.19. Positive action to reach out to minority groups, particularly those whose 1<sup>st</sup> language isn't English.
- 1.20. Link with relevant departments in the Council and other organisations.
- 1.21. Link to financial institutions
- 1.22. In order to involve all parties and residents to engage, it should be made “fun”
- 1.23. It should run “...across all occupiers”
- 1.24. Should send out annual questionnaires with Council Tax notices
- 1.25. To have a positive attitude to new ideas, “Don't always say ‘no it won't work’ as there is always a solution!”
- 1.26. Make full use of the County Voice newsletter.

Theme 1: **Communication:**

To actively engage with everyone in the County to provide efficient and well informed services

Objective 1.2.

“Developing the ‘See Through’ Housing Service”

There were a few alternative suggestions to the term ‘See Through’. These were using ‘Transparent’ (made by two attendees, one of whom suggested ‘See through = no substance’ or even the ‘Glass Housing Department’.

Comments on how to support this Objective were:

- 1.27. How will the department know what people want to see?
- 1.28. Training will be required around stigma and discrimination to help support vulnerable groups/clients
- 1.29. Those at the top need to understand what it is like being someone trying to use the service
- 1.30. Need to understand how to engage with those that are difficult to engage with.
- 1.31. Staff need to understand the needs of disabled people to engage and how to engage.
- 1.32. Soft skills such as approachability and listening should be sought.
- 1.33. Services need to be honest
- 1.34. Need to broadcast “We want to talk and listen”
- 1.35. Assess the impact of the Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) on services

Theme 1: **Communication:**

To actively engage with everyone in the County to provide efficient and well informed services

Objective 1.3.

“Gathering and deploying relevant data and intelligence to become the County HUB for Housing”

Again there were no comments on the Objective itself, rather suggestions were made around the approach and also the importance of the individual in the data.

Comments on how to support this Objective were:

- 1.36. Provide training for professionals in the field to disseminate the data.
- 1.37. How will this training be achieved?
- 1.38. Who will coordinate the data?
- 1.39. What is the relevant data and how will users of the service be informed?
- 1.40. Data needs to be reliable and accurate.
- 1.41. Keep it simple to include people.
- 1.42. Having the evidence of “need” to feed into other processes. Partnership working to share data and knowledge and the methodology to avoid duplication and meet monitoring needs.
- 1.43. Info on hidden housing need.
- 1.44. Philosophy and utilitarianism: Mustn’t forget the individual in the mass of data
- 1.45. Gathering data needs to start by determining which outcome you want to achieve.
- 1.46. Again SARTH was mentioned with the need for housing waiting lists to be up to date and have the correct information

## Housing Strategy Theme 2:

### **Consolidation:**

To build on the successes achieved, and to protect and improve the assets the County already has

Attendees had no comments on the use of the term Consolidation. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 2.1. Agreed that the Council has achieved grass root results (houses built) and good working systems and internal/external relationships over the last 10 years of “boom”. Need systems in place to continue if possible to maintain positive achievements.
- 2.2. Build on good work done in the past. Use national benchmarks on adapting properties
- 2.3. Start talking to other professionals again.
- 2.4. Promote schemes that have gone well.
- 2.5. Raise the profile of good schemes, keep pressure on empty homes owners; that Big Brother is watching
- 2.6. Need not to lose momentum
- 2.7. Again better communication is needed across the board, not just in one section and sending the right people to meetings.
- 2.8. Go across ‘artificial’ boundaries.
- 2.9. Create a stronger network to encourage more participants
- 2.10. Encourage projects to engage across the board; making the most of what we’ve got.
- 2.11. Need to ensure good spread of services throughout the County, not just Rhyl.



Theme 2: **Consolidation:**

To build on the successes achieved, and to protect and improve the assets the County already has

Objective 2.1.

“Enhancing and making the most of the Existing Housing Stock”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the Objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 2.12. Invest in all social housing stock to ensure suitable and flexible for housing needs
- 2.13. Consider changing family homes to provide house shares, one suggestion to meet the adaptations required to meet Welfare Reforms.
- 2.14. Disabled Facilities Grants should be made available across all tenures so that adaptations are fair and equitable. Currently not allowing adaptations over £5,000.
- 2.15. Again SARTH needs to be considered to make sure the register is accessible. Includes examining the care model SPA (Single Point of Access)
- 2.16. Should consider decommissioning some of the older Sheltered Stock, built in the 1970s and unsuitable for the demographic and aspirational shift amongst older residents.
- 2.17. Should ensure compliance with existing sheltered schemes i.e. mandatory licencing.

Theme 2: **Consolidation:**

To build on the successes achieved, and to protect and improve the assets the County already has

Objective 2.2.

“Working with the Private Rented Sector to help landlords and tenants”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the Objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 2.18. With regards to finance affordable loans should be made available for the private sector to improve the stock, including those with mortgages to make more of the stock and to help those struggling with payments (mortgage rescue)
- 2.19. This may require moving from a grants to a loans model.
- 2.20. More Homebuy and part owned schemes.
- 2.21. More support for landlords to encourage them to take on tenants.
- 2.22. Provide support and advice to landlords
- 2.23. More effective regulation
- 2.24. Strengthen landlord forums
- 2.25. Regional support for landlords
- 2.26. Hold seminars to inform private landlords about current policies and available grants
- 2.27. Change the perception that ‘DSS’ and young people don’t pay their rent.
- 2.28. Create mutually beneficial engagement in the private rented sector, including incentives.
- 2.29. Work with landlords to make them more aware of vulnerable groups and dispels any myths around particular client groups e.g. mental health.

Comments relating to DFG were repeated here from other sheets. Some of these comments were expanded to include:

- 2.30. Housing register should include adapted properties for matching people up to properties.
- 2.31. Work closer with social services in these cases.
- 2.32. Encourage private individuals to Buy to Rent specialised housing.

Theme 2: **Consolidation:**

To build on the successes achieved, and to protect and improve the assets the County already has

Objective 2.3.

“Ensuring effective leadership and partnership in delivering Specialised Services”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the Objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 2.33. Better internal communication in the Council to prioritise specialist services needed.
- 2.34. Needs to be clear in the strategy.
- 2.35. Collecting data with partners to anticipate future needs
- 2.36. Remembering that one solution does not fit all.
- 2.37. Right people with appropriate level of responsibility around the table.
- 2.38. Use success stories to develop schemes
- 2.39. Include development experts at the start
- 2.40. Address gypsy and traveller needs

### Housing Strategy Theme 3:

**Construction:**

To ensure new homes meeting the needs, demands and aspirations of residents are built and help to contribute to the economic strength of the County

Attendees had no comments on the use of the Theme itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 3.1. All homes should be covered
- 3.2. Need wheelchair accessible family homes
- 3.3. Need to consider equality in construction, needs of most severely disabled for example.
- 3.4. Additional 1 bedroom properties to redress the imbalance.
- 3.5. Done in consultation with tenant and residents' groups.
- 3.6. Layout of new homes could help foster an environment with a strong 'community spirit'
- 3.7. Local Development Plan allocated land for housing based on market need and demand. Work with planning in the preparation of the annual housing land availability survey to consider bringing sites forward.
- 3.8. Where are the links to planning policy and the Local Development Plan?
- 3.9. Ensure the diverse needs of the whole county are taken into account
- 3.10. Recognise impact of large developments on rural communities.

Theme 3: **Construction:**

To ensure new homes meeting the needs, demands and aspirations of residents are built and help to contribute to the economic strength of the County

Objective 3.1.

“Building new homes to meet recognised need and demand”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 3.11. How far can you forecast need?
- 3.12. Build lifetime homes
- 3.13. No good just building homes with level access and downstairs toilets if property does not also have wheelchair access.
- 3.14. Small adaptations that allow people with disabilities to access flats, e.g. first floor.
- 3.15. Look at adapting and retrofitting properties rather than just building new ones.
- 3.16. Think about the outside environment
- 3.17. Ensure the quality, location, type lead to a pride in living in Denbighshire
- 3.18. Ensure planning policies allow this
- 3.19. Use the Adopted LDP with regards to allocated land.
- 3.20. Meet the demand for single person accommodation
- 3.21. Adaptation of large properties to excellent quality shared housing like the John Street example in Rhyl.
- 3.22. Welfare Reforms suggest the need for smaller properties.

Theme 3: **Construction:**

To ensure new homes meeting the needs, demands and aspirations of residents are built and help to contribute to the economic strength of the County

Objective 3.2.

“Seeking out new Innovations in investment and regeneration opportunities”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 3.23. Develop only affordable housing
- 3.24. Include ‘community’ in ‘new build’
- 3.25. Investigate and promote self build housing/work/sustainability
- 3.26. Shrinking town centres and the impact on housing on the periphery.
- 3.27. Priorities hard to deliver housing sites or regeneration sites. Mixed town centres could be housing sites?
- 3.28. Town centres will contract. Utilise empty shops (many originally homes) for new homes
- 3.29. Using brownfield sites and living over shops.
- 3.30. Empty homes is a great idea, could be developed for disabled people, people with mental health issues as secure tenure properties.
- 3.31. Tenure neutral supported housing schemes with options to Buy to Rent
- 3.32. Guardianship Scheme.

