

**Report to:** Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**Lead Member/Officer:** Lead Member for Modernisation and Housing/  
Strategic Planning and Housing Manager

**Report Author:** Local Housing Strategy and Development Officer

**Title:** Progress on delivering Denbighshire's Housing Strategy

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

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Scrutiny on the progress made to date in delivering the key outcomes and actions identified in Denbighshire's Housing Strategy. Denbighshire's Housing Strategy was adopted by Council on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015. A table setting out progress on the Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1.

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

2.1 This report has been prepared as a result of a request from Performance Scrutiny to review progress on the delivery of the Council's Housing Strategy.

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

3.1 That Scrutiny comment on the report's contents and continues to monitor delivery of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.

## **4. Report details**

4.1 Denbighshire's Housing Strategy sets out the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for the period 2016-2021. It is an important corporate document for the Council and provides the framework for all Council housing related functions (private & public). The Strategy is set within the framework of the Corporate Plan as detailed in 5.1 and sits alongside the Local Development Plan. The Strategy identifies 5 "Themes" which are priority areas for action to be targeted:

- More homes to meet local need and demand;
- Creating a supply of affordable homes;
- Ensuring safe and healthy homes;
- Homes and support for vulnerable people;
- Promoting and supporting communities.

4.2 Delivery of the Action Plan is overseen by the Housing Strategy Delivery Group, which is chaired by the Lead Member with responsibility for delivering the Housing Strategy, Cllr Barbara Smith. Membership of the Group comprises those Lead Members with responsibility for an area of housing within their portfolios, relevant Heads of Service and the Strategic Planning & Housing Manager.

- 4.3 The Group meets every two months and monitors and reviews progress, with input from the various Heads of Service and officers involved with delivering individual actions. Any potential issues in meeting targets are identified at the earliest opportunity. The Group also oversees the allocation of Social Housing Grant (SHG) which is awarded annually by Welsh Government to help bring forward affordable housing development by Housing Associations and is around £1 million per annum. This funding is controlled locally by the Council.
- 4.4 The Strategy is accompanied by a 61 point Action Plan, with 119 milestones identified to achieve them. It sets out in more detail the responsibilities of the various relevant teams within the Council and how we work with partners to help to realise the Council's vision for housing. The Strategy is a living document and more actions will be added as work progresses and others are completed. It is planned to review the action plan in autumn 2017 when the new corporate priorities have been set and the new Council Members are fully established, to ensure the Strategy still supports the vision for Denbighshire. The Strategy itself has a five year lifespan (2016 – 2021) and will need to be reviewed by 2021.
- 4.5 Four key outcomes were identified at the outset of the adoption of the Housing Strategy, to be achieved in year one. The table sets out the detail and the progress made against these:

<b>Key outcome of Housing Strategy in year 1</b>	<b>Progress made with key outcomes by December 2016 (1) and to date (2)</b>
Increase social housing by a minimum of 7 units	(1) 30 social homes brought forward between December 2015 – December 2016; 1 of these is now a Council home previously lost through the Right to Buy  (2) 39 social homes from December 2015 to February 2017 and 13 more due to complete this financial year including 1 ex-Council property being renovated by the Council
Improved standard of temporary homelessness accommodation solutions from within DCC housing stock and/or private options	(1) New procedures to ensure temporary accommodation solutions are checked by Housing Enforcement prior to occupation
A minimum of 5 Empty properties back into use as affordable housing	(1) 18 empty homes have been brought back into use through Houses to Homes loans and in partnership with North Wales Housing (December 2015 – December 2016)  (2) 4 further empty homes are currently in the process of being purchased and renovated
Resourced neighbourhood plans	(1) Neighbourhood plans have been

developed with our Council tenants to improve their areas	developed and are informing future planning of our Council Housing neighbourhoods. 4 Community Development posts commenced in November 2016
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**Key areas of progress**

