

<b>Report to</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of meeting</b>	24 November 2020
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	<b>Councillors Tony Thomas &amp; Bobby Feeley / Angela Loftus</b>
<b>Report author</b>	Sue Lewis
<b>Title</b>	Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy

## **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 Cabinet with an update on the progress made and an opportunity to contribute to the draft Strategy prior to its presentation to Full Council.
- 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 Cabinet on progress in developing the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy.

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

- 3.1. That Cabinet considers the contents of the report and recommends the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy is reported to Council for approval.

## 4. Report details

4.1. Ensuring that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs is a key corporate priority and developing a revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy is critical to address the priority. **Appendix A** contains the summary of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy will provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County. The main text of the draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy is available with the following link:

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD1289&ID=1289&RPID=12281314&LLL=0>

4.2 Denbighshire's Housing Strategy was approved by Council on 1 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.

4.3. 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 vast majority of actions being completed and embedded into operational practices.

- 4.4. The Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group was set up to develop a more coordinated approach. This group agreed to amalgamate the Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategies into one revised and updated Housing and Homelessness Strategy and will steer the development of the revised Strategy. 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. This approach is coordinated, provides shared problem solving, effective communication and more opportunities from closer cross departmental working.
- 4.5. An immediate priority is to develop a corporate approach to tackling homelessness as the Covid-19 pandemic has caused far greater pressures on the service. A lack of enough suitable emergency and temporary accommodation plus over reliance on Bed & Breakfast/Hotel accommodation and extended stays in emergency accommodation. The approach is refocusing on providing more accommodation solutions to assist homelessness people. 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. The proposal is to retain 5 key themes, with the addition of 'Preventing and addressing Homelessness' as a new separate theme, to ensure that it is targeted as a priority. A new action plan is a key part of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy (**Appendix B**).
- 4.7. The next step for the Housing and Homelessness Strategy is to seek formal approval at Council on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

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

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

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

6.1. The costs of the projects will be closely monitored. All costs will be kept within budget – ours and those of our partners.

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

7.1. The Strategy scores well as it seeks to address an immediate need for housing for people who are homeless and also address the longer term need for quality, affordable housing in our communities. Initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock and building new stock to high standards will help to reduce fuel poverty. Energy efficiency improvements will help to address the impacts of climate change and assist in decarbonisation and improvements to biodiversity.

7.2 The Strategy will encourage partnership working, this could be enhanced with further engagement with housing providers. Linkages with other initiatives and strategies will help to address the causes of homelessness. The Well-being Impact Assessment is contained within **Appendix C**.

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

8.1. Consultation has been undertaken to develop the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy by:

- Report to Young People and Housing Programme Board (21 November 2019);
- Meeting of Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group (quarterly);
- Councillor workshop held (15 January 2020);
- Performance Scrutiny by email due to meeting cancellation (6 April 2020);
- Senior Leadership Team (18 June 2020 and 21 October 2020);
- Heads of Service meeting to consider the draft summary and action plan (1 September 2020) and further quarterly meetings are programmed;
- Key Councillors meeting (27 October 2020);
- Cabinet Briefing (2 November 2020).

## **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 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.

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

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