Theme 3: **Construction:**

To ensure new homes meeting the needs, demands and aspirations of residents are built and help to contribute to the economic strength of the County

Objective 3.3.

“Ensuring housing policy helps drive the local and regional economy”

Attendees had no comments on the use of the objective itself. Rather they made comments on what it should cover:

- 3.33. Relaxation in Welsh Government Development Quality Requirements so what is the priority? Houses for people!
- 3.34. Changes on building regulations will impact on the viability of projects thus less buildings in Wales
- 3.35. Need to be able to measure these innovations
- 3.36. Improved housing could drive well being and the economy.
- 3.37. Involve residents and look at what has worked elsewhere.  
[www.denbighshirehousing.co.uk](http://www.denbighshirehousing.co.uk)
- 3.38. Build in social clauses to building contracts to keep it local
- 3.39. Should look to only use locally approved contractors
- 3.40. Encourage self build and link to college courses and apprenticeships

Housing Strategy:

What else should we add?

Housing Strategy

- 4.1. Housing waiting list: Only have one or two application forms and easy to understand criteria to get on to the list
- 4.2. Strategy should reflect what is and could happen on the ground. Needs to be achievable and not just a paper exercise.
- 4.3. Timely reviews 'are we on track'
- 4.4. Private sector rents top up.



Who should we be talking to?

- 4.5. Social services
- 4.6. Residents
- 4.7. Comparative English counties that have been successful
- 4.8. Supporting People
- 4.9. Shelter Cymru
- 4.10. Occupational Therapists
- 4.11. Private Sector
- 4.12. Neighbouring authorities
- 4.13. NWREN
- 4.14. "Everyone"
- 4.15. RICS Wales
- 4.16. Potential New developers
- 4.17. Specialist Housing Group (though this needs to have a re-jig of its membership so that higher level staff attend).
- 4.18. Anyone on the supply and demand chain in Denbighshire
- 4.19. Social service client groups
- 4.20. Housing professionals
- 4.21. Voluntary groups, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector
- 4.22. Young people leaving care (via Barnardo's)
- 4.23. Homeless services and organisations
- 4.24. Mental health services

This page is intentionally left blank

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>
<b>Lead Member/Officer:</b>	<b>Lead Member for Public Realm/ Head of Highways and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Head of Highways and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Improving our Highway/Public Realm Service Delivery Methods</b>

---

## **1. What is the report about?**

The current reorganisation of the Council's highway/public realm services delivery methods.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

On 18 December 2012 Cabinet decided how it wanted to reorganise the Council's highway/public realm services. This report outlines how those ideas are being developed and implemented, and gives the Committee an opportunity to question what has been done to date and/or to shape the final outcome.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

That members endorse the general direction of travel, and give any guidance they feel appropriate on anything else they would like to be considered/incorporated.

## **4. Report details**

### **4.1 Why was change felt to be necessary?**

The key aims, set out in the cabinet decision were;

- a) To engender a culture-shift via a well-planned and carefully managed change programme that puts the customer at the heart of how services are delivered
- b) To develop a strong management team that will deliver the change programme and manage continual improvement thereafter.
- c) To improve the Council's resilience when dealing with winter maintenance and emergency situations.
- d) To develop operational systems that are lean, efficient, and flexible.
- e) To engage positively with the national drive towards a regional transportation service.

In the months/years preceding the Cabinet report, the highways collaboration with Conwy had proved to be undeliverable. A side effect of the Conwy collaboration had

been that many modernisation/service delivery improvement ideas, had been held in abeyance, pending the (expected) implementation phase.

This left us with some catching up to do. Within Denbighshire, there were also a number of historical duplications and/or artificial demarcations across the work areas of the two internal services (highways & public realm), which needed to be removed, i.e. in the interest of overall efficiency.

#### **4.2 What service improvements are we aiming to deliver?**

The set up being established is shown diagrammatically in Appendix 1

We want the **strategic team** to focus on maximising the value we get from our highways-spend, by analysing road conditions and identifying/proposing the optimum maintenance treatments, in a systematic (i.e. planned and programmed) way. This will be particularly important in a time of reducing budgets

We want the new **Works Unit** to procure our works in the most cost effective manner. This may mean doing things like (for example); using local contractors, on work items that had previously been done in house. We intend to provide closer supervision of the works that we are paying for. This won't reduce our direct costs (it will increase them). However; this will provide better value for money overall, because the quality of the work will be higher and the work will therefore last longer.

Not only will we be "doing things right" (as per paragraph above), but the works unit will also be charged with making sure that we are far more careful about "doing the right things". For example; the presence of direction on site (e.g. via a clerk of works) can often result in a superior solution being built.

We want our **routine maintenance** activities to be undertaken by truly joined-up operational teams, with one point of contact controlling each team. This is often referred to as the Streetscene model.

The Streetscene model will allow us to balance our winter /summer service demands, and our urban/rural service demands. It will also increase our resilience when we are dealing with emergency situations. It is a service area where demand currently exceeds the resource levels. The development of new and innovative arrangements for dealing with this imbalance is therefore crucial, and it is important that this service area is managed effectively, with a strong customer focus.

Overall; there will be fewer service managers, with more delegation to front line teams. We are not proposing any significant reductions in the numbers of front line staff. The main thing we will be asking of our frontline staff is a commitment to flexibility (in their roles and their working patterns). If we can develop a lean and efficient workforce, working flexibly, that will be the best way to safeguard jobs.

#### **4.3 Where are we up to in the change process?**

We have appointed the **Strategic Highways** manager (Mike Hitchings), and the Highway Asset Manager (Tim Towers). There is another report to Communities Scrutiny (4 July 2013) that explains more about this arm of the service.

A brand new **Works Unit** has been established, bringing together three different work strands, i.e. procurement of county road schemes, the management of street lighting, and the design work for the Trunk Road Agency. The new Works Unit is managed by Andy Clark.

Brian Evans has been appointed as the **Routine Maintenance** Manager. His role is essentially that of a change-manager, and the need for this post will be reviewed after two years. The Streetscene managers have also been appointed (Mark Evans in the north, and Robin Jones in the south),

The next 6 weeks or so will be a transitional period, when the new appointees will be getting to know their new service areas, and the staff that they are likely to be working with. We are in the process of establishing a series of defined geographical areas, each with its own single point of contact. Over this period, we will be engaging with supervisors / chargehands and front line staff, in order to work out the best "supervisory configuration" for the Streetscene model.

The consultations and negotiations with front line staff are likely to take several months, and may not be completed in time for this year's winter maintenance season. However, we expect the whole process to be concluded by April 2014.

#### **4.4 How will we know whether the new systems are improving things?**

The longer term benefits to the highway network will include; fewer return visits to locations where work has already been done, and greater longevity on the works that we have procured/constructed. By definition; longevity can't be proven instantly, but our highway condition indicators will give a good indication of the progress that we are making. See the Highways Maintenance paper to this Committee (also 4 July 2013).

Streetscene issues are frequently at the forefront of the Council's interactions with the public and with members. The Streetscene benefits should be felt fairly quickly; with members having a "one stop shop" for many of the things that they get most customer contact about.

Customers should receive quicker and more definitive responses to any queries that they submit, and this is measurable.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Improving our Roads is identified as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2012-17.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Managing cost alone will not deliver significant financial benefits. We need to manage cost effectiveness instead. This is a key message from the systems thinking principles that we are using (see list of consultation documents – Appendix Two). So (for example); although there will be a reduction in the number of service managers, the main financial benefit will derive from better use of available resources.

There should be no adverse effects on other departments of the Council. There will be some demands, e.g. upon ICT to help us to eliminate paperwork at the frontline, but these will be self-financing.

The Service will also be in a better position to align itself with corporate priorities, for example in the fields of economic ambition and tourism.

**7. What are the main Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) implications?**

The creation of a strategic team will make it easier to identify and prioritise themes. This is outlined in the other highways report to today's scrutiny committee.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

List is given in Appendix Two

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Not obtained – update/information report only.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

Risks are being mitigated via widespread consultation, and major decisions are being challenged by a project team prior to those decisions being made.

Frontline risks are covered in today's Highways Maintenance report (to Communities Scrutiny)

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Highways Act 1980 & Section 2(1) of the Local Government Act 2000.