- 4.6 Of the 61 Actions identified, 27 have been delivered, with a number now embedded in operational delivery as 'business as usual', there is some minor slippage on 5 actions in accordance with the original deadlines set but all now have amended deadlines and plans in place to complete them, the remainder are all on track for delivery within the deadlines agreed.
- 4.7 Many of the initial actions of the strategy were concerned with developing frameworks to enable housing delivery. This has included regular meetings with the strategic officers of partner Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in addition to the operational meetings which were already carried out. A Housing Land Prospectus has been developed and is regularly updated to promote the land allocations in the county to stimulate interest.
- 4.8 An Empty Homes Delivery Plan and an Energy Efficiency Delivery Plan are being developed and overseen by the monitoring group. A review of the affordable housing commuted sums policy, has also taken place, in accordance with the recommendations of the affordable housing task and finish group. These plans and revised policy will be examined under the delegated decision process.
- 4.9 Cartrefi Conwy have been zoned to access Social Housing Grant (SHG) in Denbighshire, after a successful business case was submitted to Welsh Government. As a direct result of this 3 empty homes have been bought by this RSL in 2016 (using SHG funding) and will be refurbished during 2017 and let in 2017/18. They are also looking at a variety of new build opportunities across the County. There is also potential for Denbighshire 'zoning' to be extended to additional RSLs. . By expanding the zoning to other RSLs, it increases competition and improves opportunities for partnership working to bring forward housing in the county.
- 4.10 Facilities, Assets and Housing have conducted a full review of Council and HRA land holdings, with a view to enable council house development. In partnership with this review Social Housing Locality plans are being developed, across all the MAG areas. These are assessing in detail the current and forward planning need of social housing in each area. This will inform future development and planned improvements of Council housing.
- 4.11 Denbighshire County Council along with other local authorities and social housing providers have signed up to the Housing Pact with Welsh Government. The Pact is an agreement to bring forward a minimum 20,000 affordable homes across Wales during the period 2016 - 2021. A similar target was set by Welsh Government in the last Assembly term 2011 - 2015 of 10,000. This was exceeded, with a total of 11,508 affordable properties being made available across Wales; Denbighshire contributed 266 properties to this total (2.3%).

- 4.12 Since April 2016 a total of 35 affordable homes have been brought forward (target is 40 for April 2016 – April 2017) with another anticipated 12 new build properties to come forward in Llangollen and additional homelessness leased properties before the end of the financial year. A total of 55 affordable homes were provided in 2015/16.
- 4.13 A full homelessness review has been carried out including current and future provision of emergency and longer term homelessness accommodation. This will inform the Homelessness Strategy which is currently being developed and is a statutory requirement for the authority.
- 4.14 A 'Renting Ready' course has been introduced and is run in conjunction with Crisis. It aims to provide people with skills to explore their housing options and help sustain a tenancy. This is essential in helping to prevent future incidents of homelessness.

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

- 5.1 The themes of the Housing Strategy are structured to complement corporate priorities and principally support the following areas:
- Ensuring access to good quality housing;
  - Vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible;
  - Developing the local economy – development within the County will contribute towards securing local employment opportunities in the construction sector.

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

- 6.1 The actions contained in the Housing Strategy Action Plan are contained within budgets held by teams within the Council and external organisations such as Welsh Government and Housing Associations. These are regularly monitored and reported through the appropriate mechanisms.

## **7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?**

The report outlines information on the progress with the Housing Strategy Action Plan and does not seek a decision hence a Well-being Impact Assessment is unnecessary.

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

A full consultation process was undertaken with a wide range of partners to develop the Housing Strategy. These included Health, Housing Associations, City, Community and Town Councils and Councillors. The Housing Strategy Action Plan is regularly monitored and discussed by the Housing Strategy Delivery Group.

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

Any in-house cost implications arising from the Housing Strategy will need to be considered as future plans develop. However, with this in mind the Council's current

Housing Stock Business Plan includes an assumption that an element of HRA funding will be set aside to help deliver more affordable social housing in the County

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

The delivery of the Housing Strategy is a key priority for the Council. A range of mechanisms are in place to monitor progress including this report.

**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 delivery of a housing strategy: Housing Act 1985 (S8), Housing Act 2004 (S8), Local Government Act 2003 (S87), Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Scrutiny's powers with respect to monitoring the delivery of policy objectives is set out in Section 7.4.2 (b) of the Council's Constitution.

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