

Report to	Council
Date of meeting	8 December 2020
Lead Member / Officer	Councillors Tony Thomas & Bobby Feeley / Angela Loftus
Report author	Sue Lewis
Title	Denbighshire's Housing and Homelessness Strategy

1. What is the report about?

1.1. The Housing Strategy has been reviewed and revised to form a new Housing and Homelessness Strategy for the County. This report presents the revised Strategy and accompanying Action Plan. Ensuring that everyone is supported to live in homes that meet their needs is a key corporate priority and the adoption 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 provides 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. The purpose of this report is seek Members' approval to adopt the revised Denbighshire Housing and Homelessness Strategy and endorse the accompanying Action Plan.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1. Council approves the Housing and Homelessness Strategy with accompanying Action Plan as the framework for taking forward housing issues.

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 draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy aims to provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and aims for housing in the County. It sets out the key challenges and issues affecting the County and what various Council teams intend to do to help overcome these challenges, reflecting a multi-disciplinary corporate approach to housing issues and delivery in the County. The main text of the 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 current Housing Strategy was approved by Council on 1 December 2015 and set 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. The Group have steered the development of the revised Strategy and have a key role in overseeing its delivery. 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, the Council's Homelessness Champion (Cllr Brian Blakely), 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 homeless 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. The Strategy is accompanied by a new Action Plan (**Appendix B**). 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.

What happens next?

- 4.7 Once adopted, the Housing and Homelessness Strategy will be published on the Council's website and all partners notified. The intention is for the Action Plan to be a living document, regularly updated and reviewed. The Council's 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. 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 attached as **Appendix C**.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Council and others?

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

- Report to Young People and Housing Programme Board (21 November 2019);
- Meetings 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 summary and Action Plan (1 September 2020) and further quarterly meetings are programmed;
- Key Councillors meeting (27 October 2020);
- Cabinet Briefing (2 November 2020);
- Cabinet (24 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.

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.