Articles 6.1 and 6.3.4(b) of the Council's Constitution

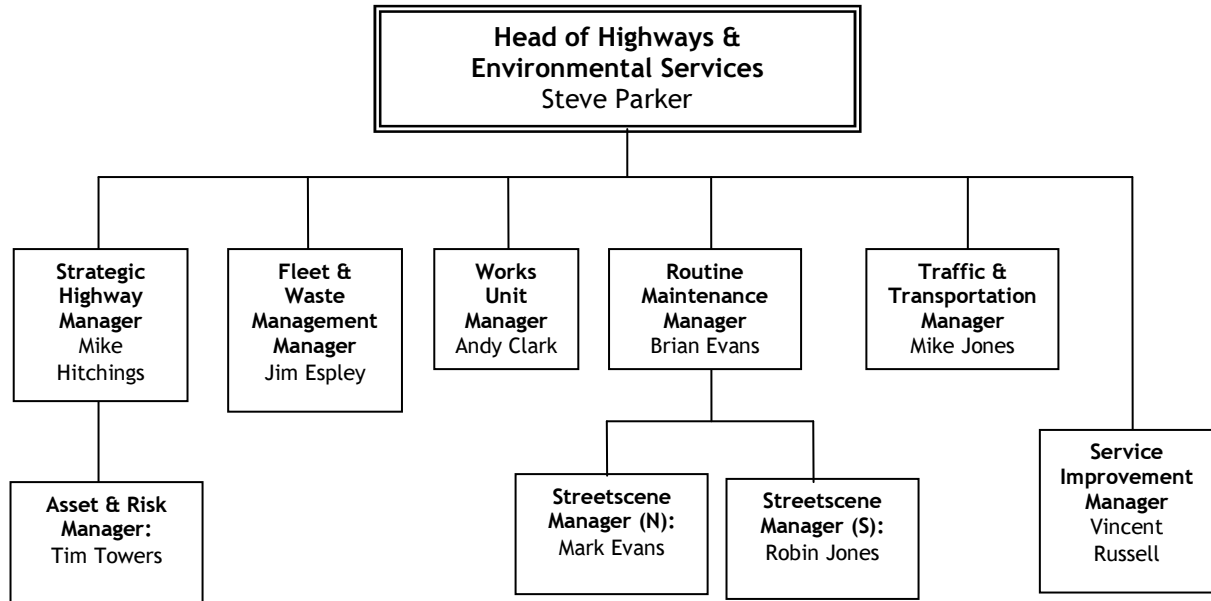
**Contact Officer:**

Head of Highways & Environmental Services  
Tel: 01824 712123

**Highways / Public Realm Staff Structure**

*N.B. showing staff appointed to date ONLY – in the highways reorg. only.*

*– see consultation documents (Appendix 2) for details of wider structures*



## List of relevant documents

DATE	DOCUMENT
18 December 2012	Cabinet paper: Service structures – Highway & infrastructure service”
1 February 2013	Email to all councilors explaining proposed service blocks and their proposed functions etc. (Phase One consultation)
6 March 2013	Email to all councilors (Phase one consultation Outcomes) describing significant changes to service block proposals as a result of staff input
23 April 2013	Email to all councilors updating them on the Phase One appointments that had been made
11 June 2013	Email to all councilors forwarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minutes of the most recent meeting with Trade Unions,</li> <li>• details of systems thinking paper, prepared for meeting with the trade unions</li> <li>• Outcomes from Phase Two of the staff consultation</li> </ul>



<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>
<b>Lead/Officer:</b>	<b>Head of Highways and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Report Author:</b>	<b>Strategic Highways Manager</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Condition of the County's Highways</b>

---

## **1. What is the report about?**

To outline the present condition of the County's highways network and identify areas which require maintenance work including the parameters and methodology for developing a three year draft programme of works.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To provide information regarding the process for developing a prioritised work programme for highways maintenance and the appropriate timing of that work to enable it to be built into future service plans and budget setting processes.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

That Members note the progress made to date, provide observations, and support the process for determining the future prioritisation of work.

## **4. Report details**

### **4.1 How do we develop the programme?**

During recent years the development of the programme has become more evidence based and inclusive. The process is based on a number of condition indicators, views of the Network Manager and Area Engineers, consultation with Town and Community Councils, and discussion and agreement at Member Area Groups (MAGs).

### **4.2 What are the condition indicators?**

#### **4.2.1 SCANNER (Surface Condition Assessment for the National Network of Roads)**

Started for all classification of roads in 2005 and has been used as a statutory indicator since. The survey is undertaken annually by one surveying contractor for all local authorities but it doesn't cover the whole of network and is particularly poor on C/unclassified roads, the largest part of our network.

#### **4.2.2 SCRIM (Sideway-force Coefficient Routine Investigation Machine)**

Measures the wet skidding resistance and profile of the road surface and has similar coverage to the SCANNER survey. Due to the significance of this data it underpins the decisions on which roads to maintain.

#### 4.2.3 RCI – (Road Condition Indicator)

This is a local measure of the visual condition of all the roads in the county. The Council's Highways Supervisors inspect the highway on a regular basis. An example of the inspection regime is attached as Appendix A. This data was first collected in 2011 and is the best indicator of the condition of our highways as it is frequently updated and covers the entire network.

### **4.3 What are the steps in preparing the programme?**

4.3.1 The Town and Community Councils are requested to identify any potential maintenance schemes in their areas

4.3.2 Following review of the condition indicators the Network Manager and Area Engineers debate the potential programme and, taking account of the type of work required and the budget available will prioritise the potential works.

4.3.3 The programme is then reviewed with the information received from Town and Community Councils and presented to Members at the MAG Meetings.

4.3.4 The finalised programme is communicated widely and publicised in the local press and on the website. Regular updates are sent to Members and Town and Community Councils as works progress.

### **4.4 What have we done in the last few years?**

4.4.1 Since identifying Roads as a priority for 2009/10 Denbighshire has invested over £15 million in capital maintenance alone. The table in Appendix B analyses this investment over the main processes that are used.

4.4.2 In 2012/13 the Welsh Government announced the Local Government Borrowing Initiative (LGBI). Additional funding for infrastructure was provided for three years which increased the Council's investment in roads in 2012/13 by £1.9m (included above).

4.4.3 Denbighshire continues to recognise roads as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2012-17. Over £3.2 million (£1.3 million LGBI) is already earmarked for capital investment in roads in 2013/14 and the Council is anticipating a total investment of up to £10.4 million during the life of the plan.

### **4.5 What is the current state of the highway?**

4.5.1 The tables in Appendix C show the change in the SCANNER and SCRIM data between 2009 and 2013. Whilst the roads in poor condition (Plan Maintenance Soon) are on a downward trend on all road classifications it is very difficult to draw conclusions from the data. The survey does not cover unclassified roads or C roads that are less than 3.2 metres wide.

4.5.2 The gross replacement cost for the Council's carriageways alone is over £1 billion. The asset is always deteriorating due to traffic and weather and Denbighshire is not alone in facing the challenges of matching budgets to a

deteriorating network. In fact, in a national survey published in March this year the average length of time before roads are resurfaced in Wales is 107 years.

- 4.5.3 Fluctuations need to be viewed in comparison with other Councils to allow for the impact of the severe weather and levels of investment. Table 1 attached in Appendix D lists rural Local Authorities in Wales that are used by Denbighshire to compare performance for the Corporate Plan.
- 4.5.4 Table 2 in Appendix D details the changes in the Road Condition Indicator (RCI) from first data collection in 2011 to date. The index covers the entire network and is becoming the focus for development of the capital programme.

#### **4.6 What next?**

- 4.6.1 The draft programme will be developed for 2014/15 as previously. This will be presented to Members and be subject to consultation during the Autumn such that a finalised programme can be agreed early in 2014. This will allow adequate time for the procurement and forward planning of the work.
- 4.6.2 Subject to agreement, a strategy will be presented to a working group of Members detailing our future approach to Highways Asset Management. The Strategy will identify our approach to lifecycle planning, whole life costing, data management, and risk assessments.
- 4.6.3 A Policy document is already drafted which proposes significant changes to our response to potholes and other defects. It will also detail our inspection regimes and other minimum levels of service across a range of activities. This document will be consulted with Members during Autumn 2013
- 4.6.4 During the first quarter of 2014/15 the entire network will be prioritised based on the established principles. This document will identify the current state of each section of highway, proposed remedial work where necessary, and estimated costs.
- 4.6.5 The level of current backlog identified will form the basis of prioritised spend for 2015/16 and, together with sophisticated modelling techniques that demonstrates the impact of any investment or lack of investment, will form the basis of future funding decisions by Council.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Improving our Roads is identified as a priority in the Corporate Plan 2012-17.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

The Council has indicated the likely level of investment in roads in the Corporate Plan. This and any further investment would be subject to scrutiny by the Strategic Investment Group and be a part of the budget setting process.

Asset management and revenue highway maintenance processes are currently being reviewed and may release cashable savings which could be invested in roads through prudential borrowing.

**7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?**

The highways maintenance regime is designed to improve the overall safety of all road users. To support the council's equality objective it is important that physical access to services, transport, the built environment and open spaces improve. On-going consultation with older and disabled people has highlighted the lack of dropped kerbs as an issue that may have a disproportionate impact in relation to safety and accessibility for people with a physical impairment including mobility scooter and wheelchair users and lack of tactile paving for people with a visual impairment. We will develop and equality impact assess a programme of work and thus identify priority areas for dropped kerbs through continued consultation.

**8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

The report identifies the consultation that would take place during the process of developing the capital programme.

**9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

Investment in highways has been included as a corporate priority for several years and funded accordingly. The Corporate Plan aims to continue this and assumes funds will be made available for future years.

**10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

There is a risk to reputation linked with public perception of the condition of the highway linked to not addressing maintenance issues.

