

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	27 January 2022
Lead Members/ Officer	Cllr Tony Thomas (Lead Member for Housing & Communities)/ & Cllr Bobby Feeley (Lead Member for Wellbeing and Independence) /Angela Loftus (Strategic Planning & Housing Manager)
Report author	Jane Abbott (Senior Officer Strategic Planning & Housing)
Title	Progress on delivering Denbighshire’s Housing & Homelessness Strategy

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. [Denbighshire's Housing & Homelessness Strategy](#) which was adopted by the Council on 8th December 2020. A [summary](#) of the strategy is included as **Appendix A** and a table setting out progress on the Action Plan is attached as **Appendix B**.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To examine the progress made to date in delivering the revised Housing & Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan approved by County Council on 8th December 2020.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That Scrutiny note the report, comment accordingly and continue to monitor delivery of the Housing & Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.

4. Report details

Background

- 4.1 Denbighshire’s Housing & Homelessness Strategy sets out the Council’s vision and aims for housing in the County for the period 2021-2026. It is an important corporate

document for the Council and provides the framework for all Council housing and homelessness 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 (LDP). The Strategy identifies 6 “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;
- Preventing & ending homelessness in Denbighshire
- Homes and support for vulnerable people;
- Promoting and supporting communities.

4.2 Delivery of the Action Plan is overseen by the Strategic Housing & Homelessness Group (SHHG), which is jointly chaired by the Lead Members Cllrs Tony Thomas and Bobby Feeley who have responsibility for delivering the Housing & Homelessness Strategy. Membership of the Group comprises those Lead Members with responsibility for an area of housing or homelessness within their portfolios, relevant Heads of Service and the Strategic Planning & Housing Manager.

4.3 The Group meets quarterly 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 Local Authorities and is currently around £7 million per annum. This funding is managed locally by the Council.

4.4 The Strategy is accompanied by a 40-point Action Plan. 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 and homelessness. The Strategy is a living document and actions are added as work progresses and others are completed. The Housing & Homelessness Strategy has a five-year lifespan (2021 – 2026) and will need to be reviewed by 2026.

Key areas of progress

4.5 The Action Plan has been monitored at each SHHG meeting although it was recognised that due to the fact the Strategy was newly adopted and there have been restrictions in working practice because of the pandemic, work would be limited at the outset, detailed reviews of the themes began in quarter three. The first three themes have been reviewed. Highlights of what has been achieved from these themes are:

- Record number of housing scheme completions of 439 new homes contributing to the highest annual affordable housing outturn achieved by DCC of 174 affordable units.
- Launch and promotion of the Empty Homes Matching Service, which has generated positive interest.
- A draft approved by Cabinet and submitted to Welsh Government of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment.
- DCC have the first time this year accessed Social Housing Grant (SHG) £1.4 million ring-fenced for 2021/22 and access to bid for a share of £7 million SHG funding for 2022/23 & 2023/24
- Work has begun on the first new build Council dwellings, in Prestatyn and Denbigh which are expected to be completed by April 2022.
- Development of draft Council Housing Asset Strategy defining the aspirations for the Authority for development and maintenance including zero carbon commitments
- Reviewed DCC stock portfolio to assess viability for repurposing to meet future housing needs.
- DCC have taken a lead in improving SHG funding monitoring with Welsh Government – simplifying monitoring and reporting and improving analysis of Housing Provision across Wales.
- Detailed information on needs provided for planning applications to assist with decision making.
- Rent Smart Wales has been successfully implemented in Denbighshire
- Inspection of all properties which are identified by the Homelessness team for citizens, prior to tenancies being taken up
- Development of fines policy and procedure for serial non-engagement and non-compliance of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)

- Additional Licensing of HMO's scheme extended to include Prestatyn, Denbigh and Llangollen
- Developed a new Housing Revenue Account Borrowing Strategy which takes into account the changes in permitted borrowing levels and capping to maximise opportunities for housing development and maintenance programmes;
- Developed 30-year business plan incorporating new development and capital maintenance programmes

4.6 Of the 40 actions identified, 9 have been embedded in operational delivery as 'business as usual', 23 actions are on track to be delivered within the set time scales, there is some minor slippage on 8 actions in accordance with the original deadlines set, which is due to the impact of Covid-19. This has restricted the Welsh Housing Quality Standards maintenance programme, for example to outside works or in the case of the replacement Local Development Plan affected consultation and evidence gathering requirements 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 Theme four which deals with homelessness in Denbighshire will be reviewed in detail at the March 2022 SHHG meeting, however some actions are already well on the way to be completed such as:

- The acquisition of a building to provide temporary homelessness accommodation for families in Denbighshire
- Review of the Housing Support Grant to ensure different levels of support are available for a variety of needs.
- Integrating the Housing First programme into the Homelessness Support Pathway

4.8 Theme five – Homes and support for vulnerable people and theme six – Promoting and supporting communities will be reviewed at the June 2022 meeting. Actions already achieved include:

- Awel Y Dyffryn Extra Care facility in Denbigh completed
- 'Own front door' scheme set up on the new build site in Meliden, providing homes for 4 adults

- Tenant Engagement Strategy developed and implemented
- SARTH administration of the partnership reviewed

4.9 The main challenges experienced in delivering the Strategy are connected to the response to Covid-19 crisis. The Local Development Plan will require consultation and consideration of the long term impact of the pandemic on housing requirements. Delays to the LDP will have a knock on effect to other work which is dependent on the LDP & site availability. The decarbonisation of social housing stock in response to climate change, is subject to the allocation of additional grant funding to achieve. The change in methodology by Welsh Government has hampered the development of the new Local Housing Market Assessment.

4.10 It can be seen from the attached action plan that progress is being made on the Housing & Homelessness Strategy and it is supporting the Council's Corporate priorities.

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 are 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. A Well-being Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Housing and Homelessness Strategy but is not required for this report as it presents an update on progress.

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

8.1. Significant consultation and engagement was undertaken to develop Denbighshire's Housing and Homelessness Strategy and was outlined in the report to Council seeking approval of the Strategy in December 2020.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. The full cost implications of any 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 regular reports to the Strategic Housing and Homelessness Group and reports as and when required by Scrutiny.

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.

11.2. Scrutiny's powers are detailed in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and in Sections 7.4.1(e) and 7.4.2(b) of the Council's Constitution