

**Report To:** Council

**Date of Meeting:** 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015

**Lead Member / Officer:** Cllr Barbara Smith

**Report Author:** Angela Loftus, Strategic Planning and Housing  
Manager

**Title:** Draft Denbighshire Housing Strategy

---

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

1.1.1 This report presents the Council's Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan. An outline proposal for the suggested approach to the Housing Strategy was discussed at Council Briefing in April 2015. A summary of the draft Housing Strategy is attached as Appendix 1 and the draft Action Plan is attached as Appendix 2. The full draft Housing Strategy can be accessed via the following link:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13611&path=0&LLL=0>

1.2 The content of the draft Housing Strategy and Action Plan represents the culmination of consultation with partners, work with officers across the Council and input from Members. The Consultation Report is attached as Appendix 3 and this summarises notes from events, meetings and comments which have all contributed to the development of the Strategy. The Equality Impact Assessment template is attached as Appendix 4.

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

2.1 The purpose of this report is seek Members' approval to adopt the draft Denbighshire Housing Strategy and endorse the accompanying Action Plan.

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

That Council adopts Denbighshire's Housing Strategy with accompanying draft Action Plan.

## **4. Report details.**

4.1 Ensuring access to good quality housing is a key corporate priority and the development of a clear and robust Housing Strategy will provide the framework for all relevant Council functions to successfully address this

priority. The intention of the Housing Strategy is to provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for the next 5 years.

- 4.2 It sets out the key challenges and issues affecting the County and what various Council teams intend to do to help overcome these challenges. The Housing Strategy aims to express the multi-disciplinary corporate approach to housing issues and delivery in the County, providing the framework for other more detailed strategies, policies, procedures etc and relevant Business Plans. The emerging Strategy reflects the full range of housing issues and provision: council, registered social landlords, private rented and owner-occupied and the need to address the concerns of the Wales Audit Office with regard to the delivery of affordable housing.
- 4.3 The Strategy identifies 5 "Themes" which are priority areas for action to be addressed and these form the core of the Strategy. These themes are:
  1. More homes to meet local need and demand
  2. Creating a supply of affordable homes
  3. Ensuring safe and healthy homes
  4. Homes and support for vulnerable people
  5. Promoting and supporting communities
- 4.4 For each theme issues, challenges, actions, desired outcomes are clearly identified, along with indicators of success. Examples of current projects and good practice are highlighted under each theme.
- 4.5 Detailed statistics and background information are attached as an accompanying document but a summary of the appropriate contextual information relevant to each theme is included in the main text for each of the "themes". The aim is for a clear, succinct, usable and sustainable Strategy.
- 4.6 The Strategy will be accompanied by an Action Plan. It is anticipated that this will be a living document, subject to regular monitoring and review by relevant Lead Members and Scrutiny. The Action Plan sets out in more detail the actions the relevant teams within the Council will focus on and how it will work with partners over the next 5 years to help to realise the Council's vision. It is important to prioritise actions which will have the greatest impact whilst also being realistic about what can be delivered with limited resources. The Action Plan has identified 4 measurable outcomes that should be achieved in the short term.
- 4.7 Work on the emerging Housing Strategy has been steered by a group of Lead Members with responsibility for an area of housing within their portfolios. The group comprised Councillors David Smith (planning, empty homes, housing enforcement, private sector housing & grants), Julian Thompson-Hill (council housing, finance & Housing Revenue Account), Bobby Feeley (extra care, older people, social care and well-being) Hugh Irving (homelessness & gypsies & travellers) and has been chaired by Councillor Barbara Smith, who has overall responsibility for delivering the Housing Strategy.

