

## **Appendix C - Key notes from Councillors workshop on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

Councillors undertook all five workshops on the five themes of the Housing Strategy (HS).

The following fourteen Councillors attended the workshop session:

Councillor Rhys Thomas  
Councillor Bobby Feeley  
Councillor Joe Welch  
Councillor Tony Thomas  
Councillor Arwel Roberts  
Councillor Emrys Wynne  
Councillor Merrick Lloyd-Davies  
Councillor Martin Holland  
Councillor Ellie Chard  
Councillor Barry Mellor  
Councillor Alan James  
Councillor Joan Butterfield  
Councillor Rachel Flynn  
Councillor Ann Davies

Apologies – Councillor Hugh Irving

Denbighshire County Council staff that attended were:

Sean Marsh  
Gareth Roberts  
Judith Greenhalgh  
Emlyn Jones  
Graham Boase  
Liz Grieve  
Geoff Davies  
Jane Abbott  
Angela Loftus  
Sue Lewis  
Abbe Harvey

The key outputs are listed below for each HS theme:

### **Theme 1 – More homes to meet local need and demand**

Theme: Most groups were broadly happy with the theme and the wording. One group suggested combining theme 1 and theme 2 together. One group suggested adding tailored to various areas of Denbighshire.

## Outcomes:

- Most groups supported the outcomes – one group questioned prioritising Gypsies & Travellers

## Potential actions to include:

- To build larger homes to give greater flexibility of use
- Build smaller homes as per Local Housing Market Assessment
- More action on empty homes (key actions mentioned by all groups)
- Develop a hall of residence approach to shared housed for younger people
- Empty was mentioned by all the groups – high priority for Councillors. They are a wasted resource
- Gypsy and travellers – about meeting the genuine need near facilities. Not an easy solution
- Tailored housing need approach – area specific
- Affordability for local people is key
- Low incomes generally in the County
- Questioned the capacity of local builders to provide enough homes
- Affordable definition – different tenures including rented (not just ownership options)
- Historically low interest rates and housing is currently a good investment
- Temporary accommodation for homeless people – more options and better quality
- The importance of more types of move-on accommodation (Council should purchase more of these properties)
- Older people – more housing options for them
- Young people – more housing options for them
- Use of evidence of housing need – Local Housing Market Assessment
- 3 bedroom Council house - should be converted into two flats
- People with disabilities struggle to find move-on accommodation
- More smaller properties including bungalows. More housing management moves to free up larger homes but moving tenants to smaller properties
- Loneliness for all generations is a real issue
- Bed blocking in hospital because homes are not suitable
- Good neighbour approach – Wardens have been taken away
- Range of different accommodation is needed
- New build – services are a key consideration – doctors, education, etc.
- Local Development Plan – remove allocated sites that have not come forward (have had sufficient time to bring them forward)
- Apartment above the shops to aid the regeneration
- Gypsies and Travellers need to be balanced with homelessness
- Rural areas – decreasing numbers of Welsh speakers with new developments
- Quality of housing is key – should be 2 bedroom minimum to provide more flexibility of use
- General flexibility of properties – single then couple and then children (needs change)
- Rhyl West – need to avoid 1 bedroom properties so previous mistakes are not repeated

- Gypsies & Travellers have unauthorised sites need – estimates are too low
- Link between housing and employment
- Partnerships with colleges – upskilling young people is key

## **Theme 2: Creating a supply of affordable homes**

Theme: Should still be a separate theme (affordable homes) – The majority of participants in the workshop, still felt that affordable housing still warranted a separate focus, rather than being subsumed into theme one, although it was accepted that there was a lot of commonality between the themes.

Outcomes:

1. Improved supply of affordable housing of all types and tenure across the County
2. Working with partners to maximise affordable housing development
3. An increase in applicants registered on the affordable housing register

It was recognised that good work had been achieved on all three of the outcomes, but 1 & 2 remained relevant and it was felt they should be retained. Outcome 3, whilst a huge increase has been seen in numbers, it was felt that publicity around the role of Tai Teg, should be highlighted and a simplification of affordable housing should be sought, as many people still did not understand the difference between affordable and social housing.

Potential actions to include:

- Investigate further temporary/emergency/long term accommodation options
- Innovate for homeless solutions
- Housing mix should reflect the need locally (LHMA)
- Housing contributions based on household but perhaps should be bedrooms instead
- More housing aimed at younger people
- More different types of housing including bungalows
- There is a shortage of affordable rented housing in rural areas
- More bungalows wanted as flexible housing options
- More publicity for Tai Teg – clarity of offer is needed
- Councillors want to have strategic conversations with the RSLs
- Tenure options should not be to the detriment of tenant suitability – need to ensure that social housing tenants contribute positively to the community and areas don't become ghettos for difficult and chaotic people
- Affordable housing options – Tai Teg needs to consider using text alerts service/Instagram. The latter social medium platform is geared to younger people
- More communication between the different layers of Councils – County, Town, Community and City to be consulted on developing housing need information for their areas – stats don't tell the whole story.
- More communication with developers/builders – they must have sales information to develop their site plans, is it something we can work on together?