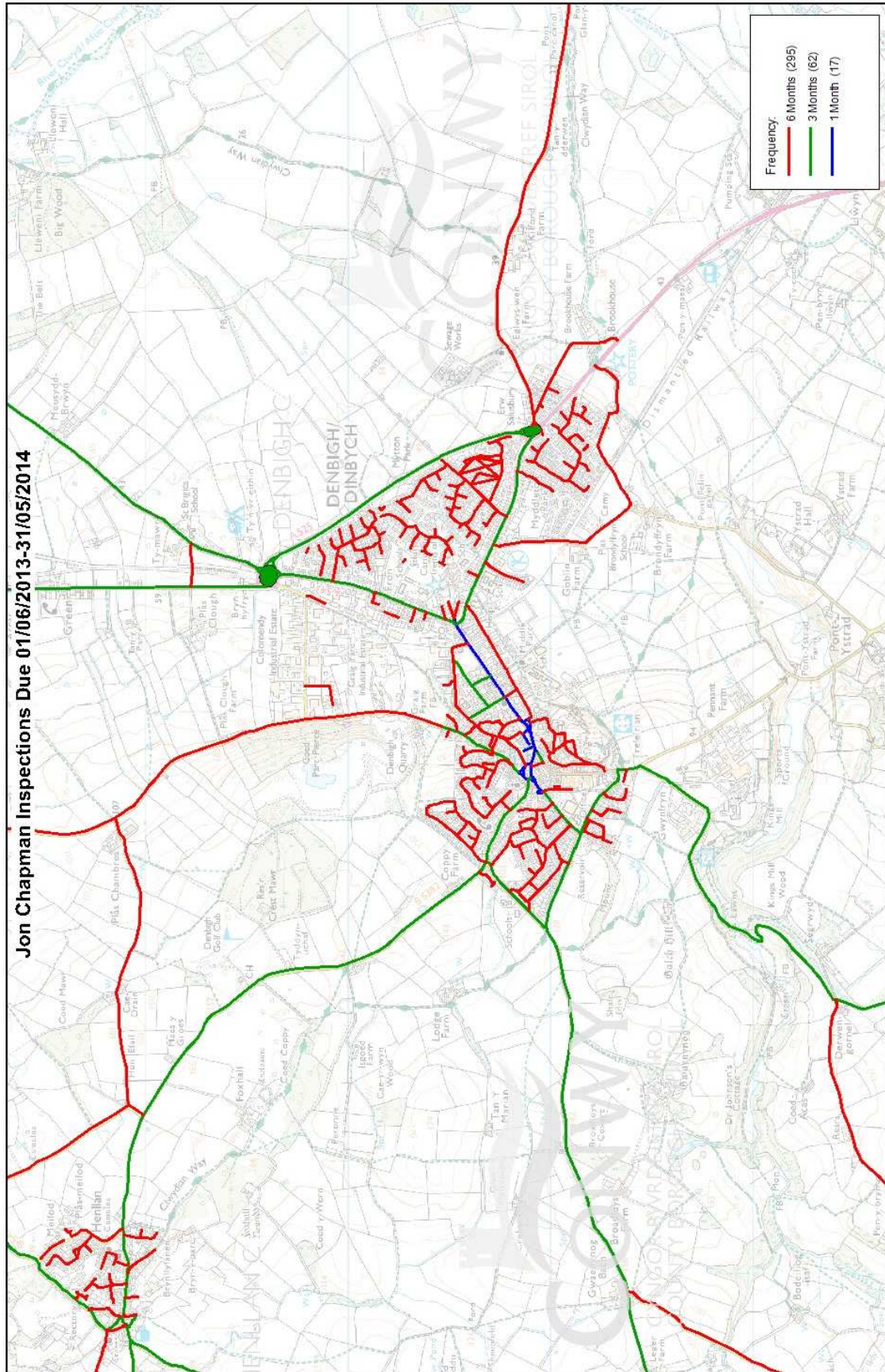
The main risk associated with development of the programme is that we fail to identify or tackle safety issues. This risk is minimised by the careful consideration of the various indicators described in the report.

The risks associated with delivery of the programme are linked to contractor availability and quality of the works. These risks are mitigated by early procurement through framework agreements and the employment of suitably qualified and experienced officers dedicated to delivering the programme.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Highways Act 1980  
Article 6 of the Council's Constitution

**Contact Officer:**  
Strategic Highways Manager  
Tel: 01824 706980



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.  
 Conwy County Borough Council 10020330 2012  
 No part of this map may be copied, reproduced, distributed or sold in any form or by any means without the prior written permission of Conwy County Borough Council.

Allychwrthyriadau hysbysu a Ddiswyddir y Cychwyn, Survey (peth aros) a ddiswyddir y Ordnance Survey ar ran Rhesolwr Llysof Eri Mawrdd © Harriant y Goron a erlyniad new aros all.  
 Cymhor Bwrdeistref Sirol Conwy 10020330 2012  
 Dim hysbysu aros all, ddiswyddir, ddiswyddir na gwerthu'r ddiswyddir heb i'w ddiplod partion mewn unrhyw ffurf.



**APPENDIX B****CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS**

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£
Resurfacing	1,283,089	1,880,144	4,386,870	1,968,604	9,518,707
Microasphalt	1,037,501	489,597	893,657	397,742	2,818,497
Surface Dressing	245,509	75,623	698,053	603,537	1,622,722
Patching*	299,657	119,235	600,533	83,756	1,103,181
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,865,756</b>	<b>2,564,599</b>	<b>6,579,113</b>	<b>3,053,639</b>	<b>15,063,107</b>

\*This is patching of other roads outside the Capital Works Programme

**APPENDIX C**

Road Condition (SCANNER Descriptions)	A Class (139.8 kms)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Generally Good Condition	72.9%	72.5%	70.5%	67.4%	68.5%
Plan investigation soon	22.1%	21.8%	23.2%	25.5%	25.8%
<b>Plan maintenance soon</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>7.2%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>

Road Condition (SCANNER Descriptions)	B Class (133.7 kms)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Generally Good Condition	56.6%	57.4%	60.4%	59.1%	59.1%
Plan investigation soon	33.6%	31.62%	28.2%	30.4%	31.7%
<b>Plan maintenance soon</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>11.4%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>9.3%</b>

Road Condition (SCANNER Descriptions)	C Class (> 3.2 mtrs) (521.6 kms)				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Generally Good Condition	49.1%	46.5%	46.0%	52.7%	53.6%
Plan investigation soon	40.5%	38.5%	37.7%	32.4%	32.5%
<b>Plan maintenance soon</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>14.1%</b>	<b>13.9%</b>

*NB There is also 620 kms of unclassified road in the County, totalling 1,415.1 kms..*

SCRIM (skid resistance)	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>7.31%</b>	<b>1.16%</b>	<b>9.07%</b>	<b>1.36%</b>
Acceptable	30.75%	8.92%	34.81%	10.59%
Good	61.94%	89.91%	56.12%	88.04%

TABLE 1

The percentage of principal (A) roads, non-principal/classified (B) roads and non-principal/classified (C) roads that are in overall poor condition		
	2010/11	2011/12
Carmarthenshire	11.99	15.40
Ceredigion	12.94	15.58
Conwy	9.82	9.86
<b>Denbighshire</b>	<b>13.10</b>	<b>11.19</b>
Gwynedd	5.95	6.42
Isle of Anglesey	10.36	11.48
Monmouthshire	8.09	9.57
Pembrokeshire	13.13	14.18
Powys	18.11	19.64
The Vale of Glamorgan	16.59	13.50

TABLE 2

AREA	ROAD LENGTH (KILOMETRES)	PERCENTAGE IMPROVEMENT IN RCI SINCE 2011	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL SPEND ON RESURFACING 2011 TO 2013	PERCENTAGE OF PROJECTED SPEND IN 2013
Prestatyn	80.3 (5.7%)	26.12%	4.09%	9.18%
Rhyl	88.3 (6.2%)	2.6%*	11.00%	11.67%
Elwy	252.7 (17.9%)	13.29%	12.79%	19.09%
Denbigh	311.3 (22.0%)	12.47%	15.42%	19.43%
Ruthin	451.6 (31.9%)	13.85%	33.77%	28.50%
Dee Valley	230.9 (16.3%)	6.80%	22.96%	12.12%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1415.1</b>	<b>12.08%</b>		

\* The reason this figure is low in comparison to the percentage of spend is due to the fact that the Coast Road has required considerable investment.



<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> July 2013</b>
<b>Lead Member / Officer:</b>	<b>Lead Member for Social Care and Children's Services Corporate Director for Modernisation and Wellbeing</b>
<b>Report Authors:</b>	<b>Service Manager: Strategic Development /Supporting People Team Manager</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Update on Supporting People Funded Internal Services in Denbighshire</b>

---

## **1. What is the report about?**

This report provides up to date information regarding the funding of internal services provided by the Supporting People Programme in Denbighshire and the planning to secure these services in the light of SP funding cuts.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

Following changes to the Supporting People regime in 2012, and the creation of the Regional Collaborative Committee, Cabinet requested that Scrutiny consider the impact of the new arrangements on the delivery and funding of Supporting People services in Denbighshire, including identification of pressures caused and potential solutions to alleviate any pressures.

