

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	19 March 2020
Lead Member/Officer	Councillor Tony Thomas (Lead Member for Housing & Communities)/Angela Loftus (Strategic Planning & Housing Manager)
Report author	Sue Lewis (Senior Officer: Strategic Planning & Housing)
Title	Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy – progress update

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The Housing Strategy is being reviewed and revised to form a new Housing and Homelessness Strategy for the County. The purpose of the report is to provide Scrutiny with an update on the progress made and an opportunity to contribute to the draft Strategy.
- 1.2. Ensuring that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs is a key corporate priority and the development of a revised up to date Housing and Homelessness Strategy will provide a framework for all relevant Council functions to successfully address the priority. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy will provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for the next 5 years.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. This report has been prepared to update Scrutiny Committee on progress in developing the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Scrutiny considers the contents of the report and provides feedback to inform the development of the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

4. Report details

4.1 Denbighshire's Housing Strategy was approved by Council on 1st December 2015 and sets out the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County for a five year period. Importantly it assists in achieving a Corporate Plan priority by providing a framework and action plan for delivery (through working with partners) of all Council housing related functions (private & public). The Strategy also sits alongside the Local Development Plan. The current Strategy identifies 5 "Themes" to target priority areas for action:

- 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 The existing Housing Strategy had a "steering group" made up of Lead Members, Heads of Service, Managers and Officers with a clear action plan and monitoring mechanisms. The Housing Strategy is accompanied by a detailed Action Plan prioritising actions which would have the greatest impact whilst also being realistic about what could be delivered with limited resources. Since adoption in 2015, the Housing Strategy has made significant progress with the majority of actions being completed and embedded into operational practices. **Appendix A** details the progress made across all 5 themes and here are some of the highlights:

- 302 affordable homes provided since 2015/16 (excluding 2019/20);
- Commencement of Council House development programme (40 new homes on site in 2020)
- Development of an Empty Homes Delivery Plan;
- Development of the Local Housing Market Assessment;
- Housing Prospectus produced to promote potential development sites;
- Production of Neighbourhood Plans through a community development approach;
- A Denbighshire Housing tenant won a Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru award for work in her community;
- Implementation of a Common Housing Register (SARTH);

- Implementation of Affordable Housing Register Partnership (Tai Teg);
- Provision of additional Extra Care housing at Awel Y Dyffryn is due for completion in early 2021 and Llys Awelon Phase 2 will start this year;
- Housing First pilot commenced – offering intensive support to complex cases:
- The Homelessness Service refocused their approach through Prevention, Duty and Move-on teams:
- A Homelessness Strategy was developed and discussed at Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 11th July 2019.

4.3 The Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group was recently set up to develop a more coordinated approach. This group agreed to amalgamate the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategies into one Housing and Homelessness Strategy and will steer the development of the revised Strategy. It is important to note that there will not be a completely new Strategy; it will be an update of the existing strategies. The Group is jointly chaired by Councillor Tony Thomas (Lead Member for Housing and Communities) and Councillor Bobby Feeley (Lead Member for Well-being and Independence). 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. **Appendix B** provides the Terms of reference for the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group. The advantages of this approach are that it is coordinated, provides shared problem solving, effective communication and more opportunities from closer cross departmental working.

4.4 The immediate priority is to develop a corporate approach to tackling homelessness because of current issues, with not enough suitable emergency and temporary accommodation plus over reliance on Bed & Breakfast/Hotel accommodation and extended stays in emergency accommodation.

4.5 It is proposed to amend the title of the Housing Strategy to the 'Housing and Homelessness Strategy' so that it reflects the importance of tackling homelessness and ensures that the strategic framework addresses homelessness. The Strategy will be the vehicle for agreeing homelessness priorities and monitoring progress

against them. This will enable improved integration and corporate ownership of work on homelessness.

- 4.6 Progress on the Strategy so far has included reports to the Young People and Housing Programme Board (27th November 2020), meetings of the Strategic Housing and Homelessness group; and a Councillor Workshop held on 15th January 2020 (key outcomes are detailed in **Appendix C**). This involved Councillors participating in workshops on the themes, outcomes and suggesting a range of potential new actions.
- 4.7 A review of good practice and updated statistical information has been undertaken which will inform the emerging draft Strategy. A new action plan to sit alongside the strategy is also being developed. **Appendix D** contains the proposed outline for the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The proposal is to retain 5 key themes, with the addition of 'Preventing and addressing Homelessness' as separate theme, to ensure that it is targeted as a priority. It is also proposed to merge the existing themes of 'Homes and support for vulnerable people' and 'Promoting and supporting communities' to form the theme 'Supporting people and sustainable communities'.
- 4.8 The revised strategy will reference and seek to address a range of additional issues in response to housing agenda changes since 2015, including:
- Fully integrate current Corporate Plan priorities (adopted after the Housing Strategy);
 - Housing Revenue Account accommodation project for homelessness;
 - Young people housing options;
 - Mental health issues & dementia issues;
 - Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019);
 - Climate and ecological change;
 - Changes to the Welsh Housing Quality Standards for Council and Registered Social Landlord properties – with increased decarbonisation focus expected in 2021.

What happens next?

4.9 Discussions with key staff, including relevant Heads of Service from departments across Denbighshire County Council and engagement with key partners, including Registered Social Landlords are currently underway, with the aim of informing the emerging Housing & Homelessness Strategy. Recommendations from this Scrutiny Committee will be reported back to the Strategic Housing & Homelessness Group. Approval for the final draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy will be sought from Council later this year.

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

5.1 The themes of the Housing Strategy detailed in 4.1 contribute to the following Corporate priorities - housing, environment, young people and resilient communities.

6. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

6.1. A Well-being Impact Assessment will be undertaken when the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is fully drafted.

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

7.1 Currently the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is being drafted and a range of the consultation events have and are being organised:

- Corporate Executive Team – 24th June 2019
- Young People and Housing Programme Board – 27th November 2020
- Councillor Workshop – 15th January 2020 (key outcomes are detailed in **Appendix C**);
- Programme of consultation across Denbighshire County Councils committees – this Scrutiny, Cabinet. Cabinet Briefing and Full Council;
- Discussions with key staff from departments across the Denbighshire County Council;
- Feedback from key partners including Registered Social Landlords.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

8.1 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.

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

9.1. Ensuring that people are supported to live in homes that meet their needs is a key priority for the Council. A range of mechanisms are in place to monitor progress including this report.

10. Power to make the Decision

10.1 Local Government Act 2000, Housing Act 1985 (S8), Housing Act 2004 (S8), Local Government Act 2003 (S87), Housing (Wales) Act 2014

10.2 Scrutiny's powers with regards to policy review and development are detailed in Section 7.4 of the Council's Constitution.