- 4.8 Once adopted, the Housing Strategy will be a key corporate document and the Strategic Planning and Housing Team have been working with officers across the Council to develop the Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, including those with responsibilities for community development, neighbourhood development, empty homes, private rented sector, enforcement, energy efficiency, disabilities and extra care, supporting people, public protection and planning, homelessness and housing stock. Officers have attended a Community Support Services team meeting and a workshop was held for staff from housing, maintenance, homelessness and youth services on 17<sup>th</sup> August, to ensure that they had an input to the Strategy. Output from this workshop has formed a key input into the draft Strategy. The Team has also met with Registered Social Landlords who are active in the County. The Strategic Partnership Board reviewed and discussed the proposed Strategy outline and has provided helpful contributions. Input from Senior Leadership Team has helped to frame both the Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan. Successful delivery of the Strategy will be dependent on input from a number of Council services, together with external partners.
- 4.9 An Affordable Housing Task and Finish Group was set up in response to concerns amongst Members about affordable housing policy and delivery. The Task and Finish Group started meeting in September 2014 and held 7 meetings in total. It considered a range of affordable housing issues in depth, and final recommendations were discussed at Communities Scrutiny Committee on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2015 and agreed by Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015. These recommendations have been incorporated into the Strategy, predominantly under Theme 2.

### **What happens next?**

- 4.10 Once adopted, the Housing Strategy will be reformatted to reflect other corporate strategies and will be published on the Council's website and all partners notified. Newsletter updates on the delivery of the Housing Strategy: Action Plan will be sent to all Members and the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Updates on progress will also be provided to the multi-agency Strategic Partnerships Board. The intention is for the Action Plan to be a living document, regularly updated and reviewed. The Council's three Scrutiny Committees will have a key role in monitoring the Strategy and more importantly progress in relation to the Action Plan, as will Lead Members. Local issues can of course be picked up by Member Area Groups.

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

- 5.1 Denbighshire's Housing Strategy will contribute to the following corporate priorities:
- Developing the local economy – development within the County will contribute towards securing local employment opportunities in the construction sector

- Ensuring access to good quality housing – successful delivery of the proposed actions will enable improved provision of additional affordable and market housing across Denbighshire to meet the County’s needs.
- Vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible

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

- 6.1 Successful delivery of the actions identified in the Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will be dependent on a partnership approach within the Council.

## **7. 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.**

- 7.1 The Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan aim to address the particular needs of those with protected characteristics, such as age and disability and it is anticipated that adoption the Housing Strategy and delivery of the Action Plan will have a positive impact on these groups. It is not anticipated that the adoption of the Strategy will have a disproportionate negative impact on any of the protected characteristics, however the Housing Strategy and accompanying Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and amendments made if necessary. The completed Equality Impact Assessment template is attached as Appendix 4.

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

- 8.1 Communities Scrutiny Committee previously reviewed the recommendations of the Affordable Housing Task & Finish Group. These recommendations have been reflected in the Housing Strategy. The draft Housing Strategy was subsequently reviewed by Communities Scrutiny Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> November and the key points raised are included in the Consultation Report attached as Appendix 3. The Committee expressed overall support for the Strategy and the need to progress delivery of the outcomes. It resolved to recommend that the Council should approve and adopt the Draft Housing Strategy and associated Action Plan and that Scrutiny should periodically monitor the delivery of the Strategy’s outcomes.

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

- 9.1 The full cost implications of specific proposals that are developed as part of the Strategy will have to be assessed to ensure they are affordable and sustainable.

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

- 10.1 The delivery of the Housing Strategy is a key priority for the Council including improving the delivery of affordable housing as required by Wales Audit Office. Failure to progress the Strategy would miss the opportunity to provide a clear approach to housing issues in the County and the Council would have no way of demonstrating to Wales Audit Office that its concerns over the delivery of affordable housing are being addressed.

**11. Power to make the Decision**

Local Government Act 2000. The following Housing Acts set out the Council's role with regard to the functioning of the housing market and production of a housing strategy:

- Housing Act 1985 (S8) - requiring Local Authorities to consider housing conditions/needs in their locally
- Housing Act 2004 (S8) requiring Local Authorities to keep housing conditions in the private sector housing in their area under review
- Local Government Act 2003 (S87) - requiring Local Authorities to produce a local housing strategy