This report provides information regarding the funding of key internal services provided by the Supporting People programme in Denbighshire. These include:

- Extra Care Housing
- Support for People with a Physical Disability
- Support for People with Mental Health Needs
- Support for People who have a Learning Disability
- Telecare Services
- Reablement Services

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

That members ask questions and comment on the arrangements being made and the risks involved in securing internal services where Supporting People provides key funding.

## **4. Report details.**

There are a number of internal services funded via Supporting People. The funding of these services amounts to £1,495,656 per year and is spread out across a variety of services. The majority of these services were originally funded via Supporting

People Grant (SPG) and were not subject to the same reporting requirements as Supporting People Revenue Grant (SPRG) monies.

The SP budget is facing cuts in the region of £330K pa for 2014/15 and 2015/16. This is part of a five year programme of cuts which will see the total SPPG grant to Denbighshire reduced by approximately 20% or over £1m.

Within a report to Cabinet in December 2012, it was stated that these cuts would be shared between internal and external Supporting People (SP) providers. Proportionally this would mean that DCC Adults Services will need to find minimum savings of £70k pa for the next two years. From initial meetings, it is expected that these savings will be identified by Adult Services and SP will be advised of where they will be applied.

In August 2012, SPG and SPRG were amalgamated to make a new funding stream which is now called Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG). There were a number of internal projects that would not have been eligible for SPPG. To ensure funding for the future, these services would, in some instances, need to make changes to the way support is delivered and they would also be required to comply with the monitoring requirements for SPPG.

From April to October 2012, an SP manager was seconded to work with Adult Services in identifying risks to funding and making recommendations of actions needed to mitigate these risks.

Supporting People are currently funding two full time Occupational Therapists (OTs) and a part time Lead OT who are working with Adult Services to assist in implementing the changes necessary to maintain Supporting People funding.

With this new grant comes new guidance that all Supporting People projects are now required to follow. This includes the requirement for each Service User to have a needs and risk assessment, along with a support plan which is reviewed regularly. Outcomes should also be reported every six months.

The following information is a brief summary of the key issues in individual service elements:

Extra Care Housing: The three Extra Care projects together receive funding of £98,628. This consists of £10,628 for alarms and £88,000 for Housing Related Support. The funding of alarms is benchmarked across all providers in Denbighshire and is unlikely to change significantly in future.

Following discussions with the Extra Care manager it is anticipated that savings can be made in 2014/15, these are yet to be agreed with the relevant service manager. The OT based with Extra Care will be funded until March 2015.

It currently appears that the Extra Care schemes are on track to ensuring compliance with the Supporting People Grant Guidance. Supporting People will continue to liaise with the OT and the staff of all three Extra Care schemes. All three Extra Care projects are due to be reviewed in March 2015.

Support for People with a Physical Disability : A relatively small number of service users receive housing related support funded by Supporting People. The current funding for this service element is £25,553. More detailed information is required to determine full compliance with funding conditions. This work will be undertaken by the Lead OT from June 2013. The review of this project is yet to be scheduled and will be dependent on the findings of the OT.

Mental health: This service was reviewed by the Supporting People team in October 2012. The review found that; there was no evidence of 24 hour on-call provision, there was an element of care being delivered via the SP funding and the project was not following referral processes necessary for this project .It was also recommended that the service introduced separate Housing Related Support (HRS) plans in order to provide clarity to workers around what HRS is.

As a result of the review, an alternative proposal was submitted by the project to address the issue of on-call. This proposal has been accepted by the SP team. A new 12mth SLA (with option to extend for an additional two years) has been issued.

The current SP funding for this project is £112,094. As a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has only recently been issued, it is unlikely that this funding will change significantly over the next three years. This project element was reviewed last year and an action plan produced .The SP team is satisfied that this is being implemented within an appropriate timescale and that this project element delivers eligible HRS. This project is due to be reviewed again in 2015.

Reablement : On the basis of the case examples provided in 2012 and a snap shot of the caseload on 29/9/12, it has been agreed that between 4 to 8 people will be identified as receiving SP support at any one time by the reablement service. This should cover the current funding allocation of £47k, which will be reflected in an SLA in terms of hours. A SP SLA will be issued shortly.

As reablement support is intensive and for short time scales, the turnover and work involved in ensuring compliance, completing monitoring requirements and reporting outcomes to the Welsh Government and regional governance group is quite challenging.

The value of this project element is currently £47,300. More detailed information is required to determine whether there are any implications for this funding in the future. This work will be undertaken from June 2013 onwards. The review of this project will subsequently be scheduled.

Learning Disability : SP contributes £1,187,308 towards this project element. During her secondment, the previous SP manager reported that between £900k and £1m was potentially justifiable HRS. In light of the overall reduction in SP budget and the commitment of Adult Services to find SP savings in the region of £70k pa for 14/15 and 15/16, it is likely that funding will be reduced by at least £70k pa for the next two years.

The part of her reports which considered risks stated:

“Having reviewed the housing support hours provided by the LD service at the end of September, I would suggest there is in a significant risk that the service has overestimated housing support hours and in cases of high need, there doesn't always seem to be a fair balance between care and support.”

It has been assumed that some of the critical and substantial needs of LD service users are eligible for SPPG in accordance with SP guidance (effective from 1/8/12), and that such needs are not a statutory duty for adult services to fund. There is some risk involved in this and there will be a need to ensure that all the expenditure fully complies with SP funding requirements.

One of the key requirements is to report on outcomes for each service user so that the Regional Collaborative Committee can clearly see that SP funding is being paid appropriately. There is a need to undertake further work with this project element in terms of compliance and eligibility and this will be scrutinised at a full service review.

Telecare : The value of this project is £12,603. More detailed information is needed in order to determine whether there are any risks for this funding in the future.

Further work will be undertaken so that SP monitoring returns are completed in order to demonstrate that this service element being delivered appropriately in accordance with grant conditions.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

The County Council has a key role in supporting the health and wellbeing of its citizens and the range of services funded by Supporting People is of critical importance in relation to meeting the housing support needs of numerous people who face disadvantages.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

The total value per annum of SP financial support for the range of internal services referred to in this report is nearly one and a half million pounds and there is a need to ensure that all grant conditions are fully complied with to prevent risk of any claw back. This report identifies that a reduction of £70,000 in support for these services due to a reduction in the overall grant.

#### **7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision?**

Not required in relation to this report.

#### **8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?**

A report was presented to Cabinet in December 2012 to “agree the changes to the Supporting People Strategy & Spend Plan for 2013-14, prior to plans being submitted to the Regional Collaborative Committee and the Welsh Government”

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

It is essential that the Council's spending plans are contained within the Supporting People grant available and also comply with the conditions of the grant. Also, the Council does currently have a Supporting People Reserve to help offset any potential reductions in grant but this is only a short term solution.

## **10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

The main financial risks are referred to in the main part of this report. There are strict requirements attached to the Supporting People Grant Programme and significant risks can result if services that benefit do not fully comply with these.

## **11. Power to make the Decision**

Article 6.3.2(d) refers to the reason why this report is presented to scrutiny

### **Contact Officer:**

Service Manager: Strategic Development

Tel: 01824 706581

This page is intentionally left blank

**Report to:** Communities Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 4 July 2013

**Report Author:** Scrutiny Coordinator

**Title:** Scrutiny Work Programme

---

**1. What is the report about?**

The report presents the Communities Scrutiny Committee with its draft forward work programme for members' consideration.

**2. What is the reason for making this report?**

To seek the Committee to review and agree on its programme of future work, and to update members on relevant issues.

**3. What are the recommendations?**

That the Committee:

- 3.1 considers the information provided and approves, revises or amends its forward work programme as it deems appropriate; and
- 3.2 nominates a representative to serve on the Council's Corporate Parenting Forum.

**4. Report details.**

- 4.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution sets out each Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference, functions and membership, whilst the rules of procedure for scrutiny committees are laid out in Part 4 of the Constitution.
- 4.2 Denbighshire County Council's Constitution requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. By reviewing and prioritising issues, members are able to ensure that the work programme delivers a member-led agenda.
- 4.3 For a number of years it has been an adopted practice in Denbighshire for scrutiny committees to limit the number of reports considered at any one meeting to a maximum of four plus the Committee's own work programme report. The objective of this approach is to facilitate detailed and effective debate on each topic.
- 4.4 The Committee is requested to consider its draft work programme for future meetings as detailed in appendix 1 and approve, revise or amend it as it deems appropriate taking into consideration:

- issues raised by members of the Committee
- matters referred to it by the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group
- relevance to the Committee's/Council's/community priorities
- the Council's Corporate Plan and the Director of Social Services' Annual Report
- meeting workload
- timeliness
- outcomes
- key issues and information to be included in reports
- officers and/or lead Cabinet members who should be invited (having regard to whether their attendance is necessary or would add value)
- questions to be put to officers/lead Cabinet members

4.5 In addition, when considering items for inclusion on the future forward work programme members may also find it helpful to have regard to the following questions when determining a subject's suitability for inclusion:

- what is the issue?
- who are the stakeholders?
- what is being looked at elsewhere
- what does scrutiny need to know? and
- who may be able to assist?