- Housing should be flexible – the needs of the young and older should be considered
- Planning obligations need to be reviewed to see if smaller homes can be developed without causing higher costs for developers

### **Theme 3 – Safe & Healthy Homes**

Theme: All groups agreed that the theme is still relevant and appropriate.

Outcomes:

General agreement that the outcomes are still relevant but need re-wording slightly to update. Several groups picked up that Outcome 4 seemed to be worded badly and should probably read something like “Target limited financial resources.....” Investigate opportunities for limited financial resources....”

Some debate about whether the control of use of holiday caravan parks for holiday use outcome is now business as usual or not. On balance Members though we’d made really good progress but it was still an issue and they would like to keep reference to it in the strategy to maintain the profile and to ensure the project continues to be resourced.

Concern from some members that small sites are cropping up in the countryside. If holiday use – do they have appropriate consents? Are some slipping into residential use and if so do they have consent and have they been captured on our caravan site database?

Outcome 1 DCC Housing Stock achieved WHQS in 2014 its now about maintaining the standard. WHQS outcome should be retained but re-worded to reflect DCC’s position.

Potential actions to include:

Again general agreement that they still broadly relevant but need updating.

Some suggestions from members and officers:

- Continue with and extend Additional Licensing for HMO’s in Rhyl and other towns within the county
- Manage,/implement/enforce Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) in private rented sector
- Develop formal arrangement with housing management provider to manage complex/absentee landlord cases (i.e. IMO’s)
- Continue to develop partnership project with homelessness team and providers to ensure better quality accommodation (including reducing potential overcrowding at source)

- Campaign to empower private rents sector tenants i.e. raise awareness of tenants' rights and landlord obligations.

#### **Theme 4: Homes and support for vulnerable people**

Theme: Most groups were happy with the theme and the wording.

Outcomes: Agreed that the desired outcomes are still relevant apart from outcome 6 which relates to the introduction of SARTH, which has already been implemented.

Potential actions to include:

- What housing is available for people with low needs (carers)?
- Provision for people who are older with large properties who want retirement bungalows (plus alternatives)
- Welfare cap of £55 for those under 35 – partnerships with education
- How do we communicate our Denbighshire County Council offer to the community?
- Planning has worked against some our services versus quality living (Rhyl Regeneration) – e.g. some charity provision (register of fragmented projects)
- Regeneration should consider specific housing for younger people (transitional living) as a stepping stone – multi-agency approach
- The greatest support for people is other people (shared living) and return to “old” culture
- All new build should be accessible
- “Vulnerable” need to be separated into categories – older, younger, mental health. Continuum – who is more vulnerable than the next person
- Council homelessness properties – specific outcome. Council and RSLs need alternative housing
- Energy ratings – tackling fuel poverty, EPC, LAD and NEST
- People falling through the gaps with homelessness, not the traditional rough sleepers but also sofa surfers
- Older people trapped in larger properties as there is no suitable move on accommodation for them, more bungalows needed in social housing

#### **Theme 5: Promoting and supporting communities**

Theme: Yes, the theme is still relevant as this is important to ensure we build sustainable communities and places where people want to live and work.

Most groups were happy with the theme and the wording. One group suggested combining theme 1 and theme 2 together.

Outcomes: Need new outcomes to reflect the need to create mixed communities, including getting the physical attributes right when delivering new build, town centre regen such as shared spaces, open spaces, community facilities,

Also promote Tai Teg to ensure mixed tenures demand.

Community development approach will be important

Potential actions to include:

- Mixed communities (tenure and property types)
- Improve partnerships (Registered Social Landlords/providers/Town Councils)
- Inclusion Plan – community involvement
- Promote Tai Teg (Affordable Housing Register)
- Tenant accreditation
- Support community responsibility to prevent negative outcomes – fly tipping, etc.
- Develop transitional accommodation for younger people
- Invest in infrastructure for sites
- Link between housing and health & wellbeing
- Open space/communal area develop into resources – community cafes, etc.
- Mix younger and older people
- Volunteering and personal development
- Tree need to be integral part of communities – new and existing
- Tackling eyesore sites – improve them

### **Summary of results**

Geoff mentioned 3 themes to the actions in his summary – people this was about the mixed community (tenure / property size), physical side this was design / open and shared spaces etc and community development supporting communities to be resilient etc– 3 future themes for the Housing Strategy?