4.6 As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 the Constitution of Denbighshire County Council requires scrutiny committees to prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work. To assist the process of prioritising reports, if officers are of the view that a subject merits time for discussion on the Committee's business agenda they have to formally request the Committee to consider receiving a report on that topic. This is done via the submission of a 'proposal form' which clarifies the purpose, importance and potential outcomes of suggested topics. One such proposal form has been received for consideration by the Committee at the current meeting. This refers to the Talented Athlete Grant (see Appendix 2).

#### Restructuring of Communications and Marketing Service

4.7 Members will recall that the Committee at its May meeting decided to receive an information report on the above restructuring exercise in September 2013. Performance Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to consider a report on the findings of a recent review of the Council's publications at its June meeting, but as the Head of Communication, Marketing and Leisure Services was unable to attend Performance Scrutiny Committee's meeting to present the report he requested that the item be deferred until September. Due to agenda pressures in September Performance Scrutiny Committee was unable to reschedule the presentation of the report. As the findings of the review have a bearing on the restructure of the Service the Head of Service



suggested that both the publications review and the restructuring of the Service be reported to scrutiny. Consequently, the Chair of Communities Scrutiny Committee agreed that the combined report be presented to Communities Scrutiny Committee at its September meeting, see Appendix 1.

#### Cabinet Forward Work Programme

- 4.8 When deciding on their programme of future work it is useful for scrutiny committees to have regard to Cabinet's scheduled programme of future work. For this purpose a copy of the Cabinet's forward work programme is attached at Appendix 3.

#### Progress on Committee Resolutions

- 4.9 A table summarising recent Committee resolutions and advising members on progress with their implementation is attached at Appendix 4 to this report.

### **5. Corporate Parenting Forum**

All scrutiny committees have recently been requested to nominate a representative to serve on the Council's Corporate Parenting Forum. Elected members will be aware of their duties and responsibilities as corporate parents to the County's looked after children (see Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services' letter dated June 2012 – Appendix 5a attached). The Corporate Parenting Forum, whose membership comprises of senior officers, Cabinet and Scrutiny members meets on a quarterly basis to monitor and support services for looked after children. A copy of the Forum's terms of reference is attached at Appendix 5b. The Forum's next meetings are scheduled for Friday, 6 September and Friday, 13 December, between 1pm and 3pm, in County Hall, Ruthin. Members are asked to nominate a representative from the Committee to serve on the Forum.

### **6. Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group**

Under the Council's scrutiny arrangements the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group (SCVCG) performs the role of a coordinating committee. The SCVCG is scheduled to hold its first meeting of this municipal year on 27 June 2013. Any matters arising from that meeting that directly affect Communities Scrutiny Committee will be reported verbally to the Committee on 4 July.

### **7. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Effective scrutiny will assist the Council to deliver its corporate priorities in line with community needs and residents' wishes. Continual development and review of a coordinated work programme will assist the Council in monitoring and reviewing policy issues.

**8. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.**

No Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for the purpose of this report as consideration of the Committee's forward work programme is not deemed to have an adverse or unfair impact on people who share protected characteristics.

**9. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

Services may need to allocate officer time to assist the Committee with the activities identified in the forward work programme, and with any actions that may result following consideration of those items.

**10. What consultations have been carried out?**

None required for this report. However, the report itself and the consideration of the forward work programme represent a consultation process with the Committee with respect to its programme of future work.

**11. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

No risks have been identified with respect to the consideration of the Committee's forward work programme. However, by regularly reviewing its forward work programme the Committee can ensure that areas of risk are considered and examined as and when they are identified, and recommendations are made with a view to addressing those risks.

**12. Power to make the decision**

Article 6.3.7 of the Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council's scrutiny committees must prepare and keep under review a programme for their future work.

**Contact Officer:** Scrutiny Coordinator  
Tel No: (01824) 712554  
Email: [dcc\\_admin@denbighshire.gov.uk](mailto:dcc_admin@denbighshire.gov.uk)

## Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

**Note: Items entered in italics have not been approved for submission by the Committee. Such reports are listed here for information, pending formal approval.**

Meeting	Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered
12 September	1 Town and Area Plans (Quarterly Report)	To monitor the Council's performance in delivering its town plans and their benefit to the towns themselves and outlying communities	(i) identification of any slippages with the plans' deliveries and actions to improve performance; (ii) assist the Council to come closer to its communities	Rebecca Maxwell	January 2013
	2 Public Realm Strategy for Denbighshire County Council	To scrutinise the structure and content of this new strategy ahead of its presentation to Cabinet	To agree a Public Realm Strategy for presentation to Cabinet for approval and adoption	Hywyn Williams	April 2013 (by SCVCG)
	3 Snow Clearance Arrangements	To scrutinise the effectiveness of the arrangements for dealing with the snow event of March/April 2013 and the lessons learned from that event	The development of robust arrangements for similar events in future	Steve Parker/Tim Towers/Mike Hitchings/Brian Evans	April 2013
	4 Restructuring of the Communications and Marketing Services (including the findings of the review undertaken of the Council's publications)	To examine the impact of the restructuring of the Services and the findings of the review undertaken of the Council's publications	(i) To ensure that the new service structures support the Council's ambition to be close to the community and to deliver its corporate priorities, particularly its emerging Economic Ambition Strategy and Destination Management Strategy/Plan. and (ii) the formulation of recommendations with respect to future Council publications and the most appropriate and effective	Jamie Groves	May 2013

## Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered	
			communication methods for engaging with residents			
	5	Gypsy Strategy/ (tbc)				
17 October	1	Rhyl Going Forward Programme (Quarterly Report)	To evaluate and monitor the Programme's progress and achievements in delivering its anticipated outcomes; and  (ii) identify any slippages with the Programme's delivery	Ensuring that the Programme: (i) has sufficient capacity, resources and the necessary commitment to deliver the intended outcomes for the Rhyl area; (ii) supports the future vision for Rhyl, and is conducive with the wider regeneration agenda for Denbighshire; and (iii) delivers a viable, sustainable future for the area and county in general, with improved long-term employment prospects and outcomes for residents	Tom Booty	September 2012
	2	Anti-Fouling Strategy	To review the effectiveness of the strategy, marketing/communication strategy and action plan in delivering its objectives (report to include full costings of the campaign and enforcement action, impact of campaign, statistics, information on the number of legal cases pursued/outstanding and the costs associated with their enforcement (incl. costs awarded), comparison on the	An understanding of the progress made to date with the Strategy and identify any shortcomings or amendments required to the Strategy at an early stage	Hywyn Williams	April 2013

## Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered
			number of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued with respect to dog fouling and litter (including income generated)			
	3	<i>Talented Athlete Grant</i>	<i>To identify funding sources from Town and Community Councils (T&amp;CCs) to fund a county-wide talented athlete grant</i>	<i>To draw-up a process to seek funding from T&amp;CCs to fund a county-wide scheme</i>	<i>Rhian Roberts</i>	<i>June 2013</i>
	4	<i>Draft Flood Management Strategy</i>	<i>To consider the final draft version of the Strategy following public consultation</i>	<i>Pre-decision scrutiny and the formulation of recommendations to County Council with respect to approving the Strategy and its subsequent maintenance and monitoring arrangements</i>	<i>Wayne Hope</i>	<i>April 2013 (allocated by SCVCG June 2013)</i>
28 November	1	Community Covenant with the Armed Forces (Nov/Dec 2013)	To give an annual update on how the measures introduced under the covenant have supported the armed forces community in Denbighshire, and for the Committee to consider any changes to provision	Identification of improvements to the covenant and the formulation of recommendations to strengthen it	David Davies	Dec 2012
23 January 2014	1	Town and Area Plans (Quarterly Report)	To monitor the Council's performance in delivering its town plans and their benefit to the towns themselves and outlying communities	(i) identification of any slippages with the plans' deliveries and actions to improve performance; (ii) assist the Council to come closer to its communities	Rebecca Maxwell	January 2013
	2	Rhyl Going Forward Programme (Quarterly)	To evaluate and monitor the Programme's progress and	Ensuring that the Programme: (i) has sufficient capacity,	Tom Booty	September 2012

Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered
		Report)	achievements in delivering its anticipated outcomes; and  (ii) identify any slippages with the Programme's delivery	resources and the necessary commitment to deliver the intended outcomes for the Rhyl area; (ii) supports the future vision for Rhyl, and is conducive with the wider regeneration agenda for Denbighshire; and (iii) delivers a viable, sustainable future for the area and county in general, with improved long-term employment prospects and outcomes for residents		
6 March						
3 April	1	Town and Area Plans (Quarterly Report)	To monitor the Council's performance in delivering its town plans and their benefit to the towns themselves and outlying communities	(i) identification of any slippages with the plans' deliveries and actions to improve performance; (ii) assist the Council to come closer to its communities	Rebecca Maxwell	January 2013
15 May	1	Rhyl Going Forward Programme (Quarterly Report)	To evaluate and monitor the Programme's progress and achievements in delivering its anticipated outcomes; and  (ii) identify any slippages with the Programme's delivery	Ensuring that the Programme: (i) has sufficient capacity, resources and the necessary commitment to deliver the intended outcomes for the Rhyl area; (ii) supports the future vision for Rhyl, and is conducive with the wider regeneration agenda for Denbighshire; and (iii) delivers a viable,	Tom Booty	September 2012

## Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered
			sustainable future for the area and county in general, with improved long-term employment prospects and outcomes for residents		
May/June	1 The provision of Day Care Services in Denbighshire	To evaluate the Council's provision of day care services across the County	An evaluation of the Council's Day Care Services' provision and its effectiveness in delivering the corporate priorities of protecting vulnerable people and helping them to live as independently as possible, and modernising the council to deliver efficiencies and improve services for its customers, will enable members to identify any slippages, gaps in service delivery or risks to residents	Phil Gilroy/Helena Thomas	May 2013
	2 Food Review	To monitor the delivery of the task and finish group/Cabinet's recommendations with regards to the Council's policies and procedures with respect to food procurement, regulation and contract management	Assurances that all practical measures in place to ensure maximum safety and provenance of food materials used by the Council and arms length organisations are enforced and adhered to with a view to protecting residents, businesses and visitors	Hywyn Williams	February 2013

**Future Issues**

Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Expected Outcomes	Author	Date Entered
----------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	--------	--------------

## Communities Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	To outline the proposals for implementing the CIL in Denbighshire	The development of an appropriate and effective CIL scheme for the County	Graham Boase/Angela Loftus	February 2013

**For future years**


**Information/Consultation Reports**

<b>Information / Consultation</b>	<b>Item (description / title)</b>	<b>Purpose of report</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date Entered</b>
Information Report [October 2013]	Economic Ambition Strategy	To define the proposed outcomes of the Strategy and detail their delivery timelines, delivery confidence status and the measures that will be used to gauge achievement	Rebecca Maxwell/Peter McHugh	May 2013

**Note for officers – Committee Report Deadlines**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
12 September	<b>29 August</b>	17 October	<b>3 October</b>	28 November	<b>14 November</b>

Communities Scrutiny Work Programme.doc

27/06/13 RhE



**PROPOSAL FORM FOR AGENDA ITEMS  
FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

<b>NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>		Communities Scrutiny	
<b>DATE OF MEETING / TIMESCALE FOR CONSIDERATION</b>		October 2013	
<b>TITLE OF REPORT</b>		Talented Athlete Grant	
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>1. Why is the report being proposed? (see also the checklist overleaf)</b>	Need to identify funding sources from Town & Community Councils to fund a countywide Talented Athlete Grant.	
	<b>2. What issues are to be scrutinised?</b>	Agreement to continue countywide Talented Athlete Grant and identify process through which funding will be accessed	
	<b>3. Is it necessary/desirable for witnesses to attend e.g. lead members, officers/external experts?</b>	No	
	<b>4. What will the committee achieve by considering the report?</b>	Support and advise on a process to seek funding for the grant	
	<b>5. Score the topic from 0 – 4 on aims &amp; priorities and impact (see overleaf)*</b>	<b>Aims &amp; Priorities</b>	<b>Impact</b>
3		1	
<b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS</b>			
<b>REPORTING PATH – what is the next step? Are Scrutiny's recommendations to be reported elsewhere?</b>		No	
<b>AUTHOR</b>		Rhian Roberts/Cllr Huw Jones	



Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Appendix 3

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
30 July	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	The former North Wales Hospital: a Compulsory Purchase Order	To approve a compulsory purchase order for the former North Wales Hospital	Yes	Graham Boase
	3	Adult Safeguarding	To consider future options for the arrangements for Adult Safeguarding	Yes	Cllr Bobby Feeley / Phil Gilroy
	4	Food Review Task & Finish Group	To approve the recommendations of the Task & Finish Group following a review into food procurement and regulatory practices.	Yes	Cllr David Smith / Hywyn Williams
	5	Developing 'An Excellent Council Close to the Community'	To consider how the Council progresses with the theme of Bringing the Council Closer to the Community	Yes	Cllr Hugh Irving / Hywyn Williams
	6	North Office Accommodation Study	To consider the work undertaken in respect of the North Denbighshire Office	tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / David Lorey

Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
			Accommodation Review.		
	7	Three Counties Procurement Service	To consider proposals for the merger and implementation of a three counties (Gwynedd, Denbighshire and Flintshire) procurement and category management service.	Yes	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	8	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>3 September</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Annual Performance Review 2012/13	To review the draft Annual Performance Review for 2012-13 and to recommend the report for adoption by full Council		Cllr Barbara Smith / Tony Ward
	3	Corporate Plan QPR: Quarter 1 2013/14	To monitor the Council's progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2012 -17	Tbc	Cllr Barbara Smith / Tony Ward
	4	Vibrant and Viable Places - Funding bid for Rhyl Town	To update members on progress.	No	Cllr Hugh Evans / Tom Booty / Sian Owen

Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
		Centre projects			
	5	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>24 September</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Faith Based Provision	To note the findings of the formal consultation on the faith review and to consider whether to proceed to the publication of the proposal by way of statutory notice.	Yes	Cllr Eryl Williams / Jackie Whalley
	3	Response to the Consultation on Town and Area Plans	To consider the response to the consultation on town and area plans	Tbc	Cllr Hugh Evans / Rebecca Maxwell
	4	Specialist Accommodation Protocol	To consider the protocol following a consultation exercise	Tbc	Sally Ellis
	5	Corporate Safeguarding Committee		Tbc	Sally Ellis
	6	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator

Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
<b>29 October</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Approval of Contract Award for Sub-regional Young Carers' Service	To award the contract	Yes	Vicky Allen
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>26 November</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>17 December</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Corporate Plan QPR: Quarter 2 2013/14	To monitor the Council's progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2012 -17	Tbc	Cllr Barbara Smith / Tony Ward
	3	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator

Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting		Item (description / title)	Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
			raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention		
<b>14 January 2014</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>18 February</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>25 March</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Corporate Plan QPR: Quarter 3 2013/14	To monitor the Council's progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2012 -17	Tbc	Cllr Barbara Smith / Tony Ward
	3	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator

Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Meeting	Item (description / title)		Purpose of report	Cabinet Decision required (yes/no)	Author – Lead member and contact officer
			Cabinet's attention		
<b>29 April</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>27 May</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention.	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator
<b>June</b>	1	Finance Report Update	To update Cabinet on the current financial position of the Council	Tbc	Cllr Julian Thompson-Hill / Paul McGrady
	2	Corporate Plan QPR: Quarter 3 2013/14	To monitor the Council's progress in delivering the Corporate Plan 2012 -17	Tbc	Cllr Barbara Smith / Tony Ward
	3	Items from Scrutiny Committees	To consider any issues raised by Scrutiny for Cabinet's attention	Tbc	Scrutiny Coordinator



Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Note for officers – Cabinet Report Deadlines

<i>Meeting</i>	<i><b>Deadline</b></i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i><b>Deadline</b></i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i><b>Deadline</b></i>
<i>July</i>	<i><b>16 July</b></i>	<i>September (3)</i>	<i><b>19 August</b></i>	<i>September (24)</i>	<i><b>10 September</b></i>

Updated 26/06/2013 - SP

Cabinet Forward Work Programme.doc

This page is intentionally left blank

## Progress with Committee Resolutions

Date of Meeting	Item number and title	Resolution	Progress
23 May 2013	<b>7. Restructuring of the Regeneration, Business Support and Tourism Services</b>	<p><b>Resolved:</b> that</p> <p>(a) subject to members' comments above the report on the restructuring of the Regeneration, Business Support and Tourism Service be noted;</p> <p>(b) an information report on the restructuring of the Communications and Marketing Services be received in September; and</p> <p>(c) an information report on the Economic Ambition Strategy to include outcomes, timelines, delivery confidence status and performance measures be received in October</p>	<p>See paragraph 4.7 of the covering Scrutiny Work Programme report</p> <p>Included in forward work programme see Appendix 1</p>
	<b>8. Revising the Local Housing Strategy – Denbighshire</b>	<p><b>Resolved:</b> that</p> <p>(a) subject to members' comments above, the report on progress made in revising the new Local Housing Strategy and the breadth of current housing challenges that need to be incorporated into the Strategy be noted; and</p> <p>(b) the proposed three theme areas for inclusion in the new Local Housing Strategy endorsed</p>	<p>The Strategy is the subject of a separate business item on the current meeting's agenda</p>
	<b>9. Review of Day Services in North</b>	<p><b>Resolved:</b> that</p> <p>(a) Cabinet be recommended to approve</p>	<p>Cabinet considered the</p>

	<b>Denbighshire</b>	<p><i>implementation of the new model as set out in paragraphs 4.10 to 4.13 of the report; and</i></p> <p><i>(b) an evaluation report on the provision of Day Care Services in Denbighshire be received by the committee in approximately twelve months' time</i></p>	<p>recommendations at its meeting on 25 June 2013 and approved the recommendations</p> <p>See Appendix 1—the evaluation report has been provisionally scheduled into the Committee's forward work programme for May/June 2014</p>
	<b>10. Food Review Task and Finish Group</b>	<p><b>Resolved: that</b></p> <p><i>(a) the recommendations of the Food Review Task and Finish Group as detailed in paragraphs 3.1 – 3.13 of the report be supported and recommended to Cabinet for approval;</i></p> <p><i>(b) the Food Review Task and Finish Group be asked to explore the viability of future meat procurement contracts stipulating that all suppliers must be Red Tractor Assured; and</i></p> <p><i>(c) a report back on the work of the Food Review Task and Finish Group be submitted to the Committee in approximately twelve months' time</i></p>	<p>Recommendations will be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 30 July 2013</p> <p>Corporate Director has been requested to report this recommendation to the Task and Finish Group</p> <p>See Appendix 1—the follow-up report has provisionally been scheduled into the Committee's forward work programme for May/June 2014</p>



**APPENDIX 1**

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref: MB/GT/02350/12  
To:

Elected Members, including Lead  
Members for Children & Young  
People's Services and Children's  
Social Services

June 2012

c.c. Lead Director for Children &  
Young People  
Directors of Social Services and  
Heads of Children's Social  
Services

Dear Elected Member

When you became an Elected Member you also become responsible for ensuring that the council acts as a good corporate parent to the children in its care. The role of the corporate parent is to seek for children in public care the same outcomes every good parent would want for their own children. The local authority has a legal and moral duty to provide such loyal support to the children it is responsible for looking after.

The importance of your responsibilities as corporate parents cannot be overemphasised. Elected Members have a key responsibility to ensure that the children in their care are able to thrive. These children will often have faced significant challenges and will need the help of powerful adults who have a responsibility to advocate for them as their corporate parents.

Elected members, managers and staff have different tasks and levels of responsibility, but all must take an active part in listening to the child and ensuring the best possible care and opportunities are available for children in care. Corporate parenting responsibilities will only be delivered when there is clear political commitment and leadership and when senior managers agree that this is a priority and make it explicit in strategic and business plans.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on statutory partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes Local Health Boards, NHS Trusts, Police, The Probation Service, Youth Offending Teams, Prison Governors and Youth Support Services amongst others. This will include assisting local authorities in their corporate parenting responsibilities. The Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services and the Lead Director for Children and Young People's Services, along with the Lead Member for Social Services and the Director of Social Services, should be responsible for leading improvements in corporate parenting and for ensuring that looked after children are seen as a priority by the whole authority. It is of equal importance to ensure that children and young

people have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive. Strategic planning in respect of these arrangements, including recognition of the contribution of partners to improvement in outcomes for the children and young people concerned, and participation of children and young people in the planning process, is now carried out through the single integrated plan led by the Local Service Board. Guidance on the integrated planning responsibilities of local authorities and their partners is to issue in June 2012

It is important to bear in mind that it is not just social services that impact upon these children. Once a child is in care, all members and officers of the council, as their corporate parents, need to be concerned about that child as if they were their own. This concern should encompass their education, their health and welfare, what they do in their leisure time and holidays, how they celebrate their culture and how they receive praise and encouragement for their achievements. It is of equal importance to ensure that children and young people have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive. Children in care have a right to have a voice in their care and their future, to be truly listened to when they want to contribute or raise something. They also have a right to access independent professional advocacy to support them when they need someone on their side to stop, start or change something and it is part of your role as a corporate parent to ensure that they are actively offered this service. This is vital to safeguard the child or young person and contributes to the quality assurance of the services they receive. The guidance in relation to advocacy is found at this link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/complaint/?lang=en>

Effective Corporate Parenting is a vital part of the high quality, responsive, citizen centred social care services that are described in the Social Services (Wales) Bill. The purpose of this Bill is to give us the legislation we need to deliver the Welsh Government's white paper "*Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action*" and to make sure that we have the social services that we want to see in Wales.

It also provides, for the first time, a coherent legislative framework for social services in Wales. The Bill makes legislative proposals in the following areas:

- maintaining and enhancing the wellbeing of people in need;
- giving citizens a stronger voice and real control;
- ensuring a strong national direction and local accountability for delivery;
- safeguarding and protection;
- regulation and inspection; and
- adoption and transitions for disabled children and young people.

Although consultation on the Social Services (Wales) Bill ended on 1 June, the consultation documents can be found at this link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/healthsocialcare/bill/?lang=en>

In June 2009 I issued jointly with the Welsh Local Government Association revised guidance to elected members on their corporate parenting role. I have set out in the annexes to this letter the Welsh Government's expectation of corporate parents. The document can be found at this link:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/corporateparent/?lang=en>

Elected Members should be able to ask and receive satisfactory answers to the following sort of questions:

- Are children safe?
- Have they got good homes in a secure and caring environment?

- Are they placed within the local authority area, close to their homes and communities, if not, why not?
- Do they get decent schooling?
- Are they being drawn out of antisocial behaviour?
- Are they healthy?
- Are they thriving and developing socially and emotionally as they should?
- Are they able to participate meaningfully in planning the services they receive?
- Are we giving them enough help to cope with the problems they have in growing up?
- How well do we prepare them for their transition to adulthood?
- Are we ambitious enough for them?
- Do we help them achieve to the maximum of their ability?
- Do we have high aspirations for them and show pride in their achievements?
- Can we help them cope with their failures?
- Can we cope with the problems they give us?

It is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects of children in care ultimately rest. I hope that you will approach your corporate parenting responsibilities with the enthusiasm and commitment they deserve.

Yours faithfully



**Gwenda Thomas AM**

Y Dirprwy Weinidog Plant a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol  
Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services

**THE WELSH GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTATION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY AS CORPORATE PARENT****The Welsh Government expects local authorities to:**

- Provide care, a home, and access to health and education and other public services to which all children are entitled according to their needs;
- Ensure that children are placed close to home, wherever possible, in placements that meet their needs including any special health and education needs;
- Provide a mixture of care and firmness to support the child's development, and be the tolerant, dependable and available partner in the adult/child relationship even in the face of disagreements;
- Prevent offending and reoffending, bearing in mind that antisocial behaviour damages the young person as well as victims and the wider community;
- Protect and educate the child against the perils and risks of life by encouraging constructive and appropriate friendships, and discouraging destructive and harmful relationships;
- Celebrate and share their children's achievements, supporting them when they are down;
- Recognise and respect their growth to independence, being tolerable and supportive if they make mistakes;
- Provide consistent support and be available to provide advice and practical help when needed;
- Advocate their cause and trouble-shoot on their behalf when necessary;
- Be ambitious for them and encourage and support their efforts to get on and reach their potential, whether through education, training or employment.
- Provide occasional financial support, remember birthdays and Christmas or annual celebrations within the individual child's religion and culture;
- Encourage and enable appropriate contact with family members – parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and brothers and sisters.
- Help them to feel part of the local community through contact with neighbours and local groups.
- Be proactive, not passive, when there are known or suspected serious difficulties.



**QUESTIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS TO ASK****Children in Care**

- How many children are looked after by your council, whether on a care order or through voluntary arrangements:
- What is their ethnic and cultural background?
- What type of placement are they in – with friends and family, foster care, residential homes or secure units?
- How many are in placements outside your local authority area?
- How much is your council spending on services for looked after children?
- Do all of your looked after children have an allocated social worker?
- How many placement moves have children had?
- How many attend school regularly and how many are excluded from school?
- What progress are they making and how well are they doing at examinations and teacher assessments?
- Is every effort being made to avoid their having to move schools?
- How many are registered with a GP, have access to a dentist and receive regular health assessments?
- How many children run away or otherwise go missing from residential care and foster care?
- How many children have a statement of special educational need or are on school action or school action plus programmes?
- How many children are involved in offending behaviour?
- What action is your authority taking in partnership with other agencies to reduce this?
- What mechanisms does your authority have for hearing the views of children and young people about services and providing feedback for those involved?
- How well does your authority train and support its foster carers?

**Care Leavers**

- How many young people leave care at the ages of 16, 17 and 18 and where do they go to live?
- How many young people who left care after the age of 16 are still in touch with the local authority?
- How many are in education, training or employment?
- How many are in suitable housing with support if needed?
- How many go on to University?
- How much is spent on after care services, including direct financial assistance to care leavers?
- How do you ensure that their views are taken into account to inform service development?

This page is intentionally left blank

**DENBIGHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE  
PARENTING FORUM**

**Terms of Reference**

- 1.** To ensure that the whole Council and partner agencies have a joint commitment to Corporate Parenting in order to achieve continuing improvements in outcomes for looked after children and young people.
- 2.** To inform and advise relevant parts of the council on issues relating to Looked After Children.
- 3.** To oversee the Corporate Parenting Strategy to ensure outcomes fulfil the Council's responsibilities towards looked after children, advising on and monitoring the council's performance against the pledge given to Denbighshire's Looked After children and young people, together with key performance indicators, educational attainments and other activities in relation to looked after children's achievements.
- 4.** To ensure children in care are able to participate in plans for their care and developments for service planning and delivery.
- 5.** To consult with looked after children, young people and their carers and celebrate their achievements.
- 6.** To actively promote work experience and work opportunities for care leavers within the Council.

This page is intentionally left blank